Change Agents, hosted by Satu Rekonen

Episode 1: Always ready, never finished – guest Tiina Tuulos, Futurice

Satu: Welcome to the Change Agents podcast. This is a podcast series from Aalto University's Department of Industrial Engineering and Management, where I discuss organizational renewal with various experts. My goal is to understand what renewal looks like in different work environments, what it means in practice, and what it requires from us as people. I am Satu Rekonen, a university lecturer.

In this episode, my guest is Tiina Tuulos, Strategy Lead at Futurice, who is passionately dedicated to developing and renewing organizations. Futurice is a consulting company that supports the digital transformation of organizations by leveraging the latest technology, data, strategic thinking, and human-centered design. Futurice helps its clients to renew their strategies, build digital solutions, and develop organizational cultures that enable continuous improvement and significant change. At Futurice, Tiina collaborates with others to shape the company's strategic [00:01:00] direction and intent, and supports organizations as a consultant in their journey to become digital, data-driven, agile, and people-centric.

As an expert in leadership and strategy, with over a decade of experience in cross-disciplinary collaboration as well as product and service development in Finland, Austria, and Australia, Tiina utilizes design thinking, business expertise, and technology opportunities to achieve positive business outcomes

In this episode, we'll explore questions such as: Where does the need for organizational renewal come from? What factors influence the progress of renewal in different organizations? What skills are essential for driving renewal, and what does it feel like to lead such efforts?

Welcome to the Change Agents podcast, Tiina Tuulos!

Tiina: Thank you very much.

Satu: Tiina, you are involved with Futurice in renewing several customer organizations as well as Futurice's own internal operations. What does renewing the organization mean to you, and what all can it involve?

Tiina: Well, I see it as ensuring future readiness. Organizational renewal is often quite systemic and can be quite messy. It's like navigating a constantly shifting playing field, where you seek the right direction by taking the right actions to achieve desired outcomes. It's incredibly rewarding and deeply meaningful—I've always felt that way—but it's certainly not easy.

As for what it can involve, it encompasses a wide range of elements, from individual-focused competence development to clarifying the bigger picture, adjusting operating models, leadership development, refining metrics, or even reorganization. The nature of the renewal really depends on what's driving the change and what the right steps are.

Satu: Those are very diverse elements. If the types of renewal organizations undergo are so varied, where does the need for organizational renewal typically come from?

Tiina: Well, basically, when it comes to ensuring an organization's [00:03:00] current and future success, it can originate from very different starting points. You might notice certain symptoms, and naturally, there are root causes behind them. These symptoms could show up in areas like employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, or business metrics. Of course, external factors can also play a role, such as market changes or new opportunities from technological breakthroughs. A great example is generative artificial intelligence, which many communities, organizations, and individuals are now considering.

We may tackle these situations by addressing challenges we've identified, or by seizing new opportunities. I'd also like to point out that, in the cases I've worked on, it's not always about fixing a problem. Often, it's about maintaining success and competitiveness, and especially ensuring long-term employee satisfaction. That, in itself, becomes a driver for change.

Satu: So, do I understand correctly that, in a way, we want to be pioneers—to renew ourselves before the need arises from external demands?

Tiina: Yeah, definitely. It's about staying in tune with the times and staying ahead of the wave. Of course, if we think about Futurice itself, our renewal is very much driven by changes in customer needs and the maturity of digital capabilities, alongside shifts in the market.

Satu: Really, really interesting. What factors influence the advancement of renewal in different organizations? If we think about various organizations, what should be taken into account, for example, in relation to the size or culture of the organization, or even the industry itself?

Tiina: Well, when embark on this kind of renewal, it's especially important to understand the context in which you are operating, as well as the culture and operating models of the work community and organization. And generally speaking, I would say technology enables a lot and can have a significant impact, but the people are in an essential role. It's [00:05:00] often said that 20 percent of change is about technology, and 80 percent is about human behavior. And that's why renewal can be challenging, because we're working with people, and changing behaviors and ways of working is never easy. We all know this from our personal lives.

Another general point is that strategy and culture go hand in hand. They are not the same, but they both drive and support each other. Indeed, how the different cultures or operating models within an organization affect renewal is very significant.

