



Rosemary Coates & Ryan Edwards

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Annalies Corbin: [00:00:13] Welcome to Learning Unboxed, a conversation about teaching, learning, and the future of work. This is Annalies Corbin, Chief Goddess of the PAST Foundation and your host. We hear frequently that the global education system is broken. In fact, we spend billions of dollars trying to fix something that's actually not broken at all, but rather irrelevant. It's obsolete. A hundred years ago, it functioned fine. So, let's talk about how we re-imagine, rethink, and redesign our educational system.

Annalies Corbin: [00:00:48] Welcome to the next episode of Learning Unboxed. This is Annalies Corbin. And as always, super, super excited to have a conversation today about teaching, learning, and the future work. And in particular, today, I'm excited because we get to talk about manufacturing. And the reason I'm excited about that conversation is because I find myself in the midst of conversations about manufacturing all the time. You can't talk to policymakers in any state where we go and manufacturing not come up. You can't talk with schools. You can't talk with colleges, universities, and trade schools without manufacturing coming up as a conversation that we really and truly need to have.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:27] And so, we're excited today to welcome two guests. Joining us is Rosemary Coates who is the Executive Director of the Reshoring Institute, which is a 501c3 nonprofit collaboration with nine universities across the US. And the Reshoring Institute's mission is to support companies starting, restarting, or expanding manufacturing in the United States. And a side note to Rosemary's introduction here, she is also quite the accomplished author. She's an amazon.com best-selling author of five global supply chain books. So, Rosemary knows what she's talking about. So, welcome.

Rosemary Coates: [00:02:04] Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to be with you today.

Annalies Corbin: [00:02:07] Perfect. And joining Rosemarie is Ryan Edwards. Ryan was a summer intern with Reshoring Institute and he is an MBA student at TCU University. And we're thrilled to have Ryan because he's going to talk about his experience, thinking about the future of work, working directly with some of the clients and some of the Reshoring Institute's projects and just a lot of that firsthand experience about what he learned and about what the future holds for him. So, Ryan, welcome.

Ryan Edwards: [00:02:32] Yeah, it's great to be here. Thanks for having me.

Annalies Corbin: [00:02:35] So, Rosemary, I would like to start with you. So, give us the big giant 100,000-foot view of what the heck is the Reshoring Institute? And what does this thing, manufacturing, have to do with the space of teaching, learning, and the future work?

Rosemary Coates: [00:02:51] Yeah. Well, thanks for that introduction. The Reassuring Institute really grew out of a long history, my history of working in global supply chains. So, for about 15 years, I was in the big consulting world as a partner and a couple of companies. I worked very hard at helping companies design their global supply chains and their global manufacturing strategies. And for about 15 years, helped a lot of companies offshore to China. I mean, we were moving operations like crazy to China because of the attractiveness of the marketplace and the low-cost operations that were available there.

Rosemary Coates: [00:03:31] Not only low cost labor, but overall, low-cost operations, including the plant, and facilities, and regulations, and so forth. It was just so much cheaper to be there. And so, that's what executives were focused on, is saving money, and really pinching pennies, and being competitive in the marketplace. And in America, consumers were demanding low-cost goods on this side of the ocean. And so, I got to be kind of an expert in Chinese manufacturing.

Rosemary Coates: [00:04:02] And that's when I wrote my first book about sourcing and manufacturing in China. And then, the presidential election between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, and during that election process, both Obama and Romney were China-bashing like crazy. I mean, they were just saying, China was at fault for everything, and it was just a terrible relationship, and so forth. So, I'm helping companies offshore to China, thinking, oh, man, I can't tell anybody what I do for a living.

Rosemary Coates: [00:04:41] This is awful. And it started to get to me also, I got to say. I mean, I could see that people were being laid off and that there was an abandonment of a lot of factories. And it was just a dark kind of situation. And so, when Obama and Romney started talking about China in a negative way, I started having these conversations with some of my clients, some executives, saying, let's consider whether or not you could manufacture in the US. Would it be possible?

Rosemary Coates: [00:05:16] And out of that grew a methodology, and then ultimately, the founding of the Reshoring Institute. Now, the institutes got two goals. So, first of all, we're a 501c3. So, we're a nonprofit organization. We don't look to profit from this trend or anything like that, we're just providing services. And half of our mission or one point of our mission is to assist companies with consulting work, with research, with any kind of assistance, with labeling, with finding locations, all of that in order to help them rebuild manufacturing in America or expand their manufacturing in America.

