S02E03: Fostering a Sustainable Mindset

Davina Moore (00:02):

What are you doing as a company for sustainability? We're really being challenged on what we offer, what we do, and for future employees, how can they be involved?

Kyle Fox (00:28):

This is a Smarter World Podcast focusing on breakthrough technologies that make our connected world better, safer, and more secure. I'm your host, Kyle Fox. Each episode we introduce bright minds and their approach to a more sustainable world. We discuss the opportunities and challenges they face and how technology can change the world for the better. Now, today, we're discussing a different approach to sustainability. Sustainability is central to everyone's quality of life, we know that, and vital for a well-functioning society, and all of us can recognize the role technological innovation plays in sustainability. But sometimes the technology can outshine what's really behind it and what's really behind it are people. It's driven by people's inventiveness and in turn, fostering an innovative and diverse mentality in the workplace, our homes, and our schools is critical to its success. So today we're talking to my colleague, Davina Moore, Director of Digital Marketing at NXP, who will give us a glimpse of the ideas, efforts, team members, and partners behind those investments and people. Welcome to the show, Davina.

Davina Moore (01:33):

Thank you, Kyle.

Kyle Fox (01:34):

So, Davina, you've been with NXP for more than 20 years and currently lead the digital marketing team in addition to your sustainability efforts at the company. I'd like to explore that a little bit. What exactly does your role entail?

Davina Moore (01:45):

It's leading and engaging a team across multiple sites, for all of the digital piece. That's a lot of coordination. I have sub teams that are led by talented new managers for the digital space. So it's sales communications, it's social media, but in addition, as you mentioned, I have the responsibility for some of our key programs such as ESG. And really I think I can honestly say there are no two days the same. There's always lots of creative thinking going on about how to handle a topic or create engagement around things that are important to NXP.

Kyle Fox (02:19):

I mentioned at the top, sustainability is about people, and I think, as we said, you see that quite a bit given your role at the company. So we know that technology can have an impact on people, but how can we go about fostering that sustainability mindset? How are we driving that in-house? How are you doing that across that broad geography?

Davina Moore (02:35):

As you say, it really does start with mindset. We have a few things. If you think about NXP, we have what we call these employee resource groups and they're this amazing resource and contributor most times into building these inclusive environments that we're trying to build up and supporting community engagement, particularly for topics such as STEM or environmentalism. And then we have this series of global ERGs with local chapters around the world. So I think today we have more than 2,000 employees who are members in one or more ERG. And really these groups have taken a massive step over the past couple of years, I think, to be active in driving that change. If you consider it at a corporate level, of course, NXP has taken steps to clearly demonstrate our commitment to making progress on sustainability. Last year, Jennifer became Chief Sustainability Officer. We have corporate targets that we track and we have a clearly defined team that covers these topics maybe from manufacturing through to reporting and governance. And this is really taking all of these topics forward. But we do also work with partners. We work with external groups. One of the most interesting I've had the privilege to work with most recently is with Engineers Without Borders and so we engaged with them around the HoverGames and we invited participants to take place in a workshop with Engineers Without Borders about responsible design.

Kyle Fox (04:03):

What you're describing, the picture I have in my head, is almost these engines of people that are focused in very specific areas and connected by interest certainly. But it sounds like what it brings is if you have employees in different countries at different generational levels, age, that sort of thing, that they're able to contribute to that in both a focused way, but also broadly across, frankly, the planet.

Davina Moore (04:28):

Yeah, for sure.

Kyle Fox (04:29):

So let's touch a little bit more on that now, on that diversity topic. And what I'm specifically meaning is with diversity, people have in both their experiences and also their expectations of

how they want to work based on where they live and what generation they're from. For instance, you live in France, I'm here in Austin, Texas. I'm a male in my mid-fifties, but many of my coworkers are in their twenties and some are older than I am. And they certainly belong to a different generation who's grown up with different expectations of what technology can be, how they actually want to work, showing up at the office. As you've seen these operate over the years, what differences, if any, do you see when working with team members from other countries or regions? How are they contributing to all this and what are some of the challenges?

Davina Moore (05:10):

I think you're right. It's actually less of a regional difference, more maybe of a generational difference. If I take it to the regional level, I see for sure there's a really high level of engagement on the topic in greater China, for example. India, also. We have many site driven activities that they work on. They're very active in external outreach and looking to implement different projects that will help to reduce resource usage or contribute to carbon reductions. I do see also that a lot of our new college graduates who are particularly interested, who want to be involved, we see a lot of questions coming in. When you look at recruitment, one of the questions that we often get is about "what are you doing as a company for sustainability"? So we're really being challenged on what we offer, what we do, and for future employees, how can they be involved. One of the ways, and actually I heard about this project just this week during a meeting with the Innovation System team, and one of our colleagues who works out of Eindhoven is engaged with a conservation program for forest elephants in Central Africa. And what's really amazing about it is they look at this acoustic monitoring of forest elephants and they've added onto this AI capability to the sensors to detect the changes in the population size, in their patterns of landscape use, for example, but also to help combat poaching of course.