For example, does the organization have a culture where experimentation is welcomed and appreciated, or do we aim to plan everything ahead and involve everyone at once? When it comes to renewal, we often don't know the final outcome in advance. So, agile, iterative methods are better—it's good to experiment, learn, and develop continuously. But if an organization's culture doesn't allow for that kind of flexibility, it can make renewal more [00:06:00] challenging.

Another thing I've been thinking about a lot is whether there's a culture that allows sharing unfinished work. As I mentioned before, renewal is about learning and constant iteration, so the idea of "always ready, never finished" is crucial. However, this way of thinking doesn't work everywhere. I've found that it can be helpful not to make things too polished. For instance, when communicating, it's okay if things look unfinished because that invites others to feel like they can still influence the process. When something clearly isn't complete, it gives people the sense that they can contribute.

But this isn't always easy, and perhaps it's not the same way of working in all organizations. There are two more things I'd like to mention. The second is related to the contrast between hierarchical and autonomous environments. Of course, this is quite fundamental. The differences in operating models and

thinking frameworks within work communities and [00:07:00] organizations have a significant impact on renewal.

In other words, the idea is that if something is decided, it trickles down through the organization, with operating models in place for supervisors and managers to carry it forward. However, in an environment of self-organizing and autonomy, like ours at Futurice, the work of influencing and motivating change must happen at every level of the organization.

This is often the case for us at Futurice. And, of course, not least, the business logic of the company—such as the industry it operates in and how it functions—always influences the renewal process. Renewal is never separate from it.

Satu: That made me think about the dynamics of different industries. For example, in the software development industry versus the manufacturing industry, the development cycles are very different. So, in a way, if iterative development already is a natural part of the development processes e.g. in product development, is it easier [00:08:00] to transfer that approach to other kinds of operational development, what do you think?

Tiina: Absolutely. In fact, I've worked with organizations like that, where—although the organization mainly focused on knowledge work—there were still notable differences internally. For some people, certain types of operating models felt very natural, likely due to their background, while for others, those same methods felt much more foreign.

Then again, I've also worked with organizations where the differences were industry-related. A large part of the workforce might have been involved in knowledge work, while others were more focused on on production or industrial work. When it comes to renewal, it's crucial to get input from everyone and to understand the different contexts in which people work.

Satu: You were referring earlier to the idea of sharing unfinished work and incompleteness in organizational renewal. I think it highlights the importance of doing the renewal together with the [00:09:00] people in the organization—not something that's driven solely by a steering group or an external demand. It's not about implementing something that's already been decided. Instead, it requires working closely with the people, allowing the process to take shape collaboratively. That's what gives the renewal its authenticity and ensures it feels meaningful for everyone involved.

Tiina: Absolutely. In a way, it would be much easier if a specific group could just decide, "We're going to renew," and that would be it. But, as I mentioned earlier, the complexity comes from the fact that we're working with people, and we want to help them succeed. That's really the key.

At least for me, what motivates my work is the idea that what we do in the process of renewal ultimately helps people—whether it's our people or the client's people. And with this notion of incompleteness, I really resonate with something our strategy director, Eeva Raita, once said. She noted [00:10:00] how renewal work can sometimes feel a bit unrewarding because you're always waiting for that moment when you can celebrate success. But in reality, that moment often doesn't come because renewal is an ongoing process. It's important to find ways to celebrate the smaller successes along the way and to look back at how far you've come, even when there's still a long way to go.

Satu: Let's continue with these themes with a concrete example. I'd like to discuss one of the client organizations, WithSecure, where you were involved in fuelling their new direction with clarified culture foundation and leadership practices. Could you explain where the need for renewal in culture and operations arose in this case?

Tiina: Sure! Just to give a bit of context, for those unfamiliar, WithSecure is a cybersecurity company that, a couple of years ago, completed a demerger from F-Secure, which might be more well-known to many people. F-Secure had offered both consumer and corporate cybersecurity services and after the demerger Withsecure focused more on providing cybersecurity solutions for businesses.

WithSecure focuses on the corporate side, positioning itself as a "good guy" in the digital world—fighting against the bad guys in cybersecurity. The need for renewal really stemmed from this reorganization. With a new corporate identity, they needed to establish the values that would guide their operations, support their success, and align with their strategy as a new, independent organization.