Rosemary Coates: [00:05:59] The other 50% of our mission is to teach graduate students primarily about manufacturing because these MBA students, these fantastic, smart, young people like Ryan are going to be the executives of the future. They're not running these companies, right? So, we felt it was important to teach them about manufacturing, particularly since there was really a dearth of education out there over the past 20 years, that most business schools have focused on finance, and marketing, and not on operations. And so, we develop the Reshoring Institute. We take graduate student interns for paid internships.

Rosemary Coates: [00:06:41] And then, we put them to work, doing research or writing case studies, or in Ryan's case, because he's also interested in consulting, we asked him to join a consulting project that we have as well. So, he's helping us on that. And so, the results have been quite successful actually. And we have a lot of research that we published on our website, as well as we have attracted a lot of attention nationwide. And now, with the global pandemic, of course, it's exposed a lot of risk in terms of lean manufacturing, and where our inventory is located, and how quickly can you respond to a need. And as a result of that, we were seeing a lot of activity in Reshoring.

Annalies Corbin: [00:07:26] And that doesn't surprise me at all. We're going to talk about some of those pieces, some of those trends that you're seeing in a moment. So, Ryan, I want to dig in a little bit with you because there's a lot of power in internships. And actually, at PAST Foundation, we talk about this all the time. We talk about the need for very applied, hands-on, tangible, rigorous internships that have meaning.

Annalies Corbin: [00:07:54] In other words, we believe that any student, whether you're a high school student through an MBA, a grad student, that you're capable of solving really complex problems if we give you something real to work on and we give you mentors to ensure that you sort of get what you need. So, Rosemary sort of set the stage for you, but we want to hear from you about, so as you come into this particular internship, what is the thing that you wanted more than anything else to be able to get out of this experience?

Ryan Edwards: [00:08:31] Yeah. So, for me, it was really about just kind of learning what supply chain looks like nowadays, is it's such an important component of businesses, and especially because, as Rosemary said, kind of the point now, timing in the pandemic, everyone is kind of moving back towards an US-based manufacturing. And there's been, I think, a trend for a while now kind of wanting to shore up the US economy. And a big part of that is going to be through manufacturing.

Ryan Edwards: [00:08:56] So, being able to learn and really show off my research capabilities, and then, fortunately, I was able to get to interact with clients, which is always nice, no matter what role you have in the future, you're always going to be interacting with some kind of client. So, getting that hands-on experience, and really, I was fortunate, in that they allow me to have a lot of autonomy to really kind of learn on my own. And it's not just work that is kind of menial in nature, but it's impactful, and I'm helping.

Ryan Edwards: [00:09:26] With their client right now, I'm doing a lot of the work, really pushing it. And so, the things I'm coming up with, the recommendations I'm making, the potential partnerships that I'm finding for them are all things that really help the company actually move forward. And so, it's something that I can really change it from a resume and talk about going forward as a real experience, where I actually made a difference. And so, like you said, that is huge for students to have those experiences early on.

Annalies Corbin: [00:09:54] It is. It's absolutely. And then, I can't tell you how many times I've encountered students. You can always tell the students. And again, no matter sort of where they fall into that spectrum, what I've seen, over many, many years of doing this, is I can pick out the students who did internships that were very applied, very hands-on, very meaningful from the ones that did either menial tasks or fluff because you come out of that experience with a very different sort of confidence in yourself. back to your point of being able to work autonomous, you have a sense of deadline, and scope, and scale, and it truly, truly does play out in a number of different ways. So, that's awesome. How long was the internship, Ryan, just for our listeners, for context?

Rosemary Coates: [00:10:41] Can I jump in here?

Annalies Corbin: [00:10:43] Yeah, please do, Rosemary.

Rosemary Coates: [00:10:43] I think this goes on and on with Brian, yeah. Normally, our internships are one semester, but in Ryan's case, because he's working on a consulting project for us, it's continuing on. I have a comment, too, because, now, Ryan is, I think, the 25th intern we've had or we've had 25 altogether. And we've learned also, over time, how to manage this internship process as well. And what we know is that, as a giver of an internship, you have to think about this, and design it well, and put together meaningful work in advance.

Rosemary Coates: [00:11:25] So, it's not like the internship shows up one day, and you'd think, well, I can put them here or there, or do this or that. They have to think about it, design it, plan for it, and maintain control. So, one of the things that we do is we have a weekly—I have a director that oversees the program. And once a week, she has a call with all the interns individually and talks to them about progress towards their goal, whether it's a research goal, or consulting, or whatever. And so, we have a very, very structured program also.

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:59] That's fabulous, yeah.

