



Guest

Sally Helgesen, cited in Forbes as the world's premier expert on women's leadership, is an internationally best-selling author, speaker and leadership coach.

Sally's most recent book, *How Women Rise*, co-authored with Marshall Goldsmith, examines the behaviours most likely to get in the way of successful women. It became the top-seller in its field within a week of publication and rights have been sold in 15 languages.

Previous books include *The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership*, hailed as the classic in its field and continuously in print since 1990, and *The Female Vision: Women's Real Power at Work*, which explores how women's strategic insights can strengthen their careers. *The Web of Inclusion: A New Architecture for Building Great Organizations* was cited in *The Wall Street Journal* as one of the best books on leadership of all time and is credited with bringing the language of inclusion into business.

In addition to delivering leadership workshops and keynotes for companies around the world, Sally has consulted with the United Nations on building more inclusive country offices in Africa and Asia, led programs at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Smith College and been visiting scholar at Northwestern University, U-Nordic Stockholm, and the Lauriston Institute Melbourne AU. She is a contributing editor for *Strategy + Business* magazine and a member of the MG 100 Coaching Network and the New York and International Women's Forums.

Context to the conversation

Welcome to the 74th conversation at the Play to Potential Podcast. I am your host Deepak Jayaraman. This podcast is my labour of love for the long term to have conversations with leading practitioners, thinkers, authors, artists, sportsmen and other leading professionals to decode insights around leadership, transitions and careers.

When I am not podcasting, I am working with leaders as a Trusted Sounding Board helping leaders and organizations play to their fullest potential. To know more about what is in the podcast archives and the advisory work I do, you could just visit www.playtopotential.com

My guest this time is Sally Helgesen. Sally cited in Forbes as the world's premier expert on women's leadership, is an internationally best-selling author, speaker and leadership coach. Sally's most recent book, *How Women Rise*, co-authored with executive coach Marshall Goldsmith, examines the behaviours most likely to get in the way of successful women. It became the top-seller in its field within a week of publication and rights have been sold in 15 languages. Her previous books include *The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership*, and *The Female Vision: Women's Real Power at Work*, which explores how women's strategic insights can strengthen their careers. Her book *The Web of Inclusion: A New Architecture for Building Great Organizations* was cited in *The*

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Without further ado, let us dive into the conversation with Sally Helgesen.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Sally, thank you so much for making the time and coming on the Play to Potential Podcast, really excited to have you.

Sally Helgesen (JG): My pleasure Deepak, good to be with you.

DJ: Sally, in this podcast, we have conversations around three themes, Leadership, Transitions and Careers. Maybe, before we dive into your book and your insights around women leadership, would love to know how you got into this topic, Sally. You have been researching women leadership for a while, could you talk to us a little bit about how you got here?

SH: Yes, I have been in this field, now this is 31 years and it really started in the 1980s. I was working in corporate communications with some really excellent companies, mostly in New York but also in Texas. And what I noticed in the companies I have worked with is they did not have any clue as to how to think about women's leadership potential. They had a lot of women who had a lot to give but it was much more, you know, they were not thinking about any kind of leadership or strategic potential. So I decided that one way of addressing this would be to try to write a book about what women who were really, really successful as leaders had to contribute. And I began interviewing women and it came together as a book called The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership, which was published in 1990 and I am proud to say it is still in print, which is unusual. But because I think The Female Advantage was the first book that looked at what women had to contribute rather than how they needed to change and adapt, companies began calling me right off the bat, asking me to come in, talk to their women, give advice, work with their women. So I just found that extraordinarily rewarding. So I decided to go out on my own and see if I could make it work and the last 31 years have suggested that it has.

DJ: Wow, I am sure, I mean this appeals to at least 50 percent of the population, so I am sure there is a big need out there to solve this situation. And before we get into some of the insights you discuss in your book, Sally, I would love to set context a little bit around your research and how we should think about some of the findings from your research and maybe to get statistical for a couple of seconds. You know, I was curious about couple of situations, right, and some women who may not necessarily fall in the framework that you lay out in terms of the archetypes that you suggest and some men who might identify with some other themes you suggest. So could you talk a little bit about how we should think about some of your insights and how it applies to men and women?

SH: Certainly and you are right on both points. Although, I will say that the book has been out a little more than three years and I have done thousands and thousands of programs all over the world and I have only once had a woman come up to me and say, I did not identify with any of the habits or behaviors in the book. But that has only happened once. But often, there are women who identify with just a few of them and usually, we are all human beings. So we are all different, we are all kind of on a curve and our experience shapes us as well. So what I find is that as women become more senior, they will have had to address the habits and behaviors most likely to hold them back from

moving to the next level, which is really what this book is about. They will have had to address a lot of those in order to be where they are, so they will no longer really identify with those. There are two exceptions, but we can talk about those later. So I think it is just, we are human beings and we have a range of the habits that hold us back. But I will say and this was one of the biggest surprises to me as soon as the book came out, I started hearing from men who said I really identify with habit 7, 9, 2, and 3, whatever. So that to some extent surprised me. And as you may know how women rise, this idea of habits and behaviors most likely to hold you back, really came from the inside of my co-author on this book, Marshall Goldsmith who had written a wonderful book called What Got You Here Won't Get You There. And in that book, he looks at habits and behaviors most likely to hold successful people back. And when I read the book, I thought this is wonderful, this is terrific, but the primary things that I see being a problem for women are not in here. So that is why I suggested to Marshall we collaborate on this book. But what has surprised me is how many men do identify with a number of these habits, some as many as six or seven of them. And I think there again, it is often experience. You know, if you are in a sector where you are not expected to do much self-promotion, then, men would not necessarily develop or emphasize that skill in the same way that women will. So what I have come to really think of this book, even though I know it has special application for women, is a book that looks at the habits and behaviors that Marshall left out of What Got You Here Won't Get You There. So it sort of completes that.

DJ: Hmm. And let us dive into the specifics of the book, Sally. Very early on, you talk about how women often respond differently to 360 than men and one of the things I did while preparing for this conversation, Sally, was, I said, let me not get biased by the way I see the situation or the way I have digested the book. So I asked a few women leaders who are friends to opine on the questions I should ask you. And actually, I want to read out one of the questions I got from one of them. And she says, on 360, while women respond differently, do they also get judged differently. She says, I have seen instances where similar outcomes and character traits get called out differently versus men. For example, a demanding no-nonsense man boss is direct while a similar situation with a woman can get her labeled as insensitive, aggressive or even "bitchy." And if indeed there is a different baseline, how do women comprehend and act on 360 in the light of that. So I would love to hear from you on how women should think about the 360.