Kyle Fox (06:39):

So non-invasive acoustics, they're just listening to the sounds in the forest to track them?

Davina Moore (06:43):

Exactly. It's super fascinating the way that you have this crossover between a project that was brought up by students and it's now become a startup, and they're engaging with us to give us support in areas that they may not be so comfortable with that we can bring in more expertise.

Kyle Fox (06:59):

The picture you're painting is there's a definite generational difference in what expectations. If I think of when I was looking for a job, I was looking for the salary. Is it something I care about? What can I do with that company? What interests me? But what I heard you say is that the

generation coming up are going in saying, "What can your company and me working with you do for the planet for sustainability?" Because that's what you're seeing.

Davina Moore (07:22):

Yes, for sure. Definitely being challenged on that. And I see that across all of the societal issues really. And this is where we are being held accountable in many respects for how we design, how we think through the types of products that we are working on. But so there's so many different ways to approach this, but I think harnessing that enthusiasm, that interest is something that is super interesting for us to do and for us to learn from.

Kyle Fox (07:50):

You just described a systemic feedback loop. It's not something you can dictate down, "Thou shalt do this." It's the people are coming to you and it's affecting the corporate decision making process and what the corporation can do and what they should focus on. Can you give me another example of what has changed in response to some of that feedback?

Davina Moore (08:09):

I think it's more a question of being aware that these are things that are important to employee wellbeing and provisioning for that. You mentioned earlier some of the things that you looked for when you were looking for a job when you're fresh out of college, all those kinds of things. But now we also have these other concerns that are coming in where we're looking at work-life balance. We're looking about what are the other values that really resonates with employees. But it's not also only our employees, it's also with customers, it's also with partners, the people we want to associate with as a company and how do our values resonate with their value systems. It's becoming really an integral part of how we work.

Kyle Fox (08:53):

That makes sense. And you talk about work life balance, that certainly, again, when I started my career, work-life balance was 80 hours a week and we really didn't focus back then. And I think that was a huge mistake, certainly for my life, but also for my coworkers. Now, I think about work-life balance, a simple example is we're in the post-Covid timeframe where we all had to work from home for a significant amount of time, we come back. When I think about how a generational mindset might be about what it means to go to work, I was wondering if you could talk to me a little bit about that. Somebody from my generation might be described as someone who wants to go to the office, whereas I think the younger generation has grown up with technology and are much more comfortable about working remotely. And how that ties to sustainability perhaps is in a country where you're able to work from home more often, you're

not driving to work, you're not consuming fuel, there's not energy being done to keep the lights on. Can you talk to me a little bit more about how that may have changed at NXP?

Davina Moore (09:47):

Yeah, we've been back and forth a little bit on that in terms of the benefits of working from home. Of course, there is that sustainable element in not having to take your car every day. What I see particularly is more around alternative uses of transport, car ownership, for example, and more car sharing or use of bikes to get to work as much as possible. I think there's a real interest for more sustainable mobility overall, less the question of not wanting to be in that shared workspace. What I see at any rate with the team is definitely very much this desire to want to be with coworkers, to have that time to hear and experience from other people who they could get insight from in the office. So that is something I see more of them actually wanting to have a less fixed office in the sense that they would... And this is almost contradictory with the sustainable side that we were just talking about, but actually being able to travel around to other sites or do office swapping. So that is something we see more of that they want to be able to actually visit other sites and work from other sites, be more flexible at that level.

Kyle Fox (11:09):

I want to switch topics on this. I understand you're also very passionate about advocating for STEM and women in technology. And personally as a father of a daughter, this topic is very close to my heart and I assume it's the same for you.

Davina Moore (11:21):

Yes, I have two daughters. So today, for example, my daughters didn't have school because we have strikes in France and we've been doing experiments today at home, which is not always conducive to being reassured whilst I'm in a meeting and things are being worked on. But there's always an interest for trying things out. And so I try to encourage that as much as possible.

Kyle Fox (11:43):

That's wonderful because I think, and again, I'm using my own journey, my own experience, but I want to make the claim that we've made some good progress since I was very young many years ago in removing many of the stereotypes and perhaps inherent biases that define what women and men are expected, and I'm using air quotes, to do in their lives, certainly since I was young. But let's focus a little on the STEM fields. I was preparing for this, I came across what, for me, was startling research by Abby McCain, which I'm sure you're already familiar with and I'll read some stats for you. Number one was a full 74% of girls express a strong desire for a STEM

career. Number two, only 15% of engineering jobs are currently held by women. And in 1984, 35% of all tech roles of all types were held by women. By 2018, it had actually dropped to 32%. It went in the other direction. So what was startling about it is that pursuing STEM related fields was never about inherent interest between a man or a woman. The desire's clearly there, which is no surprise to me, but something's happening here. So what is your take on that data and how can we change this dynamic and make a difference here?