Rosemary Coates: [00:11:59] So, content and structure. And I think those two things are really important in internship programs.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:05] Yeah. No, absolutely. And Ryan, have you done other internships or is this the first one that you've done?

Ryan Edwards: [00:12:11] I've done a few others.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:12] Because I really appreciate very much Rosemary's comment about the structure and the quality control, both for you as the intern, and for the client. And for Reshoring Institute as an entity, an organization, it has to work for everybody involved or it's not going to work. So, what would you reflect on, I guess, back to Rosemary as it relates to the quality of that internship experience?

Ryan Edwards: [00:12:40] Yeah. So, I think just how hands-on and well-thought out, Rosemary and Daisy, who is the director that Rosemary mentioned before, have been is huge. There are a lot of internships where you report to a director or your direct report, but they don't necessarily take a super active role, and kind of like you're learning in your advancement because they have a lot of other stuff that they've got to do, also, and the internship may be kind of more or less the last thing on their minds.

Ryan Edwards: [00:13:05] But with Rosemary and Daisy, it's very apparent that your personal development, your professional development is important to them. And so, they take the time, like she said, to really be thought out and thorough about it, teach us skills are actually translatable, and give us a meaningful experience that will allow us to get that next role and to flourish in it from day one. So, that's like testament to their hard work and their thought, and it really makes all the difference for students.

Annalies Corbin: [00:13:34] Yeah. And I did put you on the spot there a bit, so I apologize, Ryan. But I thought it was really, really important. And I didn't think that you were going to say, oh, my God, don't make me talk about that. So, we're good.

Rosemary Coates: [00:13:45] We do some things, too, that I think are a little bit different. So, we have all of our interns have an online project management tool and they have to put their tasks in there, and they have timelines and so forth. So, that's one thing. We also have them prepare their own invoices for us, just like you would in the gig economy or a consulting role. They have to develop these skills that I think are transferable to other places.

Rosemary Coates: [00:14:13] We also have like writing guidelines and certain structures in terms of the research that helps, I think, guide that research a little bit. But we also do editing. So, we're not bashful. We get the pieces that are written by our interns, and then we do extensive editing, and go back and forth so that the end result of the research, which we publish, and the student is highlighted on the back page. You look at any of our case studies on our website, we have a huge website with all the research we publish.

Rosemary Coates: [00:14:52] But if you look at the Case Study Center website, you see they're very professionally done. They're nicely laid out with graphics. They're beautiful marketing pieces that the intern can then be proud of, take to interviews with them, and show them to their parents, and their friends, and so forth. So, it's kind of a nice reward as well as a discipline that's required in the big business world or the big consulting world.

Annalies Corbin: [00:15:22] Yeah. And it is really interesting because lots of companies struggle with how to structure and do internships. And it's a little different when you're talking about large companies that, oftentimes, will have staff that they could pull and dedicate. The smaller organizations or companies often, what I will hear from them is, oh, gosh, we couldn't possibly manage an intern. It's going to be too much work. And what I tell them all the time is, yes, it is work, but you, the company, are getting something very meaningful out of it as well. And so, trying to get folks to sort of step back and think about, what's the purpose of the internship? How is it going to be a win for everybody? And what would that structure look like?

Rosemary Coates: [00:16:06] Yeah. Yeah. Structure, but also, there's no substitute for detailed planning. And I think we know if a company says, we don't have time to manage an intern, I would say, go back, and take a couple hours, and plan out what that internship should look like. What are the tasks and so forth. Just like you would planning a project. And then, that way, you've created a guideline, a whole sort of plan for the intern, which is going to be much more successful than just sitting down in a meeting with an executive, and saying, oh, we're thinking about this, or can you look into this? Or I mean, you really need to add some structure upfront. And taking a little bit of investment time upfront pays off big in the end.

Annalies Corbin: [00:16:50] Yeah, absolutely. And Ryan, talk to us a little bit about, I mean, it sounds like it has been and is, since it's still ongoing, a wonderful experience for you. But all internships come with their challenges as well. And they're all unique, right? Because they're unique to the organization you're working. They're unique, in this case, the client that you're working with. So, share with our listeners just a little bit, especially because a lot of our listeners are folks in education, so a fair number of folks in K-12, but also, a fair number of folks in post-secondary, as well as some of our industry folks.

Annalies Corbin: [00:17:21] And what I hear repeatedly from the folks within the educational side of the internship, so sending their students off into organizations and companies, is they're trying to figure out how to ensure that not only is the experience that you have meaningful, but that you know how to problem-solve in the moment sort of appropriately. And so, in your case, because you're an MBA student, you're a wealth of age and experience that is calm as opposed to some of our younger interns. But it's not always smooth. So, when you sort of think about moving from one internship to the next, it sounds like you've had several, as you think about or evaluate internships, what are you thinking about? What are you asking yourself, Ryan, as the learner in that moment?