And it wasn't just about defining values in words. It was about embedding them into actions, fostering strong behavioral models, and setting leadership principles that would guide day-to-day operations and management.

Satu: So, how did you go about moving this renewal process forward?

Tiina: This was a multi-year collaboration, and perhaps it's good to mention that renewal is often a long-term effort. It doesn't usually reach a clear

endpoint. You need [00:12:00] patience and a belief in the process. In this case, when we talked about shaping a culture that supports the strategy, it wasn't about inventing a new culture from scratch. You can't just impose a culture from the outside—it already exists within the organization.

What we did, in close cooperation with the client's team, was to identify the elements that already existed within the organization. We worked to bring those elements to the forefront, recognizing what was already there and amplifying the aspects that would help move them toward their desired direction.

How we moved forward? I think it's important to emphasize that it was a participatory, collaborative process. We took an agile, iterative approach. A basic recipe for this kind of renewal often involves identifying the vision—what good looks like and where you want to go. Then, you assess the current state—where are we now? By comparing the vision and the current state, you can identify the gaps. [00:13:00] From there, it's about prioritizing and deciding on the right steps to take, as well as figuring out how to measure progress.

It's also crucial to find the right ways to measure whether you're heading in the right direction. Indicators—such as employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and other metrics—don't always shift quickly, so you need patience. In this case, we closely linked the renewal efforts with a strategic goal management model, which helped align the operating models and leadership principles with the company's strategic objectives.

Satu: What were the concrete steps you took at the beginning of this renewal journey, and how did you plan the path forward?

Tiina: We started by working closely with the client's key team. Our primary stakeholders were the entire leadership team, with particular support from the Chief people officer. The first thing we did was discuss their goals, business metrics, and what success would look like for them. We asked questions like: How will we know we've succeeded when we start seeing the behaviours and leadership in practice?

In practical terms, we began by thinking about how we could understand the current cultural situation. We worked together to build what we called a "cultural foundation." This involved bringing people together from across all business units around the world—gathering input from a wide range of perspectives.

We asked questions that helped us understand what people's daily activities looked like, what was supporting their progress, and what might be hindering them. For example, we'd ask things like: What is currently helping us move forward in our work? and What obstacles do you see that are holding us back?

We conducted many remote and in-person sessions, across different time zones, to build a common understanding. From there, we aligned the organization's strategy with these insights and connected it to different aspects of their brand and messaging, which had already been formulated. It was very much a systemic approach, tying the cultural foundation to the company's strategic direction.

We also identified elements in the organization that were already seen as strengths—things that promoted success. At the same time, we spotted areas that had potential for growth. This wasn't about reinventing everything, but rather about reinforcing the elements that were already contributing to success while addressing the areas for improvement.

Satu: I remember someone once saying that an organization can only be as good as it dares to think it is, and I thought that sounded wonderful—this idea of having discussions and creating a shared understanding of how we recognize that we have succeeded in this renewal.

And Tiina, you beautifully highlighted the importance of making visible what is already working well and how it can be further strengthened amidst the renewal. Would you have a concrete example from this particular case of what that looked like?

Tiina: Yes, definitely. When it comes to renewal, it's easy to focus on finding problems and areas that need solving, and that's important. But it's just as crucial to recognize what's already working well—what resources we have, what's worth maintaining and strengthening—and to communicate those things. This often serves as a reminder to people that we don't need to make complete or drastic changes, especially since change itself can be a bit intimidating.

For example, in this case, it was absolutely admirable when we spoke with people in the organization, and everyone expressed immense pride in their purpose. Their sense of mission was incredibly strong—they saw themselves as the "good guys," fighting against the villains of the digital world, and they took great pride in that.

This kind of mindset was a huge asset in the renewal process. It gave us a solid foundation to build the story on top of, and we [00:17:00] were able to combine these operating principles and working methods with a recognition of what was already working well.

It's an ongoing, daily process. We need to connect the story in a way that everyone can find their own way of talking about it. Stories are fundamental to who we are as people—they stick with us. We've been told stories since we were children, and we find ways of telling them that resonate with us.

