

Agency for Change Podcast: Susan Krejci, Chief Product Officer, BizLove

Connect with Susan and BizLove at:

- Website – <https://bizlove.com/>
- LinkedIn – <https://www.linkedin.com/company/bizlove/>
- Instagram – <https://www.instagram.com/bizlove/?hl=en>

Susan Krejci: 0:01

Be curious and be reliable.

Announcer: 0:06

Welcome to Agency for Change, a podcast from KidGlov that brings you the stories of changemakers who are actively working to improve our communities. In every episode, we'll meet with people who are making a lasting impact in the places we call home.

Lyn Wineman: 0:29

Hey everyone, this is Lyn Wineman, president of KidGlov. Welcome to another episode of the Agency for Change podcast. Now, today, I am thrilled to talk with Susan Krejci, Chief Product Officer of BizLove. Don't you love that? KidGlov and BizLove? BizLove isn't just another consulting firm. It is a unique blend of consultancy and, something we love creativity, bringing top talent under one roof to tackle the most complex challenges businesses face today. With her dynamic leadership and innovative approach, Susan has been instrumental in driving BizLove's mission forward, and today she's going to share the journey of BizLove, its groundbreaking strategies, and the magic that happens when passion meets purpose. You're going to love it, Susan. I'm eager to talk with you today. Welcome to the podcast.

Susan Krejci: 1:49

Thank you so much. I'm happy to be here.

Lyn Wineman: 1:51

All right, Susan, here is a fun fact. This is Agency for Change episode number 212. Isn't that cool?

Susan Krejci: 1:55

Oh my gosh, I'm honestly thrilled to hear that 212 is such a cool number. I don't know if you know this, but at 212 degrees Fahrenheit is where water starts to boil, creating steam. Steam is what powers a whole lot of technical innovations that have changed our world.

Lyn Wineman: 2:05

Wow. How do you know that? You must have paid attention in middle school science class when I was looking at boys. That's all I'm going to say.

Susan Krejci: 2:14

I can't say. It was middle school science class. It was a motivational book that my high school field hockey team really really glommed on to and it's always stuck in my head as a powerful nugget of just one more degree makes all the difference.

Lyn Wineman: 2:27

Oh, wow, I love that. Way to start this off. I can tell this is going to be a great conversation, and so, Susan, after that amazing bit of information, I'd love to hear more about BizLove.

Susan Krejci: 2:43

Sure. So. BizLove is a strategic consultancy. We support organizations in seasons of significant growth, change or transformation. So, while we primarily work with large Fortune 100, 500, and global businesses, we do work with small organizations in the seasons that they are trying to undertake something really ambitious that creates significant change for not only their leaders and their employees, but also for the customers and the communities they serve. So think about when organizations go through mergers or acquisitions, decide to launch a new project or enter a new market, or do serious restructuring or transformation to make their business be able to achieve the goals that they hope to.

Lyn Wineman: 3:35

I love that. Susan, you dropped a quote on me just a minute ago. One thing that comes to mind for me as you say that is the saying the big ship turns slowly. I think the bigger the business and the more established, the harder it is to make those shifts. And in our world today it feels like things are shifting all the time and if you don't keep up with it that can be a big problem.

Susan Krejci: 4:03

Absolutely. The pace of change for us as individuals in society and, as a result, for businesses, is warp speed, and what customers need, what communities that organizations serve need, are changing as a result. So it's not just about what's the next thing to look for. It's about a balance of maintaining relevance and understanding how you, as an organization, need to evolve to continue to support the communities and customer bases that you serve.

Lyn Wineman: 4:37

Yeah, really cool stuff, right, Really cool stuff. So I want to hear a bit more about you. Susan, you've got the title of Chief Product Officer at BizLove. What inspired you to do this work and what inspired you to do it specifically at BizLove?

Susan Krejci: 4:57

Great question. A little bit about me as a person. I have always been interested in the intersection of business and people. I've loved personal development, growth and all of the things that make people within organizations tick.

I spent about nine years with the Allstate Corporation working on a variety of big, transformative, meaty projects to change their organization, and what I found was that in markets that are asking our organizations to achieve big things, be more purpose and impact driven, there's mega trends like we are trying to solve the sustainability crisis through corporations and governments. We are trying to understand the impacts of evolving technologies on our world and ethics. These are not activities that can be solved in silos. No single function can be responsible for changing overall outcomes and impacts that businesses have on our world and, as a result, I found very early in my career that, while functional experts are so important to businesses, we also need those bridge players that understand the intangible in-betweens of different departments and the roles they play in organizations. So over the course of my career, I've gravitated towards those places of cross-functional intersections.