Ryan Edwards: [00:18:04] Yeah. I think when it comes to finding the industry that's right for you, you've got to think about, am I going to be challenged? Is it actually meaningful work? We also got to know that every single initiative you take, you're going to learn something from it. Even if it's not what you expected to learn, per se, there's always learning growth. And a very important thing is looking for autonomy. Like you don't want to micromanaged. You want to be able to have the leeway to make mistakes and kind of have to learn on your own. Because in the real world, when you get into your big job, like you're going to have to solve things on your own. You're not going to always be able to rely on someone for help.

Ryan Edwards: [00:18:41] So, you've got to at least attempt it first, try to figure out, how do I solve this problem? Where do I get this information from? And then, always ask for help when needed. But I think, too often, like in internships, we kind of get micromanaged, sometimes, as students. So, really finding a company,

in particular, kind of your direct report, who's going to give you that leeway, and that autonomy to solve problems on your own and to make mistakes, and they're not going to freak out because you made a mistake, but they understand that it's a learning process, and that you're better for it and they're better for it at the same time.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:18] Yeah. No, absolutely. That's great advice. Rosemary, I want to get into the weeds a little bit about the manufacturing side of what's going on. So, you've built this amazing internship program inside of, back to some of the pieces you talked about at the very beginning, this is socioeconomic and political, global political climate that can be really, really complex. And then, you add these interns in the midst of something, quite frankly, is not an easy set of conversations and solutions anyway, right?

Rosemary Coates: [00:19:47] Right.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:47] So, how do you help these folks really sort of, at the end of the day, if one of your goals is to ensure that the Ryans of the world, they leave you and they, one day, become these executives working in the manufacturing space, making these really tough, critical decisions, what's the conversation? Because I can imagine, to your point earlier, that the conversation around, we're going to bring manufacturing from overseas, wherever that happens to be, we're going to plant it back here in the US, but it's complex for a whole host of reasons. So, how do you help sort of show them or demonstrate what and how that conversation should go with these companies?

Rosemary Coates: [00:20:29] Yes. So, you're right, it is very complex, and not anything that you can sit down and teach in an hour. So, that's why the experiential learning is so important. And writing case studies, I think, is a great way to do that. And that's because when our students are writing a case study, we start out with big picture in terms of why the company did something. For example, the case study that Ryan worked on for, the company is called Waterlogic. And that case study is published on our website.

Rosemary Coates: [00:21:04] And so, Waterlogic as a UK company, UK-based company with lots of success in Europe. They make the water filtration equipment, like the faucet at the airport, where you fill up your water bottle, make that stuff. And they have a very advanced technology that purifies the water at the dispensing point, which makes the water much cleaner, much, much cleaner. So, they have breakthrough technology headquartered in Europe, manufacturing in China.

Rosemary Coates: [00:21:35] They have a big factory in Xingning, I think, in northern China. And they had a burgeoning market in the US. So, they were selling lots of equipment in the US and they had sales offices across the US, but decided they wanted to set up manufacturing here. And so, we worked with them for over a year to find a location. And Dallas is where they set up. And they hired 200 people and have the factory set up. So, for Ryan, we asked him to write this case study. So, starting off with the big picture, what is the issue or the situation? And how did they go about solving it? And what were the results?

Rosemary Coates: [00:22:16] And so, in this way, you offer context in a learning environment. So, it's experiential learning because Ryan was able to talk to the executives there, he interviewed them, as well as understanding their strategy, their business strategy, and then also, the execution of the plan. So, all those components. Now, be nice if we could do 20 of these, and you would learn a lot, but in general, an internship is limited. So, we do the best we can in giving that kind of overview and process. Plus, we talk to our interns a lot. So, we try to pass on our understanding of the world and offer as much learning as possible. There's lots and lots of stuff to read on our website about global manufacturing environment.

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:07] So, Ryan, that first experience in writing one of these big case studies, obviously, you had lots of examples because they've been doing it at their Reshoring Institute for a period of time, so share with us just a little bit because I would imagine that there's a little bit of intimidation in suddenly saying, you're going to write a case study, and you're going to go out, and you're going to interview these executives, and you're going to come back and tell us what you learn. What was that experience like?