For example, in the case of Futurice, this renewal we're undergoing is something we think about constantly. We're discussing this renewal with different people in different ways, whether it's about our new strategic direction or other aspects of the business. It's important, but also challenging, because no single individual can take it forward alone.

The key is helping people—whether they're in sales, marketing, business development, or product development—find a way to tie the renewal into their own story and align it with the vision we're working towards. [00:18:00] As I mentioned, it's about the day-to-day work: constant prioritization, making choices, and checking along the way. It's also crucial to remember that we have data and metrics to monitor whether we're moving in the right direction.

Satu: In the case of WithSecure, what do you see as the key prerequisites for the success of this organizational renewal?

Tiina: We've discussed how important people are in this process, and really, they are the heart of the organization. People must be motivated, and we need to find ways to communicate that motivation for the change and renewal we're undertaking. At the same time, our founder, Hanno Nevanlinna, has described change in a way that resonates with me—it's like a champagne glass tower, where the change flows from the top to the bottom. A major factor in the success of this renewal was the support and belief of the management and CEO. They genuinely believed that this was the right path, the one that would lead to success, and they were committed to fostering a more values-driven way of operating, right down to the management team.

That was one key factor. Another was our openness. For instance, when we talk about the everyday leadership development program, we started with a pilot. We had team leaders from different areas of the business, and we developed a model with them. It involved various face-to-face sessions, as well as online interactions and other measures to support changes in everyday behavior. After

this pilot, we iterated and learned a great deal, and the feedback was very positive. People appreciated that we actually ran a pilot and developed it further from there. Often, in this kind of renewal, you really only learn once you put something to the test in the real world, with real people. That's why it's so important to bring ideas from the drawing board to reality as quickly as possible, whatever the initiative may be.

Another critical success factor was the [00:20:00] renewal team itself. It wasn't just about individuals driving the renewal, but about a collective group—people who shared trust, motivation, and belief in the process. In cases like these, you often need to remind yourself of your own motivation, especially when results don't come quickly. It's easy to lose sight of progress when the outcomes take time, but it's crucial to keep believing in the process. Having people around you who also believe in it makes all the difference.

Of course, there will be moments of doubt when you wonder whether anything will come of it or if certain efforts will succeed. But it's vital to keep that faith in yourself. You don't have to be naïve, but you do need to maintain that belief. Another key success factor was our strong link and constant dialogue with the business side of things. Although this initiative started within the people team, the Chief People office had a very clear understanding of how the renewal would impact the business. [00:21:00] That connection was essential.

Satu: You ran a pilot during this renewal with the management of WithSecure. What insights did you gain from that?

Tiina: Well, perhaps the most important thing was the opportunity to hear, discuss, and spar with the leaders about their everyday situations. We got to understand what challenges they were facing and what areas they wanted to develop. Throughout the year and a half that I was involved in this organization and in collaboration with them, I was constantly gaining a deeper understanding of their reality, which is crucial in being able to support the renewal in the best possible way.

We worked very closely with their people, bringing everything into their specific context. I'd say that was the greatest value of the pilot—not only did we get ideas about what types of exercises or questions resonated better, but we also learned more about what could truly support behavioral change in the leaders' everyday lives.

Satu: On the other hand, what kind of challenges did you face during this renewal journey?

Tiina: One important lesson was the need to always communicate where this work came from and what stages it has gone through. By the time we've reached a certain point, and things have already progressed, we might assume everyone knows what's going on. But you can't assume that—there may be someone encountering the project for the first time or who hasn't fully understood it before.

In this case, we learned that it was critical to remind people in every interaction why we were here in the first place and what prompted this renewal. We needed to clearly communicate what had been done so far—what steps had been taken and who had been involved. This gave credibility to the work, reinforcing that the current progress was built on solid foundations. And, of course, it was equally important to explain what would happen next.

I also mentioned earlier the importance of finding the right metrics to track whether we're going in the right direction. This can be challenging in renewal processes because the indicators—whether employee satisfaction or other key metrics—don't always shift quickly. That's why patience is essential, as well as ensuring that we are using the right measurements to track progress.

Satu: Let's move on to Futurice. Tiina, you've recently been involved in renewing the strategic direction and vision at the company. What has it been like to drive innovation forward in an organization like Futurice, and what factors have you had to consider?