SH: Well, I think that the woman you interviewed makes a point that I have observed and witnessed for 30 years and that serious researchers, including McKinsey in their Women Matter series that they began, brilliant research in 2008 and Catalyst and other researchers have noticed that the same characteristics in men get described differently from women often. I do think it is changing, I have watched that change, but it is still nowhere near where the assessment is, it is similar. There are two things going on. On one hand, I think it is harder for women to get accuracy in their 360s because of some of the judgment that comes in on exactly what you said on being direct. You know, oh, she is too direct, what do you mean she is too direct, oh, I do not know, she is aggressive, she is brusque, she is this that or the other, whereas direct will be valued in a man. So I think there is some judgment there. But there is something else going on that I have witnessed. And this you would not find so much in the research, but I have seen it so many times and that is 360s, women can tend to take them more to heart and to use them as an occasion to feel bad about themselves when they get any kind of negative evaluation and to question themselves in a very thorough and not always terribly constructive ways. Whereas one of the things I have watched, and Marshall would bet me up on this because we have had many conversations about it, is it often especially with very successful man when they get evaluations that they do not agree with or do not like, they think that person got it wrong or they get angry about it or they say, you know, it is lousy test or, you know, it was bad questions, whatever. So that is the other thing that I think that there is on one hand, differences

often that are getting less pronounced but slowly in how evaluations are done, but there is also a difference in how much men and women often take the results to heart.

DJ: Hmm. And back to the earlier point you made, Sally, about some of these biases in the way the behaviors are noticed in men and women, any messages for the men out there in terms of ensuring objectivity, while delivering feedback to a woman specifically?

SH: I think it is very helpful for men to be aware of this and to be able to catch themselves and really ask themselves hard questions when they hear themselves say things like, I think she is a little too aggressive, I think she is a little bit too direct, and try to figure out what that would look like in a way that they would think was positive because usually, it is either you are too direct or I cannot figure out what they are actually saying she is so indirect, and they are not leaving much of a space between. So I think it is very helpful and I think this is one area we have made so much progress I have to say. As someone who has been in these 30 years, it has really changed. And I think men are much more, in my observation, open to saying, I am wondering if that might be an unconscious bias that I am bringing into play here when I have that objection and to stop and sort of question themselves with that quick evaluation, I see much more of that happening.

DJ: Hmm. And you also talk about women thinking about ambitions slightly different from men and you say that there are different dimensions to it; could you elaborate on the nuance here, Sally?

SH: Yeah, I think that women often struggle with defining themselves as ambitious. And part of that is because they have seen women who are perceived of as being ambitious. They have seen them get so negatively typed for. And you can go back; I mean you can see someone running for president, oh, she is so ambitious. Yeah, she is running for president, what do you think? People who are going to be running for president are going to be pretty ambitious. Women who are in very high positions are often criticized while they are so ambitious, you know, they must not have any personal life or any home life or, you know, just being very difficult to be around. So I think that women often get kind of scared off from being seen as ambitious. And in the book, one of the things that I quote this psychiatrist on the Upper East Side of New York City work with women who are mostly either very senior women in investment banking or very senior women in law firms and she said that about 80 percent of the clients who come to see her in the first session say, I want you to know I am not ambitious. Well, you do not get to be partner in a New York City top 10 law firm if you are not ambitious; it does not just fall into your lap. So it is that discomfort with being perceived of as ambitious or the language around ambition. And I think that that has inhibited women often from making the commitment to develop to their full potential.

DJ: Hmm. And you also talk about the different dimensions around which they are ambitious in terms of some of the other domains of life and other interests; could you expand on that, just for women to take note of what else could be called ambitious?

SH: Yes, certainly. Again, that is changing a little bit. Women have always looked at ambition at work as being balanced or calibrated with being, to some degree, ambitious for the quality of their family life, ambitious for the relationships within their family, ambitious for the ability to be a good family member, a good team player in a neighborhood association, recognized as a good neighbor, a good contributor, good in a non-profit role that they may take. So I think that women have often had a rather balanced way of viewing ambition as something you strive to have, you are ambitious to have a well-balanced life. And I think there was not that much room for men to do this in the past, but I certainly see that as beginning to change, whereas men are more likely to also articulate their own ambition in terms of the capacity, the launching they provide for their daughters and the kinds of relationships that they have at home. So I think that is really changing slowly again but in that way.

DJ: Hmm. And one of the other leaders, women leaders when they looked at this question or looked at this insight from you, they said, given that women often think about ambition in a little more of a holistic manner beyond just work, there is a reasonable chance that they end up finding the true north probably more often than men, do you see the two connected and empirically or anecdotally, do you have a view on women finding their true north in life more frequently than men?

SH: I think that women have more awareness of wanting to find their true north because men will often feel that they do not have much of a choice that they have just got to get the best job they can and go for it, make it a success and they do not have the options. And women will be more likely to think, they will want to ask themselves, am I really enjoying the quality of my days, do I feel that I am making the best contribution with my talents, am I making the world a better place through what I am doing. I find women very avid to ask these questions even at a midpoint in their career, whereas I think in the past, that has been tough for men unless they are in a position of great privilege to feel that they even have the option to ask that question because they just have to buckle down and do whatever they do and sort of, you know, as Marshall would say, they have to suck it up rather than using as an opportunity to really think about how is this serving me, how is this serving the world, how is this aligning with my purpose. So I think we are now at a time in the workplace where there is a lot of language around that, around purpose, around meaning, etc., and I know that it is often considered to be something millennials brought into the workplace. But I have been for the last 30 years, my observation is that women kind of got there first, there were more women thinking in those terms. Women sort of pioneered that idea that, you know, really we need to look at work in a larger context, holistically as you say, about meaning and purpose in life; it is an element of that. And I think that that sort of opened up permission for people to look at that. And now it is something that men and women are both much more comfortable with.

DJ: Hmm. And if I may persist with that, Sally, what do you think is driving the change among the men? Millennials definitely probably are one factor, any other factors you think that are driving this slow change in men overtime?