Ryan Edwards: [00:23:34] Yes. So, I mean, especially a lot of business students, people who want to get into business, case studies are a huge way that it's taught in schools. You've read a bunch of them. You always kind of think, maybe that'll be interesting or how would I even go about finding all this information? And what makes for a good story? What doesn't? So, there was a little bit of apprehension, like you said, like, oh, I have to go talk to the CEO and kind of get their story out of them?

Ryan Edwards: [00:24:01] Like I'm an intern, but once you have that, and most of these people are super helpful, that's the thing about being a student, is everyone wants to help you. So, they understand just how critical they can be. And so, they're very forthcoming, and helpful, and encouraging. So, I was great to get to know more about them. And they were a very interesting company. So, it was really cool kind of getting to learn their stories. And once you kind of interviewed people, and see how passionate they are, and learn their story, the writing part comes much more easy. The story kind of just flows off the page for you, in a way.

Annalies Corbin: [00:24:41] Yeah, absolutely. What next for you, Ryan? What's the aspiration?

Ryan Edwards: [00:24:45] Yeah. So, I'm kind of like Rosemary, hopefully, getting into consulting. And so, this has been quite the experience in that realm, in getting to working with those clients and having that hands-on role. So, I'll be looking for consulting roles, and we'll see what happens from there.

Annalies Corbin: [00:25:00] Okay. Well, good luck to you on that. Absolutely. So, Rosemary, what's next in sort of the strategic, big picture thinking for the Reshoring Institute? I really kind of want to close our conversation with, what's that next thing that you guys are going to be working on? And then, how would you tie that back into your ongoing work with your interns?

Rosemary Coates: [00:25:26] I've developed this passion over the past few months being locked up at home in Silicon Valley in favor of American industrial policy. So, that may seem dry and boring, but let me explain.

Annalies Corbin: [00:25:40] Please do.

Rosemary Coates: [00:25:42] Yeah. So, first of all, America has no industrial policy. We have always believed in an open-market economy, where supply and demand drives the development of products and the sales of products. However, when the pandemic hit, it was pretty obvious that we have a problem, right? We don't make PPE here or didn't make PPE here. We weren't making respirators. We don't control the pharmaceutical market. We don't have a policy regarding AI or 5G, right?

Rosemary Coates: [00:26:20] So, industrial policy is the development and sort of tapping strategic industries to support the well-being of Americans. And while it's been a policy for a long time because we really believe in a free-market economy, the pandemic has showed us that we are vulnerable in some areas. And we really need to rethink that. I mean, aren't there some industries that we definitely want here? For example, building-block pharmaceuticals for antibiotics. All of that is in China right now, right?

Rosemary Coates: [00:27:00] And so, it should be fairly obvious that we want to bring some production back here, I mean, just to protect American citizens. Another area is rare earth minerals which are found

everywhere, but China controls about 95% of the market. And if we're with an adverse relationship with China, they could decide to shut down the rare earths. Rare earths are in all electronics. They're in magnets. They're in just all kinds of products. We would be dead in the water.

Rosemary Coates: [00:27:36] A lot of defense products are dependent on rare earths. So, there are things like that that I think it is time to have a serious discussion about industrial policy beyond just farm aid. So, today's environment, we do provide some government support, farm aid, and some subsidies there, but we really need to think about some other strategic industries. Medical products, pharmaceuticals, for example, some of the high-tech things, rare earths, some other areas, too, that I think are very important.

Rosemary Coates: [00:28:11] So, that's kind of the direction we're going forward for the next few months, I think. I'm really pushing for that, that we think about it and try to determine a way forward. Almost every other country in the world has an industrial policy. China has Made in China 2025. Japan has industrial policy ever since World War II. Germany has a very heavy industrial policy. France has aerospace. Mexico has development policy. Time for us to have one, too.

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:44] Time to get on board in the US here. Yeah.

Rosemary Coates: [00:28:47] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:47] I want to thank both of you very much for your time. Ryan, we expect amazing things from you in the future, and I actually have no doubt you're going to do them. So, that would be a wonderful thing to see over time. And to both of you, thank you so much for spending time with us today, but also, thank you for what you do. I think that the work that you're collectively doing at the Reshoring Institute, in particular, spearheading, is going to be really, really meaningful for many folks, so I appreciate that very much.

Rosemary Coates: [00:29:16] Thank you for having us.

Ryan Edwards: [00:29:18] Yeah. Thank you so much.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:42] Thank you for joining us for Learning Unboxed, conversation about teaching, learning, and the future of work. I want to thank my guests and encourage you all to be part of the conversation. Meet me on social media @AnnaliesCorbin and join me next time as we stand up, step back, and lean in to re-imagine education.