Davina Moore (12:55):

The experience that I've had is if you go into universities, the current split in terms of the teaching body compared to the students coming in, they don't find themselves well represented. So I think that's one thing. I think secondly, the courses that are being developed and delivered now are probably not the same as they were previously. And we see that certainly when we get students coming in for internships where there are maybe gaps in the knowledge that we're having to teach them things at work that we would expect them to have learned at university previously.

Kyle Fox (13:32):

So the level of education?

Davina Moore (13:33):

Yeah, there's a certain gap, let's put it that way. So really I think that it might be discouraging. It might be off-putting for some of these young women coming up. I think also if we cycle back earlier and we look into schools and how science is taught, I think there's more opportunity to make it more fun, whether that's for boys or for girls, to show them the possibilities of what they can do with science. We were talking earlier about the forest elephants. Those are the kinds of things that are very engaging for students, getting them involved where they can actually test things out for themselves with experiments, as we were saying. And you look at typical classes or the way science is taught, they don't have the possibilities to do experiments in the same way that maybe I know that we did, certainly in science when I was at school, they don't do experiments in class. Everything is just written down. It's just drawn on a piece of paper. It doesn't have the same impact.

Kyle Fox (14:32):

And what you're describing, it's the dry facts versus the passion and the process and how you can apply it. And if we're focused on the dry facts, you can learn math, you can learn how a circuit works and that sort of thing, but it has no life to it. It's just a fact.

Davina Moore (14:47):

Yes, exactly.

Kyle Fox (14:48):

That makes a lot of sense. Being able to have the parents be involved and doing experiments with your daughters there when they're off school, what really occurred to me was we're already seeing the data. You're seeing the new generation of employees coming in saying, "Wait, how does your company work in a sustainable manner with the things they're passionate about?" It would seem to be that if we can start at a very young age where they're able to not look at dry facts, but actually able to do an experiment and show how you can apply it, like using acoustics to find and track elephants. That makes complete sense. So tying all of that conversation back to sustainability, it sounds like it's quite simple. I'm not saying it's an easy problem solve, but really what we're describing here is the more diversity we invest in people, the more diversity, the more ideas, frankly, the more brains, the more thought can be applied to any given problem. It would help break open paradigms and foster new ideas because you can get isolated into one thought process, when you bring new people in and new interests and new ways of looking at things, you break that open and foster those new ideas, and that's the lifeblood of technology. Would you agree with that? Because that's really what we're hitting toward because we need that technology to help advance techniques for sustainability.

Davina Moore (16:06):

Yeah, for sure. I think this is really a chance for us to bring people together, to innovate together and to work out how can we play a role in addressing some of these issues. And there are a number of ways that we can bring people together like this. We talked about employee resource groups, we talked about some of these partnerships that we have. There are so many opportunities that we have that we can look at putting all of these bright minds together to help solve some of these issues.

Kyle Fox (16:35):

I ask my guests, what issues of today's world are you tackling? But this time I want to ask you, what issues of today's world should we as a company be tackling? What issues are often overlooked?

Davina Moore (16:46):

I think this comes back into the citizenship question. We see that we are not making very fast progress towards the UN's sustainable development goals as a society. We have these critical resource or carbons emissions risks that we're facing, and we as a company have the opportunity, the engineers with the diversity that we have to help change the mindset to help

train people, the communities that we're involved in, in picking up these new skills to be more socially responsible. And I think that's where we can make a difference.

Kyle Fox (17:32):

Davina, you are definitely on the cutting edge of all of this, and we appreciate the time with you today. I've learned a lot today. I'm going to end with our usual question. How do you envision a greener world in 50 years from now? What does it look like to you?

Davina Moore (17:50):

I probably see a little bit more of a crossover from my digital hat. I really see the metaverse as having a bigger role for us in the future, seeing how can we use the metaverse for better, smarter planning. We can use technology to live more efficiently, we know that. The metaverse is this perfect space for us to experiment, to try things out. So, we can create these digital twins of the things that we're working on and experiments in this virtual space and work out ways how we can reduce the impact of the way we live. So I think that a greener world is really going to be something where we are going to be using the digital space to be smarter in the real world.

Kyle Fox (18:36):

You've even said that you have people wanting to be more involved with each other at different sites. You'd mentioned that about employees wanting to travel to different sites with a desire to interact, to be able to experiment, try new ideas. Your point is layering that, we can solve that in a sustainable manner digitally, if we can really embrace a metaverse way of looking at digital twins allow you to participate without potentially actually moving from where your current location is.

Davina Moore (19:05):

Exactly. Amazing.

Kyle Fox (19:07):

It's amazing. I love your view of the world in 50 years. I can't wait to see it.

Davina Moore (19:11):

Thank you, Kyle.

Kyle Fox (19:12):

Davina, it has been an absolute pleasure having you on the program today. I know that I have, and I'm sure our listeners have, learned a lot and I wish you best and good luck in your continued efforts in NXP, and thank you for being on the program.

Davina Moore (19:25):

Thank you for inviting me.