

[Introduction]

With the rapid behavior changing disruption of recent years, and the ongoing stream of corporate governance failures. ACCA has been digging deep into how interconnected risks such as climate change and geopolitical issues are influencing the way we approach risk management. This podcast series will look at what risk culture means and to what extent risk and accountancy professionals understand its impact on performance.

[Voiceover]

Hello, and welcome to the latest episode of our risk Culture series. Today we are going to talk about social learning with a company called Attain and its unique game experience called Rising Tides, which really reinforces the focus on collaborative risk training that I see more ACCA members around the world talking about. Team's founder Klaus Woeste, and their COO Nick Reid, are here to tell us all about it.

It's great to have you guys here today, I couldn't really think of a better podcast that really relates to the SDGs that I'm most focused on at ACCA. And that is SDG 4 quality education, and SDG 17, which is partnerships for goals. So let's start by you guys just telling our audience about what inspired you to set up a team?

[Klaus Woeste]

Well, first of all, thanks, Rachel, for having us today, really excited to be part of this podcast series, I'm Klaus Woeste I'm the founder of Attain, what inspired me is actually really simple. So I've worked for many, many years as an adviser to the financial services industry, helping to you know, create then embed a strong risk culture. And I felt that traditional training just lets everybody down, and definitely doesn't build any skills or change any behaviors. So when I looked at how sustainable finance will change everything, I thought, we need new learning and new training. And that's where Attain's the way.

[Nick Reed]

I'm Nick Reed. And as an accountant by training, my career has been in business management and COO roles in financial services. And I was always super keen on the need for a strong enterprise-wide risk culture within the organizations that I worked for. And I was also very aware of the need for a strong learning culture to enable effective risk management. And sustainability seems a great place to start. Because as a topic, it's still evolving, and regulation is gathering pace, but the learning hasn't yet matured into the mandatory learning space. So there's still time, I think, to try and get people to engage with this topic in a way that educates and excites people. So when I met Klaus and understood what he was trying to achieve, it was a no brainer for me to join up with him.

[Voiceover]

It was a great experience in June 2023, when you guys came to pilot your Rising Tides game with our ACCA, CROs and heads of risks. And now I'll have to joke to say I was on one of the winning teams in the end. But when you think about just what's happened in a year already, like how ESG has evolved, and how complex this VUCA world we live in is, it would be really interesting to hear about, you know, how you've seen the game evolve the approaches, and, you know, maybe with hybrid learning and stuff, what you've learned.

[Nick Reed]

Absolutely, I mean, we're finding that sustainable finance is definitely a topic that resonates with all people. But we also find that people tend to lack confidence to engage with the topic, because of VUCA. As you kind of say, we definitely see that game participants want to do the right thing. They want to be commercial. And they also want to try and have impact. But the trade offs are complex and nuanced. But what we are seeing for sure is penny drop moments if you like when our game participants realize that there is a balancing act, and everyone in an organization has a role to play. We're definitely

seeing that when we play the game with people. And hopefully, you'll have found that when you played as well, and being part of a winning team, what can be better?

[Klaus Woeste]

Well done. Congratulations on that. Actually.

[Voiceover]

I'm looking forward to our next session. And of course, you know, our members come from all industries, regions and hierarchies. But all of them do say the challenges are getting everyone to sing from the same song sheet. And that how learning and training is such a high priority right now in terms of raising risk awareness, and better informing decision making.

[Nick Reed]

Our aim really is to reignite the passion for learning in people. And that isn't specific to financial services, it definitely applies across all industries. We firmly believe that expertise already exists within an organization, but it's connecting people through learning that really enables the learning to land. And flexible working is making it harder for people to interact informally, you know, those kind of 'around the water cooler moments' are harder to achieve. And so with our game and our approach, we think that social learning can foster that collective learning culture again, and also importantly, learning needs to be fun

[Klaus Woeste]

To build on that. I think so. To me, the key lesson from the past 12 months is first we see the penny drop with people who play the game and to me as a founder, that's usually exciting to see. But actually, when we really make a difference, we also see the game developing. We're developing games for different segments in different sectors. Because ESG is actually compliance and a risk challenge no matter which industry you work in, it doesn't matter whether you're in services manufacturing tech, well, you know, this Rachel, with every in every industry, it's a major risk and compliance issues. So we actually really excited to build this out and and just get more people to have fun and learn at the same time.

[Voiceover]

And considering the interconnectedness of risk today to just like, with fraud and greenwashing and cybercrime concerns, it'll be really interesting to see how you evolve the game. And just in terms of all the web of risks out there that organizations are facing today.

[Klaus Woeste]

Yeah, it's a really good point, you brought up greenwashing. And actually, the next learning experience we're developing is specifically for green washing in financial services is the most material most probable risk, I think, not a week passes by where we don't see someone being caught making claims about their product, which actually aren't quite that true. But also, again, it applies to every industry, right? I think the biggest and most famous greenwashing case of all times is Volkswagen, right? When you have to manage the risk or avoid the risk of greenwashing in your organization, you really have to ask yourself, How do I embed the right spirit, the right mindset and the right behaviors into every one in the organization? That's where we want to help?

[Voiceover]

Yeah, I really appreciate the inclusive and collaboration side. I know, Nick, when you were last in the Adelphia, you were talking about the worry about segregated learning and how a lot of organizations have learned how that is not helpful.

[Nick Reed]

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, a fundamental part of risk management and risk culture revolves around segregation of duties, and understandably so. But to apply, you know, segregation to learning is not the right way forward, I don't think I think it's really important that people have the opportunity to learn with and from each other, and also that they get to experiment to experience learning through trial and error, and also see the outcome of the decisions that they make during our game. This is a really effective way to embed learning outcomes.

[Voiceover]

And I know a lot of our members across all three lines are working on or experimenting, you might say, on how they can work together more and create more of a comprehension view, holistic view of risk. So I can see how this would help them be able to evolve that as well. But it would be great to end on, you know, what are your messages to our members to accountancy professionals, and all their different roles.

[Nick Reed]

For me, your ACCA members work across all parts of an organization. You know, I'd love to think that they could be the real drivers to encourage social learning, try and bring people together to bring different perspectives from different parts of an organization together, you know, and I think that your members can be a real driving force for that. Having a safe space for people to learn together is fundamental. And you know, your members operating in all parts of our organization can really drive that that will be great

[Klaus Woeste]

To pick up from Nick's comments. My advice would be embrace a culture of discussion, a culture of communication, and maybe even a culture of disagreement wide. So in my previous career was involved in a fair number of investigations into 'why did something go wrong and risk and conduct in organizations' and one of the main root causes was usually that people just didn't speak to each other. Right. And we made the point earlier that it's important to speak across different lines of defense. I don't think much has changed. So my advice would be embrace communication, embrace openness. Go for it.

[Voiceover]

Yeah, I'm really looking forward to our session with the CEOs and heads of risk. Hopefully, I have another good luck. But also, it'd be great to maybe get you guys in here to do a pilot session with ACCA. Internally, ourselves,

[Nick Reed]

we'd love to Absolutely, it will be. That will be really fun.

[Voiceover]

Thanks so much for coming in

[Klaus Woeste]

Thank you for having us.

[Nick Reed]

Thank you.

09:01

Rachae[Voiceover]

[Voiceover]

Many thanks to Klaus and Nick for this really topical discussion. Join us again next time when I'll be talking to David Gross, and Sandra Bori. About what collaborating across the three lines means today, and how we can empower our members to take on a more behavioral science approach to building and incentivizing a culture that gets your organization where it wants to be.

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