SH: Yes, a couple of things. One I think is that again, having watched this up close for so long, how we define excellence in leadership in organizations has really shifted over the last 30-35 years. In the 1980s for example, which was really the last period when women had virtually nothing to do with leadership, the idea of a leader was execution, performance, somebody has got to be top, you have got to make your numbers, drive everybody else to make numbers and we had some of these, and remember, Fortune Magazine used to have an annual issue called America's Toughest Leader and it was a profile of a man who seemed like he was the most difficult person on the planet to work for. And sort of underlying theme was always you have got to be tough. Of course, I do want to say that one thing I got to watch was how most of those men actually ended up driving their companies if not into the ground into very serious, serious problems later on. But it was, you know, just sort of how we thought of leadership in a corporate setting and that has changed. And I think part of it has been the participation of women, but big part of it has been the change in the nature of technology to be much more interactive and networked and weblike and naturally to some extent, inclusive. So I think the technology has shaped what we expect from leaders and also the nature of the economy, the switch to more of a knowledge economy where knowledge is distributed more broadly. So the top dog leader cannot be expected ever to know everything because there is so much knowledge distributed through companies. So through the 1990s and early 2000s, we really began to get a different way of looking at what constituted excellence in leadership. And Peter Drucker wrote about it, you know, someone like Tom Peters certainly wrote about it. And I think that that kind of beautifully, there was a confluence between what women were bringing and that larger change that has served women well, has served organizations well and has helped bring forth more and more

men who are thoughtful, reflective, self-aware and humble leaders than would have ever been possible 30 or 40 years ago.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here. I am reminded of my conversation with Prof Stew Friedman (SF) of Wharton who speaks about 4 domains of life that we all should think about – Work, Home, Community and Self not necessarily in that order. Out of these 4, I find that Work and Home are well understood. So, I asked Stew when he came to the podcast what he meant by the other two – Community and Self. Here is what he said.

SF: *“So the community piece just to answer your question about what is that and how it is relevant? People struggle with that I often get questions about what is community and why does that matter? Community captures everything you and your work in your family. So that includes your networking friends and neighbours that people place where you live but it could also include people that you are engaged in with in some kind of political group or religious group. That usually has some meaning for it may not be the most important thing but some people it is and the self of course this is who are you as an individual in your own private sphere, the things that matter to your physical health, your mental health and emotional growth and your spiritual life which is important to some people and not for others but these aspects of our existence are for most people pretty important. So these four buckets if you will seem to capture most of our experience and it’s also simple there is not 12 categories there is just four and last point about this I ask people to define these domains of their lives in ways that make sense to them so there is no rigid definition that I impose but rather it’s a device to help you to think about the differentiated parts of their life. That helps you to make sense of how to bring them together in order to make sense of the whole you have to see what the parts are and so people make their decisions, choices about well what does home mean to me how do I define family and the way you define might be different the way I define and etc. so it’s useful in that way that everything about this approach is subjectively defined by the learner or the user.”*

DJ: Back to what Sally says, very often we think about ambition only in the context of work. But it’s worth having a holistic view of the various domains of life and has a calibrated ambition that can serve us in the long game of life! Let’s get back to the conversation with Sally Helgesen.

DJ: And moving on, Sally, you talk about women struggling with accepting credit when somebody compliments them on a good performance. And I specifically love the insight you share from Marshall where he says, just say thank you and put a full stop and say nothing more. And I found that so simple, yet so hard. And you go on to say that the cost of claiming recognition rises significantly as you move through the ranks. And once again when I shared this question with a few women leaders, one of them came back and said, how much of this accepting credit challenge is housed in a wider prevalence of the impostor syndrome among women and how does one go after the root cause. So could you talk a little bit about this notion of accepting credit and how that shows up with women?

SH: Yes and I do think that the woman you spoke with was really very correct in locating some of this in the imposter syndrome, that when you have some reservations about how much you fit in or how much you belong, then when you receive a compliment about how you did something very, you know, really made a real contribution that you are more likely to say, oh no, it was not me or no, well, my team is great, I was just doing my job or something like that rather than as Marshall said, just a simple thank you, thank you, I appreciate that. So I think that the imposter syndrome does

certainly play a role, other things play a role as well. I think that that women are often raised to be modest and humble and those are good qualities. So I am not saying they are not, they are very, very good qualities. But when they manifest as a kind of false modesty and in an ability to accept a well met compliment, they do not do anybody a favor. Why contradict someone who says something nice to you, it does not really seem like a terrific idea? So I think that that is often at play as well.

DJ: And could you bring that to life, Sally, this point around, just thank you and nothing more? You have shared a couple of examples in the book where there is a temptation to sort of maybe downplay the accomplishment or to sort of deflect. Could you maybe bring it to life with a couple of examples for the listeners to relate to?

SH: Oh, certainly, I mean where I see it most often is where somebody will say, oh, you really did a great job on that, well, it was my team. Okay, you know what, yes, it was your team and then you will talk to the woman and say, why did you say that? Just say, well, it was the team, you know, we work as a team, yes, but it is not an either/or. It is not an either/or. You always can say, thank you and excellent team, this is what I contributed. That is a very important thing to be able to say because every one of us needs to get visibility for our achievements. In my experience, great careers are built on three legs: visibility, connections and expertise. And we always need to keep those balanced. So we want to create a situation where we are comfortable claiming and accepting visibility for what we have contributed in recognizing that that does not necessarily take it away from other people, but it is something we can share but we want to be clear about what our role is or we will get lost in the shuffle.

DJ: Hmm. And moving forward, Sally, in the book, you refer to Anna Fels and her book *Necessary Dreams*. You say that feeling fulfilled at work requires two things according to her, recognition and mastery. And when women do not get enough of the former, which is recognition, they dig deeper into mastery and that can come in the way of assuming a wider span of responsibility. Could you expand on this nuance here again?

SH: Oh, yes, that is such a brilliant insight from Anna Fels in that great book *Necessary Dreams*, which has extraordinary research and that is what she talks about that a real contribution at work is always a combination. You need to be recognized but you need to also feel that you are mastering skills. And the framework I put this in has to do with what I just said about a great career being built on three legs: visibility, connections and expertise. Recognition depends on visibility. So if you do not have the capacity to create visibility for what you are contributing, it is going to be very difficult for people to recognize what you do. So what women will often do as a default is they will overvalue expertise or mastery, say, okay, you know, it is part of that habit number two, which is most popular one in the book, I have to say, expecting others to spontaneously notice and value your contributions. You are reluctant to bring attention to them, so you hope other people notice. They often do not notice because they are busy with something else. Then you start to feel bad because you have put in so much effort and have not been recognized. So you try to solve that problem by working harder and harder and harder, which kind of digs you in further because what you really need to be addressing is a visibility factor, not the expertise factor in other language. What you need to be addressing is the recognition, your ability to get recognized for what you do as opposed to just constantly pursuing mastery.

DJ: Hmm. And in the notion of self-promotion, you also talk a little bit about getting the tone right, the healthy self-promotion, not to go over the top, at the same time, not staying silent. Any wisdom there on getting that balances right?