Tiina: Well, like many other work communities and organizations, we're not immune to the same challenges—how to get everyone involved and how to find a story that resonates with people.

For us, it's been both hugely interesting but also quite challenging. Sometimes you may feel for a moment like, Do I really know anything? or Will this succeed? because, as I mentioned earlier, those moments when you can clearly celebrate success are not always easy to come by.

Our culture is very much aligned with this experience. We are a strongly autonomous organization, highly agile, very value-driven, and we enjoy challenging the status quo. The challenge has been tying this renewal and new strategic direction to our existing strengths—those that have always been there and remain critical to us. We've had to keep this balance in mind, while also considering how it looks on a daily basis.

It's kind of like a constant, moving playing field. Just this week, I found myself laughing about the never-ending backlog and the constant need for prioritization. Of course, it's important that we have a plan and know what things we're working on that we believe will move us in the right direction, but we also need to stay humble. We have to be flexible and willing to re-prioritize as new things come up.

Satu: When you think about this strategic renewal at Futurice, what [00:25:00] kinds of new concrete practices or ways of working have you needed to implement to drive that change and willpower?

Tiina: In this case, too, one element that I have been involved in a lot is related to our leadership team, and the practices and ways of working. As I mentioned earlier, although we're a strongly autonomous organization, that doesn't mean we don't have direction. We have a shared idea and vision of where we're headed.

However, this doesn't mean that everyone is told exactly how to get there. Instead, it's about enabling our smart, capable people to figure it out for themselves. We often talk about being "highly aligned, loosely coupled," meaning we stay aligned with the big picture but give people the autonomy to figure out the best way to move toward that common direction.

In this case, within our leadership team, it's been about refining our operational practices—how we clarify that direction and communicate it. For example, we held a massive workshop, a hybrid session where everyone in the company was invited. We discussed our customers and the challenges we see them facing, as well as the problems we can help them solve. This session took place during one of our regular "Futu Fridays," which we hold every month.

What's been really crucial, though, is that these discussions have been taken down to the level of smaller teams. Different teams have their own sessions, connected to their everyday work, where they discuss, What does this concretely mean for us?

Satu: Tiina, you've mentioned metrics a few times and the importance of measuring how change or renewal has been achieved within the organization. Do you have any specific ways of measuring this?

Tiina: Yes, we've experimented with a few different approaches because, as we've discussed, change happens in people's behavior. In an organization like

ours, one of our goals or visions is to help customers with large-scale digital transformations and guide them on their journey of change.

Often, this happens through the proposals we make to clients after we've discussed and understood their situation and challenges. These proposals are one concrete way where we can see the impact of change. For instance, if we want to see a shift in how we talk about the customer's situation—how we understand their business, metrics, and goals—we conduct narrative analyses of our proposals.

We created a list of key terms that reflect our desired state—the way we want to communicate about the customer's business goals and challenges. Then, we ran narrative analyses on all the proposals, reflecting on them on a weekly basis to see what kind of changes were emerging.

Most importantly, this approach allowed us to identify the best examples—those proposals that were particularly well-designed. We could then highlight those to the rest of the team to show how effective communication can look.

This ties closely into the broader renewal effort. One thing I've been reflecting on is the importance of keeping our hypothesis in mind—what are we aiming for? Even though we can measure behavioral change through these narrative analyses, at the end of the day, we want to see an impact on customer satisfaction. The metrics we track are just single data points, but they form part of the bigger picture.

Satu: Really interesting. What have been the prerequisites for this renewal at Futurice, and in what ways do you think you've succeeded?

Tiina: We're still on this journey of change and renewal, and it will certainly continue. Some of the habits that have helped us succeed include ensuring that we engage with enough people—we've made sure to talk to a wide range of individuals. By having these conversations, we gain an understanding of how people see things, and we help them connect the broader story of renewal to their own context.

It's important to tell a general story, but as I mentioned before, it's equally important to bring it to smaller teams so it becomes more concrete and relevant to people's everyday work. Another thing I've learned from this renewal work, and from working in a two-person strategy support team, is that you don't have to do everything alone or know all the answers. In fact, it doesn't make sense to try to do it all by yourself.