I came to love a lot of digital transformation, corporate strategy, leadership and development and ultimately found my way to BizLove, an organization that brings a lot of those things all into focus, to support organizations not just with the tactical and strategic business strategies but also cares for the human experience and the intangibles associated with significant growth and change. So at BizLove, as our chief product officer, I care for both our client experience and our employees' experiences. We, as a consulting firm, the product we are offering we deliver to our clients is really our people and their partnership to our clients. So we as a small, growing consultancy, find that our ability to deliver solutions and really work with our clients to achieve their big goals, our ability to do it is based on how well supported our team members are. So in my role, I care for both.

Lyn Wineman: 7:37

I love that. I love that you describe your role as caring for not directing, not managing, not leading, but caring for. That is just absolutely golden. I love everything you just talked about. One of my passions in the past couple of years has been digging into how business impacts people's lives right, and so I think one statistic that I've seen is that most people will spend a hundred thousand hours over the course of their lifetime doing their work, and so if you're in an environment that you hate, that brings you stress. I mean, maybe hate is a very strong word, but if you're in an environment that you don't love, that's going to change your life in a big way. Likewise, there's a lot of research out there that I'm sure you have come across, and maybe even done, about how so many people derive their sense of purpose from their work and I love that you personally and that BizLove is focused on this work. The intersection of business and humanity. That's really cool. So talk to me about some of the key initiatives or strategies that you use to enhance growth for your clients while still caring for the humans.

Susan Krejci: 9:12

So the interesting thing about working with clients from a variety of industries, we're pretty industry agnostic, is that every situation a business faces holds its own nuances and considerations. No client is the same. No client, even year after year, is the same, because the market context is shifting, the employees and leaders inside the organization shifting and what customers are looking for continues to evolve. So one of the things we focus on at BizLove, in addition to the actual business strategies, is helping leaders help their teams make decisions and evolve how they think. So one of the things we think we try to help our clients understand, regardless of what the season is they are in, is that to

achieve their goals, the role of leaders really is to set the direction and then create the conditions to help their teams do the work to achieve the goals.

So, as leaders, their responsibility becomes so much less of knowing exactly how to get the work done and so much more understanding what amount of vision, direction, direction and clarity is needed, and then having the skill set to be able to identify what are the things that are points of friction for my team, what might be creating bottlenecks or slowing us down in some way? Where can I grease the skids? In a variety of ways. Sometimes it's resources, sometimes it is connection with people inside or outside your organization. Sometimes it's the ways of working. Are they conducive to actually producing or creating the work that needs to be done? Sometimes it's sense of security. Are we concerned about an external market threat? Do we have psychological safety? We at BizLove use a holistic design system called Luna for Transformation, which is really just a mental model to help organizations understand a lot of the intangibles and their connection to the tangible aspects and activities we do in business every day.

Lyn Wineman: 11:22

I love that. I have to ask because you've dropped some really great names on me today the name BizLove, the name Luna. Can you give me any background to where those names came from?

Susan Krejci: 11:34

Sure, I have to give credit to our founders of BizLove for where they came from, but I can tell you what their meaning is. So BizLove first. We believe that what hampers a lot of businesses and organizations today is leaders that feel like they have to operate from a place of risk mitigation, fear and hedging our bets. What we see is leaders who lead with a sense of direction towards what is the greatest for the greatest good that we can create are leaders that create organizations that are sustainable, that have employee populations that willingly give discretionary effort, that ultimately end up creating the greatest good for the greatest amount of people possible.

The idea of the name BizLove is business and love are not two things that you often speak of in the same sentence, and love is not just the traditional idea of intimacy or caring or romantic love. It's the idea of operating without fear in business and operating from a sense of how can we create the greatest impact or outcome for all those that we serve. So, on a more tangible level, BizLove our name really comes from the idea that every day, leaders have to manage tensions and hold dualities. The decisions they make every day are very rarely black and white and usually it's a conversation of and not or. So the name BizLove is our step to say we want to help leaders figure out a way to not just manage the business or care for people, but to do both.

Lyn Wineman: 13:19

Oh, my goodness, as an entrepreneur who loves branding and loves culture, I think you just gave me a shiver with that. Like that is one of the best brand stories I've ever heard and I interrupted. I got so excited about it. I interrupted you because you were telling me about Luna for Transformation. Let's go back to that.

Susan Krejci: 13:41

Yeah. So Luna for Transformation is a holistic business design system. It's inspired by some of the wisdom of Eastern philosophy, but what it really does is decode a lot of the seven major functions of business, the tangible activities that we do every day, and the elements required in organizations to facilitate continual growth and change. What we decode, though, is it's not just about the tangible activities we do. We've all been part of projects or working on initiatives where we've done all the activities, but somehow we it hasn't been a good experience, or somehow we haven't actually achieved the goal that we thought we were going to.