SH: Yeah, first of all, it is accepting it is not an either/or, it is not either you are the obnoxious person taking up all the air in the room and constantly talking about how great you are, or you just hang back and expect and hope other people notice what your contributions are, there is always a middle ground. But in finding it, there are many different ways to do that. The example I just gave, thank you, our team did a great job, this is what I contributed. There are many different ways to do that but the most important and I always say this to the clients and the women that I work with, is a successful way of doing that is always needs to come from you. So start practicing, do not try to figure out in advance, okay, you have got to find the exact perfect way of doing this. So on one hand, I do not seem as if I am overly self-promoting but on the other hand, I make sure people know what I did. Instead of trying to find the perfect way in advance, just start doing it. You will make mistakes. Sometimes you will be a little over the top. Sometimes, you will sit back a bit. But you will know you will learn by doing it. It is very hard to just do it all in your head and then turn on a dime and suddenly become very skillful with it. And if you are not sure, ask other people. So, you know, we are going in this meeting, I really am very eager to present to let people know about the success that I had with this, you know, whatever it was, the initiative, whatever I did, I really feel like I need to make people aware. It will be helpful to them in doing their job to know what I have contributed. But I am a little bit, you know, I am not used to doing this, would you just watch me and let me know, do you think that the way that I presented this worked, that it was appropriate, that it landed right, that I found the right tone. So ask other people because you cannot always judge for yourself. So again not going through trying to find the perfect way in advance in your head and then try it out but start trying and start asking.

DJ: Hmm. And back to the three pillars of a good career you spoke about, Sally, one of them being connections. And in the book, you talk about the distinction between building great relationships and leveraging relationships. And you say that women often build great relationships but sometimes do not do enough to leverage them. What is your advice again for women to do this without coming across as transactional?

SH: Yeah, I think that it is very important not to do this in a transactional way. It is really important to leverage people in your career and to be a point of leverage for other people. It creates that give-and-take around which successful careers are built. And it is a key part of organizations really being able to do things too. It is people leveraging one another's skills, resources, connections and ideas. So that needs to be something that you are committed to doing. There are a couple of things that are interesting, one is that because I have started doing some research on what are the most effective ways to engage and leverage other people to help you and to be a resource for them. What is the least effective is a real quid pro quo approach, which was surprising to me. So what is least effective is saying, hey, I am going to help you, I really need help with them getting some connections in this field and if you help me, then I will be glad to get you connections in this field or make a recommendation to you. So when you try to frame it as a quid pro quo as, well, you do this for me, I will do that for you, it takes away some of the joy that the other person can have in actually helping you. And research demonstrates that the number one reason people help other people is because it makes them feel better about themselves. So when you frame it as a quid pro quo, you take away that ability for the other person who is helping you to feel better about them. The other thing is, when you want to engage somebody to help you with something, say it is some connections you need, or say it is access to resources, or whatever it is, you want to be as specific as you can about the request. Sometimes, if we are not experienced at doing it or we feel uncomfortable, we kind of fudge it and say, hey, I am kind of wondering, I am wondering if you might be able to give me a little bit of help on, and then you say something kind of vague. It is more specific you are the clearer you are, the more helpful they can be, oh, you know, I could not really help over that as opposed to just trying to get them to sort of read your mind. So you want to be specific. It is also

good to give a timeframe, so the person does not feel like well, if I help her on this, does it mean I am really helping her with that for the rest of my life. No, really wondering if you could help in this timeframe, I get access to whatever it is, that is a very good thing to do, and to approach it really as a win-win. I think that one thing I have noticed, well, there are a lot of very successful women who are superb leveragers. Men who are successful are virtually always superb at leveraging and engaging other people. And the ones who are most effective, they really do tend to see it as a win-win. They do tend to see, you know, I am asking you to do this for me, I am asking you to be a resource for me in this way and they really do see, now we have a relationship where I can be a resource for you and that that is going to be to your advantage as well. So it is partly I think of it as seeing yourself as a player, as somebody who can be instrumental in helping other people build their careers as well, that is what makes you comfortable.

DJ: Hmm. And when you look at this, I was trying to remember Adam Grant's research around givers, takers and matchers, do you see a difference in distribution for men and women in terms of how they distribute into the three categories or do you see that as largely gender agnostic?

SH: You know I have not really thought of that. I think it is a very interesting question. I think that the goal is that we all want to be more effective matchers, in Grant's language. That is not someone who is always giving in the hope that someday someone will give back to us, which is often something we are unclear about what we need or want or even the fact that that we do want something and then, you know, I do not think anybody really benefits over the long run by being a taker. But we want to be a matcher that is we want to sort of match what our asks and what our offers are to the colleagues and peers that we build and leverage and help ourselves along the way. So I think that is really what we are aiming at. We are all aiming at a better, you know, sort of more skillful approach to being matchers.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman. Sally's insight reminds me of something I learnt from Herminia Ibarra (HI), one of the earlier guests at the show. She speaks about three kinds of networks – Operational, Personal and Strategic. Herminia says that Operational networks are what get the job done. Personal networks often have a certain emotional quality to them and consist of relatives, friends and so on. She goes on to say that Strategic Networks are the ones that provide breakthroughs and advance careers. Very often, we are not intentional about these networks either because we don't make the time or we aren't deliberate enough.

HI: *"One example that struck my eye a couple years ago so what that to my mind when Beth Comstock was still at GE as chief marketing officer she felt that she was often times much more connected to the outside world than most people in operational jobs at GE which tended to be more internally focused is though she felt even that wasn't the part of the job description that are part which is you can bring that outside in for those people and the example that I love is she was at a book talk in Silicon valley for the launch of "The Lean Start up" by Eric Ries about fast prototyping which originally had a book for start-up how do you go to skill quickly minimum viable prototype but she just has thought we are taking too long in a product department or turbines are taking too long to develop and I bet we could use some of these ideas in our more classic manufacturing context let me make the connection and she did and a big part of GE aviation then got trained on these methods to kind of make the process agile so that for me is a great example of how you can be strategic you have got access to something others don't is so you see the idea here in the need there and you bring them together."*

DJ: Over the last few years, I have started realizing the value of the Power of Weak Ties, going back to the 1973 study by Mark Granovetter. We often think that opportunities come from our strong ties but I have personally noticed they often come from our weak ties. I heard somebody explain quite elegantly why this phenomenon might be at play. That is possibly because the strong ties are possibly close to our ecosystems and we see similar opportunities as them. So, the net add to the possibilities is limited. But when it comes to weak ties, the Venn diagram of the world of opportunities as they see and what we see has lesser overlap leading to a greater surface area of opportunities if that makes sense.

As Sally says, I guess it is a combination of building the right kinds of relationships and establishing the right tonality of mutual value add in these connections.

Thank you for listening. If this topic is of interest, you might like the Curated Playlist on Women Leadership that has insights from several women leaders on what it takes to unlock the potential of women at the workplace. Please go to playtopotential.com. Go to the tab Curated Playlist and then look up Women Leadership.

If you find the podcast purposeful to rate and review on Apple Podcasts or wherever else you consume this content. We have recently started making some of the nuggets from the podcast archives available through WhatsApp. If you would like to be a part of that, do message +918591452129 with your name, number and email. Let's now get back to Sally.