In organizational renewal and development, it's incredibly valuable to involve people early in the process. When you bring them in early, they get more deeply involved, which helps the whole initiative. I often think about this when working on things like our goal setting framework or when considering the relationship between our strategic planning, implementation, and the rituals that come with it.

I always ask myself, Who in our organization is knowledgeable about this topic? Who is interested in it? We're fortunate to have people who do this for our clients, and I often spar with them. [00:30:00] This way, I can gather the best information from them, while also sharing my thoughts so we can work together toward the same goal.

In this process, it's also important to set aside your ego. You don't need to feel like you have to know everything. It's about having the humility to recognize when you need help and knowing who you can turn to for support.

Satu: So at this point as well, the importance of working together is emphasized, and allowing yourself to embrace your own incompleteness or the fact that you don't need to know everything is really important. Do I understand correctly?

Tiina: Definitely. Eeva, our strategy director, and I have often talked about how our ultimate goal is to make ourselves unnecessary. The idea is that when something is initiated or when we start developing an idea about a new direction we want to take, the people involved will eventually feel like it's their own. They won't need us anymore.

Of course, by that point, we'll likely already be thinking about the next steps, which means the renewal process is ongoing and never really stops.

Satu: And what kind of challenges have you encountered at Futurice with regard to this strategic renewal?

Tiina: Our collective organizing and autonomy are both challenging and wonderful. The challenge lies in finding ways to motivate everyone and communicate the change in such a way that it resonates with them personally.

This is especially true for an organization like ours with 800 people. So the question becomes: What are the right methods? It's about identifying the key people who can carry the message forward to their teams, helping them find their motivation.

Sometimes we think we need to come up with a new story or reinvent the wheel, but what's often most effective is simply repeating the same story, reinforcing it. Over time, you get better at telling that story, and the vision and direction become clearer.

It's easy to feel like you're saying the same thing over and over, especially when you're immersed in it every day. But in reality, that's exactly what's needed. There are always people in the organization who might be hearing it for the first time, so repeating the story is essential to ensuring everyone is aligned.

Satu: You mentioned earlier that Futurice is a very self-organizing and flat organization. I'd be interested to know how this is taken into account when moving forward with renewal in such an organization.

Tiina: Yes, it might be helpful to look at some extreme examples to understand the balance we need to strike.

In a more traditional organization, it's easy to think that direction comes from the top and is fixed—people are told how to operate and what to focus on in the next quarter. On the other hand, the opposite extreme would be a lack of clear, common direction, where smart people are working in different directions because there isn't a shared visibility.

What we aim for in a flat organization like ours is to find [00:33:00] the balance. We want to have a common, high-level direction—a vision, a clear sense of where we're going—but we also want to leave enough space for people to find the best ways to get there from their own context. For example, we operate in different countries and markets, so it's important that each team can figure out what works best in their specific context.

Transparency plays a key role in this. It's crucial that people can make informed decisions. How do I know if this decision will move us toward our desired goal? We have a strong value and principle of transparency at Futurice—everyone has access to all data. But it's also important to remember that having all the data doesn't necessarily mean clarity; sometimes, it can lead to chaos. You need to be able to find the right information and ask the right questions, and we're always working on improving this.

For example, we've developed a dashboard where anyone can see our key metrics, strategic numbers, and the direction we're heading. This is essential because it helps people make informed decisions, which supports self-organizing.

We've also created a decision-making model to support everyone. We call it our "four times two" model, which is based on the idea that we trust our people to make good decisions. But they also need support. In both big and small decisions, they ask themselves: Is this the right decision? Our model guides people to consider four factors in every decision: our people, our clients, our numbers, and the world around us—both now and in the future.

This "four times two" model helps people structure their decisions. And sometimes, they need sparring or additional information to make the best choice, which is why we have platforms where they can access data and check how things look in light of the numbers.

Being self-organizing doesn't mean we don't have leadership. Leadership just looks different. As a leader, you help your team [00:35:00] members succeed by ensuring they have the knowledge and context to do their best work. You provide support and guide them in making the best decisions for the team, and of course, we support our leaders in this process.