Lyn Wineman: 14:27

You checked the things off the list, but it didn't really complete or come to wholeness.

Susan Krejci: 14:35

Exactly, and sometimes that's best case scenario in that space. Sometimes what we find is we can't figure out what's not working about why we're not achieving that goal or growing or evolving as a team the way we hope to. And ultimately, what Luna for Transformation helps us do is map the tangible activities. Many of us are very familiar with things like providing or developing strategies, doing marketing and communications technology operations, et cetera. What's the real intangible intent or the intangible need that is intended to be provided for by that tangible activity? So we develop strategies because they're intended to create clarity for all of those that need to understand how they're supposed to contribute.

We provide resources to help our teams build momentum towards the goals we are trying to achieve. We look at technology and security in order to provide people stability and safety. So Luna for Transformation is as much a mental model as it is a methodology and a process. It helps us help leaders understand, as their organization is growing and changing, that the intangible needs of their teams and companies will evolve during the different seasons of growth and change and the more they're able to identify and understand what might be the intangible need that's not fully provided for, the more easily they're able to create the optimal conditions for their team to try to achieve their goals.

Lyn Wineman: 16:10

Wow, that sounds amazing. Because, honestly, for my own experience and talking to other business leaders and owners that I know, there's nothing more frustrating than knowing you need to make a change, kind of knowing what the change needs to be but not knowing how to get from here to there and then make it stick right. And so it seems like, with your expertise and knowing our listeners, it seems like it would be a mistake if I didn't ask you do you have just any high level advice for entrepreneurs or maybe nonprofit leaders who might be navigating growth and change in their own organizations?

Susan Krejci: 16:56

Absolutely. I think the first thing is sometimes putting words to whatever that block might be. Where are we feeling friction? What feels like a bottleneck? Why are we frustrated about this thing? That can be half the battle sometimes is recognizing that the unspoken or intangible experiences organizations have trying to accomplish their goals can be a frustrating one in itself.

The thing I would recommend to entrepreneurs or leaders of small organizations is to start with both. Why are we trying to accomplish what we're trying to accomplish and what is it truly that we're trying to accomplish? Not what are all the details or what are all the ideas, but if there's one focused outcome we're trying to achieve, what is it and why? It can be an extraordinarily unifying and aligning activity to really distill down to the basics of what it is you're trying to accomplish and why. The next thing is sometimes understanding do we have all of the skill sets needed to do this thing? If we feel like we're missing something, what is it? Sometimes it's a technical skill set, sometimes it's even a mindset or an energetic presentation, and those are some of the things we often look at first in small organizations to say are we clear and aligned about what we're trying to do and why, and then do we have the right people to try to pursue it.

Lyn Wineman: 18:32

Amazing. All right, so what I wrote down, Susan, I'm taking notes frantically here. Put words to the friction. I love that. It almost sounds like therapy when a therapist says where do you feel that frustration or your anxiety right. Put words to the friction. Start with your why. Figure out what it truly is you're trying to do, Kind of that big picture, not all the details, but the big picture. Let that unify and align the team and then ask yourself do we have the skill sets that we need? Does that sum up what you said? I want to make sure I remember it myself. Fantastic. Well, Susan, tell us then next with after all of this great advice thank you so much what's on the horizon for BizLove, Any exciting projects coming up for you and the team?

Susan Krejci: 19:24

Yes there is a lot on the horizon that we're really excited about. I always have to start with the work we're doing with our clients. We, over the past six months or so, we have had the opportunity to support our clients in some really cool, pivotal moments for their businesses. Taking companies public, you know, focusing on and planning for some big acquisitions, lots of questions about leadership and transitions, working with folks in moments that matter, leadership and executive conferences, team off sites, sales kickoffs those type of experiences that really solidify and chart a course for the near term afterwards. So all of that we are so excited about. In this moment we, as a growing business, are reckoning with the ideas of how do we continue to grow our team and find people that are excited about the work that we're doing. We also are always reckoning with what does day-to-day delivery look like, while also balancing some of the things on the horizon that we're really excited about. Luna for Transformation we currently use as a business design system with a lot of our clients and consulting projects. We have big plans and a lot up our sleeves exploring being able to bring Luna for Transformation to broader groups. So I can't give too much yet there.

Okay, but stay tuned on an individual basis for leaders and cohort basis for leaders, as well as bringing Luna as a design system more broadly to available to clients. So we have a lot of stuff we're excited about.

Lyn Wineman: 21:15

Cool, well, hey, this is probably a good time to ask you for those who want to stay tuned, learn more, find out what you're doing at BizLove. What is the best way to find information?

Susan Krejci: 21:29

I would say, first and foremost, our website, bizlove.com, b-i-z-l-o-v-e.