DJ: And changing topics, Sally, you talk about the phenomenon where men and women are seen differently when they are evaluated for a role. And the way I read it was that men often end up being assessed for leadership potential, while women are assessed for performance. And you actually go on to say, on the other hand, women also end up prioritizing their current job over their career and I like the pithy language. Could you talk a little bit about how this phenomenon plays out and therefore, what is the implication for both men and women in ensuring that this bias is avoided?

SH: Yeah, I think, well first of all in terms of the evaluation being a set of men being assessed for potential and women being assessed based on their contributions, there is a lot of research that backs that up, that men tend to get assessed as, you know, he is a real potential leader. And it is not even necessarily based on something that he has done but on the perception that he carries himself like a leader or has a personality or operating style that is like a previous male leader, that sort of thing. So that is a very common thing that happens whereas especially if you are in an organization or culture where there have not been that many women leaders, it is often, you know, you just fall back on judging women based solely on what their performance has been, not on what you think they could contribute strategically because you have not really thought in that frame or had experience with it. So I think that that can be problematic for women often and, you know, was sort of an inherent problem in that, you know, 1990s or early 2000 obsession with high potentials, sorting out who is a high potential, who is not a high potential. Before anybody ever even done anything, you kind of decided this person was and that person was not. So I think that that has often, to some degree, disadvantaged women. It is a little bit different than the habit of about putting your job before your career, which is something that I have noticed and I think it was really one of the most popular, if I could say, or the most endorsed habit in the book that so many women identify with where you pour your energies into the job you have feeling that if you do the best job that you can at the job you have, that will translate into being rewarded so that you will be the person who is chosen for a promotion or whatever. And guess what, it often does not work that way and the reason it does not work that way is because of the two other legs of the successful career: visibility and connections. You value your job, so you are putting all your energy, all your time, all your skill,

all your effort, all your learning into doing the best job that you can. So you are underinvesting in building those relationships and gaining the visibility that you need and so you are not promoted. Someone else is promoted who has perhaps done a more balanced job of courting visibility and of building connections and then it feels very, very disappointing to you and you feel like, well, wait a minute, how come I did not get that promotion, I did the best job. It may have been your overvaluing what your job was. And also, there is a loyalty element there. A research demonstrates that women tend to see themselves as more loyal and put a higher premium on being loyal to the people around them. And that part of overinvesting in your job at the expense of your career is showing that you are loyal. And I know I have worked with numerous women who have said things like, you know, my boss has really believed in me, so I am not going to talk about what I would like to do next because then my boss is going to see me as being disloyal. Now your boss did not get where he or she got by only doing the job they were doing and not thinking about what the next step might be. And so they understand the realities. And if you are a smart person who really believes you have something to contribute, then you probably want to take the next step in your career, and it is not a great idea to pretend as if you do not because you think you are going to get loyalty points for that. So I know that I have worked with women directly. I remember a woman at a technology company in Boston and her boss actually said to her, I was going to recommend you for this other position that came up. He said that I realized you are invaluable and I do not know how we could lose you, so I did not. And she said, she actually felt very good about that him saying that to her for a number of months and then she thought well, wait a minute, if that is true, does that mean I am going to be in this job forever. And she decided she had to take some initiative. So the next time it was a listing that came up in the company for a job she really wanted, she took that listing, she walked into his office and said, here is the job that I would really love to have and I would love your support in thinking about how to potentially position myself for it. And he said, of course, you have done a wonderful job here. So that really surprised her because she thought he was going to think, oh she is so disloyal. It has only been 11 years doing the same job. So I think little bit more of that thinking. You know, in any case two things, in any job you are in, think about it, of course you want to do a good job, you are never going to get anywhere if you do not do a good job. But how do you see this is leading to something else. And then once you have a clear picture of that, talk about it a little bit, not incessantly, but talk about, you know, I am really hoping and go into somebody who is in a position and power and say, I am really hoping this job might translate as to such and such, do you have any suggestions, are there any skills you think I could acquire or areas for improvement, any connections that would be useful for me to build in order to get to that next place. So coming out with it being to some degree direct and clear about it is a powerful thing to do.

DJ: And as I read that insight, Sally, I was also wondering how this dynamic plays out with working couples where if we go with the observation that you make about men being assessed for potential and possibly being career-oriented, while women being assessed for performance and being the current role oriented, there is sort of one path leads to growth and the other path leads to stagnation, do you see that phenomenon playing out on the personal front in the way dynamics play out?

SH: Where I see it in dual career couples is often a very healthy synthesis whereby each person becomes the other person's real champion. I have heard this so many times, when I talk about, when I do a program, and I am talking about putting your job before your career, I cannot tell you how many women come up to me and say, this is what my husband tells me, I have been doing exactly what you are saying that I need to think of this more in a career context, that I need to talk more about it, so what I get from that is their husbands are encouraging them and sort of giving them some help on that, which is something that in many, certainly not all, cases, men are a little bit more comfortable with. So that is a very, very good thing. And I think that that is one way and obviously,

there are ways in which women can help men to be more articulate about what their skills are, how a given job fits into their larger sense of meaning and purpose and can help them develop more sensitivity and all kinds of things. But I think that that can be a very positive thing in a dual career couple. We learn from each other and we learn from each partner sharing strengths and insights in a very helpful way.

DJ: Sally, moving to a different theme, you allude to the perfection trap and the disease to please as the two big reasons that come in the way of women rising. Could you expand on these two phenomena and how it plays out for women?

SH: Certainly, these are really important habits to be aware of because they really are the two habits that are the most toxic at a leadership level and the most pervasive at a leadership level, you know, many of the habits in book like reluctance to claim your achievements or minimizing or too much, which is too much information, too much background, too many details, too much disclosure, many of those kinds of habits. By the time a woman will get to a more senior level, she will have worked away around those putting your job before your career, but what is remarkable to is to find the extent to which the perfection trap and the disease to please can still linger at very senior levels and the extreme difficulties that they cause. Especially with the perfection trap, I will say that in my experience, when a woman who has extraordinary talents and a lot to offer and has worked very, very hard does not make it to a senior position where it looks like you would expect her to make it, it usually perfectionism is somewhere involved. And why is perfectionism, for example, so toxic when you get to a position of greater influence authority and scope, it is because if you are a perfectionist, you can have a very hard time delegating and as your scope enlarges, the more you need to delegate. It is because if you are a perfectionist, you are going to have a much harder time, you know, not being in judgment of other people and where they fall short, and that is going to have a more negative impact, the higher that you go. But probably the primary reason that being perfectionist and by perfectionist I mean believing you are either doing everything perfectly or you are failing. There is no middle ground. You are either you did everything right and kind of got through that or you messed something up and therefore, you really blew it. So the reason that that is so problematic at a senior level is you create a tremendous amount of stress, you create a lot of stress for yourself in a way that really makes doing your job and doing it well unsustainable because you put yourself under so much stress and tension and you create a lot of stress for the people around you. And I always say this but I have been doing what I have been doing for over 30 years and I have never once ever heard anybody say, I work for a perfectionistic boss and I love it. No one does. No one has a good experience with that. So, even as you are trying to make everything work and pouring your heart and soul into trying to be perfect, you are creating a stress that undermines yourself and others in terms of being able to reach the full potential. Two other things at a leadership level that are problematic with perfection is you can become chronically risk-averse because if everything has to be done perfectly, you cannot take risks or try something because it might not turn out perfectly. So that limits really your ability to learn because we all really learn from making mistakes. And the other thing is, you sort of identify yourself as a micro thinker as opposed to a big-picture thinker because you are focused on the details and getting everything right. So lots of problems with perfectionism at the top.