Satu: Listening to you now, it sounds like this kind of organizational renewal isn't straightforward or easy. I'd love to hear about your personal experience as a change agent—what is it like, and how does it feel?

Tiina: As I think I mentioned earlier, there are times when I feel like I don't know how to do this because we're dealing with quite complex issues, often outside of our comfort zone. We work and have discussions in very different contexts, and even when we come from similar backgrounds in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary collaboration, we might still be talking about similar things but in very different ways. Finding that common understanding is crucial.

I've been reflecting on this a lot, particularly in the context of product and service development, and how it applies to the world of renewal. I've been thinking about prototypes—how we can use them in the renewal process and how powerful they can be. Prototypes can guide our discussions in a way that ensures we're seeing the same thing and working on it together, rather than talking in hypotheticals, which can lead to slightly different interpretations of the subject.

Because this work is so challenging, I've found it's really important to remind myself of the motivation behind it. I strongly believe that through this work, we can help people succeed and create a better, more fulfilling working life for everyone. It's important work, but it's not so serious that we need to be overwhelmed by it. It's really important, but it's not serious.

Satu: What kind of key skills and attitude are needed when renewing an organization and leading its renewal?

Tiina: One skill I didn't initially recognize as important is facilitation and co-creation. It's essential to know who you need in certain sessions, who should be involved in moving information forward, or making decisions. How do you get people to discuss a particular topic together and come to decisions? This has been a critical competence—being able to choose the right methods to keep discussions productive and moving forward.

Another crucial aspect is creating an environment of psychological safety. Psychological safety means that no one feels judged or looked down upon for speaking up or sharing their thoughts. How do we create a space where everyone feels comfortable contributing their ideas? In organizational renewal, we don't always know the end result in advance. It's often a messy, iterative process that moves forward, backward, and sideways—similar to the new product and service development process. Having psychological safety allows people to be open and collaborative in this uncertainty.

These are skills I've found to be particularly important. Additionally, you need to be adaptable and curious in different situations. For instance, I experiment with generative AI tools every day and think about how I can use them myself, but also about how they could benefit our renewal efforts and the organization as a whole.

Satu: This made me think that there isn't really one right way or one correct answer when it comes to organizational renewal. It seems to require us to step out of our comfort zone, to be curious, as you mentioned, and perhaps to embrace vulnerability. That vulnerability, in turn, requires psychological safety around us.

Tiina: Absolutely. There isn't one specific background or path that makes someone a change agent. Even I didn't recognize at first that this is something that excites me. I wouldn't have been able to predict what kind of training or career path would lead me here. The most important thing I've learned is that it's essential to study the basics because it gives you [00:39:00] confidence and an understanding of how things can be done and how they've been done before.

But beyond that, it's crucial to listen to your own passion. For example, when I was studying at the Helsinki School of Economics, now Aalto University, I somehow found myself in Otaniemi, getting involved in product development. I left accounting as a minor, which would certainly have been important and

useful, but at that moment, something pulled me toward this path, and now I can see how the pieces are falling into place.

Satu: To wrap things up, I'd like to ask: what is one lesson or insight from your career that you would like others working in the same field to be aware of?

Tiina: That's a big question. Of course, it immediately feels like I should have a comprehensive, great answer.

I still feel like I'm on this journey myself. One reminder I always keep in mind is that you don't need to know everything and that you're constantly learning. Courage plays a role here. For instance, when we began spreading and sharing the strategy in our organization, we had reached a stage where the strategy had been developed collaboratively and participatively. We thought we were ready to move forward with concrete actions and implementation plans. But we soon realized that perhaps it wasn't as widely understood as we had assumed, and in a way, we weren't all on the same page.

A key lesson from this experience was to always check the environment. How can I gather a complete picture? I might have certain information and data points, but I need to ensure that I'm seeing the full picture before making decisions about next steps.

There are ways to do this, such as using good research methods, conducting interviews, and maintaining a sense of curiosity before you start moving forward too quickly. That's a lesson that has really stuck with me.

Satu: Thank you so much, Tiina, for being a guest on my podcast. You've given us a comprehensive view of what organizational renewal can look like. It's clear how different it can be in different organizations, but at the heart of it, it's about us as humans—our interactions and our ability to work together.

Tiina: Thank you very much.