Lyn Wineman: 21:35

I love it, I love that you got that URL too. You got the real URL. That's amazing, bizlove.com. We'll have that in our show notes, Susan.

Susan Krejci: 21:44

You can also see us in terms of business updates. You can always see what we're up to on LinkedIn, and our Instagram is an inspiration factory for those that love business strategy, growth and transformation, so we always welcome a new follow if you're interested in the type of topics we love.

Lyn Wineman: 22:01

Fantastic, sounds great. All right, one more question about you, Susan. So as the chief product officer at BizLove, I'm curious, what challenges, as well as what rewards have you experienced in this role?

Susan Krejci: 22:18

Great question. I think one of the biggest challenges I've experienced as our Chief Product Officer is the tension between codifying methodologies. We as a professional services consultancy, we have years and years of expertise. There are many methodologies out there and the reality of business is that every situation and client is a little different. So while my product design and development brain loves to develop methodology. My practical strategic advisor self knows that it's a combination of expertise and methodologies plus critical thinking that really delivers solutions that are tailored to our clients' needs and helps them actually create sustainable solutions. So for me, I often manage that tension of more method isn't always delivering more value to our clients. So that's definitely a challenge I see. On a reward standpoint, I learn from our clients all day, every day.

I have the privilege to work with a lot of really smart leaders and teams, and we at BizLove are better for having worked with them. The work my team does, developing our products and service offering just oozes the hard work of our clients too, because it's where you, where the rubber really hits the road, that you learn what, what's worth sharing and codifying for the future.

Lyn Wineman: 23:56

Absolutely. I mean I've got to think and this might sound corny, Susan, but I've got to think too. It's gotta be hard to have that life work balance. Maybe you don't have an issue there, but when the work is fun, like that, you're really like diving in and you're like, oh, just like. I'm just going to come up with one more idea here tonight before I go out and do the thing. I mean it is fun to be at the intersection that you are at, or can be fun.

Susan Krejci: 24:27

Oh, it's so much fun. I feel very lucky to do work that that pushes me and uses my brain. Totally lights me on fire. I love the work that I get to do and the combination of serving clients and, as you said in the beginning, help slowly move those big ships while also get to build our own little speed boat is the privilege of a lifetime it's awesome.

Lyn Wineman: 24:55

I love that so much. No better way than to live out the mission of BizLove. So, Susan, I'm going to ask you my favorite question. Next I mentioned this is episode 212, which is the temperature at which water becomes steam, correct, okay, I'm locking it in so I remember. In every episode, we've asked our guests to give us their own inspirational quote to inspire and motivate our audience. Could you give us one?

Susan Krejci: 25:28

Yes, mine would be. Be curious and be reliable. I think that it is undervalued. Doing what you say you're going to do it is an incredible quality as a team member and as a professional, and that, more than anything, being curious, being a lifelong learner, is so important. When we don't understand, sometimes we're scared to ask, but coming from a place of curiosity and not judgment is so powerful. Every day, we all miss a lot in what's being said and not being said in the metaphorical conference rooms that we're in, and the power of asking good questions is something that I found to be to make all the difference when connecting with new people and trying to solve big problems.

Lyn Wineman: 26:20

That's amazing. Susan, I'm so glad I've had the chance to connect with you and ask you a few questions today and, as we wrap up this really fun conversation, I'd like to know what is the most important thing you would like people to remember about the work that you're doing.

Susan Krejci: 26:45

Oh, that is such a beautiful question. The thing I would love for people to remember is that the smartest business strategies in the world, the ambitious purpose-driven transformations and making impact and driving outcomes, the best business strategies fall down if we don't acknowledge the reality of the tensions that leaders face every day, the compromises or trade-off decisions that have to be made in service of a greater vision. And the more we start to understand what those trade-offs are, the more the skill and practice of leadership becomes real. So I think the thing I would hope people remember is that to ask themselves, once you've developed what the plan is, ask yourself what are the tensions we're going to feel trying to execute it.

Lyn Wineman: 27:41

Amazing, that is pure gold. I've taken so many notes this episode. I really appreciate you taking time to talk with us on Agency of Change and I fully believe, Susan, the world needs more people like you and more businesses like BizLove. Thank you so much for your time.

Susan Krejci: 28:02

Thank you for having me. This has been wonderful.

Announcer: 28:06

We hope you enjoyed today's Agency for Change podcast. To hear all our interviews with those who are making a positive change in our communities or to nominate a changemaker you'd love to hear from. Visit kidglov.com at K-I-D-G-L-O-V.com to get in touch, as always. If you like what you've heard today, be sure to rate, review, subscribe and share. Thanks for listening and we'll see you next time.