DJ: Hmm. And you go on to say, Sally, that this is possibly a generation where parents, women included, are spending a lot of time on their child compared to previous generations. And at the same time, we have a lot of women entering the workforce in large numbers and you talk about this double whammy, which has significant implication on women. So I was curious about the takeaway for women at one level but also systematically, how should we think about making it easier to provide for child care to ensure we have more women leaders?

SH: Well, that is an issue. The solutions for that really lie either at an organizational level or at a national level and different countries will solve that problem differently and really this book has a very global scope as I think you know we are in 18 languages and so I am not making any recommendations in terms of child care. What I was talking about there more was that there is an intensity to parenting in contemporary society that did not exist 30, 40, 50 years ago. And part of it probably has to do with people having smaller families. I came from a family of five kids. I went to Catholic school growing up in the Midwest, people in my class, their families had between 4 and 12 children. So it was very common to have these big families. So parents could be worried about every single thing that ever happened to their child because it was just too many of them. That is very different, you know, people get very involved with everything that pertains to their children. And in so many ways, that is a good thing. It just gives children more support, it is a much more complex environment that they are going out into, and so that is a very good thing. And I am certainly not finding any kind of fault with that at all. But I am noticing that we have evolved, probably the most time intensive style of parenting in human history at the very time that women are playing a much more active role in the workforce and as leaders. And that that makes things extremely intense for women and often creates a layer of guilt that is not useful, put it that way, not useful.

DJ: And we are not even talking Covid, right, we are talking pre-Covid.

SH: Yeah, we are not even talking Covid. Yeah, sitting next to a woman who was at, you know, one of the top artificial intelligence women at Google, Silicon Valley, she was actually from India. And she was telling me how in her neighborhood in Silicon Valley, it is so competitive, the kind of birthday parties that 4, 5 and 6-year-olds have, they take six months of planning. And just how she was trying to get off of that without her children feeling as if they were the least cared for children in the neighborhood because it was such a wildly time consuming situation and she said, what is really strange about it is that a lot of the these are dual career couples where the women have big important jobs and they are spending six months of major logistical and strategic planning around a 4-year-old's birthday party. She said it is just, it is kind of unbelievable, and that is what I am talking about.

DJ: Got it. And maybe just given its topical, Covid, right, that has changed the intensity to a different level, right, in terms of taking care of the online schooling, taking care of the kids 24 hours, earlier they were away for a while, how has that impacted men and women differently? Do you have a, maybe it is too early for detailed research, but do you have anecdotal insight into how it is impacting men and women differently?

SH: Yes, I do and I think it is really important that we distinguish between the short term impact of Covid, which is for parents, so much, and disproportionately for mothers, so much about the difficulty of homeschooling, the difficulty of having a child at home all the time not able to be in play groups, not able to go to daycare, not able to have people in the house to help care for the child, maybe not being able to have the grandparents in the house caring the child, this is an extremely challenging situation for parents. It has been especially challenging for women and at least in the United States, it is correlated with some declines in female participation in the labor force over the last 14-15 months, which I do also think is related to the fact that women are disproportionately represented in retail and hospitality, which are probably the two most impacted sectors. So that is also, you know, that is Covid related. But it is not to minimize the challenge of that, it has been an enormous challenge and it has been terribly, terribly difficult for many. However, I do think that there is also the side coming out of Covid, the switch to much, the acceptance of so many leaders of how effective virtual and flexible work can be that is going to be overtime an enormous advantage for women. Two examples, one, I was speaking with a Head of HR at a client; it is an energy company here in the US in the South, in the southern US, quite conservative company. And she said this is

going to be incredible. She said we have had so much difficulty hiring women because we are very inflexible about anything to do with work from home and we do not give any allowance for people who have children, sick day, etc. She said women who have choices just do not want to work for us. And she said; now our leadership sees that our productivity has not been impacted by this at all. So they are becoming believers in it, she said and I think this is going to make a big impact in terms of our ability to attract women. I was also struck, I read a long interview with the Chair of Tata Corp. Mumbai-based in Financial Times, and this was probably about seven or eight months ago, maybe even earlier. I think it was in last spring, fairly early in the pandemic and he was saying that what this is going to do is to dramatically increase the pace of flexible work hours and virtual work. He said that he anticipated that Tata would be 70 percent people working from home by the end of this decade, by 2029. And I thought that was really fascinating because although there are challenges in that as long as you have children who are in school and can either have daycare or people, if there are young children in the home helping with them, that is a very good option often for parents, certainly having some flexibility around it. So I think that in the long run, this is going to be a big plus for women and for parents in general.

DJ: Hmm. That is a great insight. Lot of the mindsets around what it takes to be effective at work have fundamentally shifted in the last 12 months and maybe that is an opportunity to level the playing field.

SH: It really is. You know, I was just reading a piece of research today from ADPRI, I think it is called; Marcus Buckingham has associated with it. It was a whole analysis of some engagement surveys that they had done. And the biggest surprise to me in reading this engagement survey is that it showed people who are part of teams have higher engagement than people who are not. But people who are part of virtual teams had actually higher engagement than people who were part of teams where they met on an ongoing basis and that was a big surprise to the researchers and a big surprise to me. So I think there are more surprises like that out there and certainly, in terms of many organizations, there was a challenge for women with children in terms of travel requirements for executive positions. And I can speak for my own experience, that is one of the absolute best things about the experience horrible and painful as it has been through over the last 14 months, is the sort of reevaluation of the role of business travel. And that is another thing I think that is going to be equal, you know, level playing field.

DJ: It is a great insight. And moving themes, Sally, I wanted to talk about communication. And I was surprised actually to read that there is a research, which suggests that women are known to speak about 20,000 words a day on average compared to men who speak around 7,000 words an average. Of course, I am sure there is a spectrum in both situations. But I guess where I was going with this was as women and men rise, the talk-listen ratio changes as you sort of evolve into a leader. So I was curious when we think of executive presence, is that a nuance to the way women should think about it compared to men? I guess I am mixing two questions here. But if you could expand this notion of how communication applies to men and women and how they should find their own authentic style in developing their presence.

SH: Yeah, that is a really important question. First of all, the 20,000 versus 7,000, it is very helpful to think of it and it is generally true. I think the research was US based and I would imagine it plays out some differently to different degrees in different cultures. But the way that I was using in the book was talking about the importance of developing a really concise and clear mode of communication that especially for women it helps men who are in positions of influence and authority to really hear you. And my mind goes back to a woman I spent some time with who was a leading operations person in one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies. And she had been a medical doctor before and I asked her, what do you think is responsible for your rapid rise in this organization. And

she surprised me by saying I really think what it is I had to learn in my medical practice to be very concise in delivering often very important information to people because it was not that much time, the appointments are not that long anymore. And she said and that really served me well here because we have a kind of male tone as she put it in this pharmaceutical company and in the sector, she said where very crisp and concise communications are valued. And she said I saw that there are a lot of really talented women here who just used too many words and that some of the senior members' patients and some of their male colleagues cannot figure out what they are talking about because it is just a lot of words coming at them. And she said so what I have tried to do is really make myself a resource for coaching a lot of our extremely talented women to be more concise and to develop more of that concise leadership tone being very careful. Now, let us talk about it from the point of view of authenticity because on one hand, that is an important observation but does it sound like what I am recommending is that women try to talk like men, no, not at all. But in my experience, the most effective leaders are very, very aware of the outsized value every single word they use has. When you are in a position of leadership, people listen to everything you say and try to discern clues about what it might mean or what that hidden message might be for them or what you really want, that is where people's minds are. And the most effective leaders I know are very aware of this, so they are careful in their communications. That does not mean they are censoring themselves but it means that they recognize what they say really has weight. So they tend to not be quite as profligate maybe. We could say with words because they understand that the more words you use, the more potential ground there may be for a misunderstanding. And they treat their communications with real respect and seriousness because they know how much impact they will have. So that is where I think that looking at it in terms of authenticity is probably not the most helpful thing. What is the most helpful thing, thinking how I can be as clear as possible? And I know there is a rider. I have big audiences but I deal with a lot of complicated topics around the leadership and technology, nature of the economy, etc. So my goal in everything I write is I want it to be as clear as possible. And I find that when you are in a position of authority, when people are listening to you, that are a good goal to strive for, not how can I be the most authentic, how can I be really me or what is my tone. Try to be as clear as you can. Not redundantly, not repeating over and over but being as clear as you can the first time and your tone will evolve naturally from that. It is what I find.

DJ: Hmm. And in the limited research I have done and the conversations I have had, Sally, I understand that maternity is a place where there is significant leakage in the pipeline of women rising to the top. In your experience, would you agree, number one and number two, would you see any other points of significant drop-off where women sort of move away from the pipeline and any guidance especially for women through some of these phases of transition?

SH: Yes, certainly maternity is historically a place where there develops a kind of leak, if you will, in the pipeline in that, especially after a second or a third child where it just suddenly, you know, a woman will say, I need to take a step back, that does not mean she is going to drop out of the workforce, but I need to take a step back, I may not need to accept this next promotion if I want to keep all these balls in the air. And that can slow a woman's progress down. But, you know what, careers today are much longer than they used to be and slowing down 4, 5, 7 years is not the career killer that it would have been in the industrial economy, especially given that people are hired today for their knowledge and their skills so that those, you know, as long as your technology skills, as long as you keep up with that, your knowledge and that your value often increases. So it is not that big a deal to worry about. There is also a very common phenomenon where the pipeline gets leaky just before the senior leadership level. And that is something that is a little more challenging I think to address. In my experience over these many decades, what I view is the most common reason for that is that women will often get right up close to a senior position. So they are at a point where they can see what the lives of the person who hold that position are actually like and they will often

say to themselves, I do not think that is worth it. And in fact, almost every time I have interviewed a woman who has left a job or made a lateral move away from a job at a very senior level, what she eventually at some point says is, I decided it just was not worth it. And that means that the personal toll, it looked like it took, was too much. And often that is because they are looking at someone who has an unbalanced approach to life and has thrown absolutely everything into the self-identification with the role and the position and those they do not want that for themselves but there are many, many ways to avoid that. And so when I am working with clients, I always urge them to not make those kinds of judgments but to say, let me give this a try, let me see if I can make this work for me in a way that would be satisfying where I feel like I am able to make a contribution where I am able to have a meaningful life, where I am able to balance a range of responsibilities, let me see if I can do that rather than looking at some guy in a position and saying, well, his life looks awful to me, so no, thank you because it is often a superficial judgment, it really has more to do with that individual.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here. One of my earlier guests, Roopa Kudva (RK), Former MD of CRISIL and current Country Head of Omidyar Network in India has a slightly different take on the point Sally speaks about. While Sally refers to women coming close to the top asking them the question “is it worth it”, Roopa talks about the notion of self-belief that might come in the way.

RK: “the second barrier that women hit is later on when they are in the upper end of middle management or in senior management but when it comes to them taking the top jobs I feel that there is a mental barrier of self-belief that I can and I should ask for the top jobs and I can do it I think women hold back, they hold back in asking for a seat at the table and I think that is where other women leaders can play a very big role, my own thinking on this has evolved in the last 15 years if you asked me 15 years ago I would have said it’s all about merit and if you do good work you will be recognized women don’t need special treatment is the argument that I would have made. Today I believe that the second barrier that I talked about is a very big barrier and therefore it is actually almost incumbent on other women leaders to reach out and talk about this issue and help other women to cross this barrier.”

DJ: For more, you might find the playlist Women Leadership of interest. Just go to playtopotential.com. Go to Curated Playlists and you will find Women Leadership as part of that. Multiple women leaders share their perspectives on what it takes women to succeed. Let’s now get back to the conversation with Sally.

DJ: And another related question here, Sally, when I sent this list of questions to my friends, one of them is a partner in an advisory services firm, and she sort of looked at the list and said, it seems like the only way to break the glass ceiling is to exhibit behaviors, you know, that play by club rules, should not we aspire to change the game rather than just play the game based on existing rules. I know it is a provocatively worded comment but any commentary around how women could think about changing the game as they say rather than fine-tuning their approach to conform to the current game that is being played?

SH: In my experience, that is exactly what has happened over the last 30 years. I think that women have been instrumental in changing the way the game is played. And what I spoke about earlier that we have really redefined how we perceive of excellence in leadership. I think that that has been in part because women have brought a broader perspective. I have not seen that many women who have achieved extraordinary things who said, well, I just looked at it and I decided I was going to play

by the rules and just do everything the way the guys are doing it. I have not seen that much at least in the last 20 years. So you would hear that someone in the 1990s and it was probably, you know there were not many alternatives but I have not seen that. And I think that particularly today what organizations are looking for are people who have great human skills, who are effective communicators with people across levels, when organizations are looking for people who are capable of motivating employees who have a significant knowledge base so that they can most effectively harness that knowledge base. And I think when organizations are really especially looking for people who can increase the capacity for creativity and innovation within the organization, I think that you really get few points by just saying, okay, I see this is a club and I am going to play by the rules. No, I think women have been instrumental in beginning to change how organizations function and operate in the world because they have not gone wrong with that. So I think that is something that has been happening for some time.

DJ: And changing topics, Sally, I have two young kids, I have a girl who is 11 and a boy who is 7 and I realize a lot of what you say in the book is actually deeply wired mindsets both with men and women. So I am curious what advice you would have for parents in the way they bring up boys and girls so that we have more women leaders in the future.

SH: I think that they can benefit by trying to help their boys be better listeners, that that is an essential skill for rising together for achieving their own best, while helping women and the rest of the world achieve it as well. So I think they can emphasize listening skills to their boys, which I see often are to some extent disregarded. I think that certainly for girls, it does not help female children to be complimented by saying, oh, that is perfect, you did a perfect job, etc. because it gives them that idea that mental clue, oh, this is what being good at something else, it means that I have to be perfect at it. So I think there is some really good modeling we can do. I want to share a quick little story that was from an event that I was working at a great tech company out in Silicon Valley, right before the pandemic. And afterwards, a young woman came up to me and she said I have a thing in the book where I, you know, trying to let go of worrying and rumination and I put up a sign in my office, it says, oh well, to remind myself to have a kind of a let it go attitude. And she said that was the most helpful thing I read in the book, she said and I am a real ruminator that is one of the behaviors in the book. She said, so I find that it is really helpful for me to put up little stickies all over my house that say, oh well, oh well, oh well, to remind myself. Well, when things happen, I will go, oh well, oh well. She said, well, I just want to tell you that she said a couple days ago, my 3-year-old daughter came into the kitchen and she was carrying a big bowl of Jell-O and she tripped on the door sill and the Jell-O went all over the kitchen floor and she just looked up at me, in her little 3-year-old voice and said, oh well, she said and it was because she read these so many times. She said so I felt really happy that I was modeling something for the next generation of women and raising a strong confident young daughter, who was not going to second guess, apologize, shrink, feel terrible because she made a perfectly normal mistake and was not expecting herself to be perfect.

DJ: Beautiful.

SH: Yeah.

DJ: Sally, it has been wonderful talking to you. Just as we wrap up, just a small thought experiment for you. If you could send a Twitter message, Twitter sized message to all the women out there to unlock their leadership potential, what would you say?

SH: To all the women, I would say to articulate what you intend to achieve, that is real from you, that is something that would motivate you and drive you forward and to work on that statement and to keep that with you at all times so that you will be ready to speak your purpose in the world.

DJ: Hmm. And if you could send a Twitter message to all the men, what would that say to unlock women's leadership potential?

SH: To unlock women's leadership potential, I think that listening, I would say listen, listen to what they say but then also question. I find lot of men will say things like, you know, I offered her this job and she said she was not ready. She said she was, you know, still had things to learn in the job she has, and I do not know why she does that and she must be getting ready to have another baby or she is not ambitious. Just listening to what she says and then saying, you know, I think you are ready for this, I just want you to consider this, no need to give me an answer right now but if you want to do it, I am in your corner. So I think letting people know that you are there as an ally, you notice what kind of talent they have and that you want to support them, men can get an unreasonable amount of points with women when they do that.

DJ: Hmm. And finally, what would you tell the CEOs and CHROs in creating a climate where women can flourish?

SH: Well, I think the most important thing that leaders need to do to create that kind of environment is to be very, very clear about what their expectations are in terms of what constitutes an effective job that you do, be very clear on that. There is often a sort of lack of clarity about it and I think that is confusing to many people, it is particularly often confusing to women.

DJ: Sally, is there anything I may not have asked you explicitly in the context of unlocking women leadership that is relevant for the listeners?

SH: No, I think we have had a very wide-ranging and thoughtful conversation. I have enjoyed it tremendously and, you know, I want to iterate that one thing I am left with from these many decades, I have been in this field is a great, great sense of optimism, I see women becoming far more self-confident. I think there is a much greater sense of solidarity among women, I know that, has developed over the last 30 years, and a much greater understanding that they need men as allies and that they have a right to expect that. So I think all of those things have put us on a great track, I think we have made wonderful moves forward but I think the future is wide open and I am very hopeful.

DJ: Sally, it has been a pleasure talking to you. Thank you so much for making the time and for your insights.

SH: Thank you Deepak, I really enjoyed it.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Thank you for listening. I hope you found the conversation purposeful. A couple of messages before we wrap up. If you find the podcast purposeful, do take a moment and contribute to Antarang Foundation. I work closely with them and can vouch for their impact with young adults who come from challenging backgrounds. While we are battling the health crisis, we cannot afford to ignore the issue of solving for livelihoods in our battle to save lives. This second Covid wave has further worsened the employment crisis in India and supporting an organization like Antarang can mean a lot in these challenging times. You can get more details at the Pay It forward section at playtopotential.com.

Do also rate and review the show on Apple podcasts or wherever you consume the content. It might seem like a repetitive ask. But trust me it makes a big difference in people discovering this podcast amidst a lot of noise out there given the boom in the podcast supply in India in the last few months. It also helps us attract good quality speakers.

To know more about what is in the podcast archives and the advisory work I do, you could just visit www.playtopotential.com. Thank you and hope to have you tune into one of the subsequent conversations at the podcast. Bye now.

End of transcription

Nugget from Roopa Kudva that is referenced: [Women Leadership - The barrier that doesn't get spoken about.](#)

Nugget from Herminia Ibarra that is referenced: [Operational, Personal and Strategic networks.](#)

Nugget from Stew Friedman that is referenced: [4 porous domains as Self, Work, Home & Community.](#)

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Formative years: Discussions around how the leaders were influenced by the climate in which they grew up and how that has impacted them as individuals and the choices they have made as they have gone about their journeys. You can access the playlist [here](#).

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Sally Helgesen - Nuggets

- 74.00 Sally Helgesen - The Full Conversation
- 74.01 Sally Helgesen - How women often respond to feedback
- 74.02 Sally Helgesen - How women often think about ambition
- 74.03 Sally Helgesen - Reluctance in accepting credit
- 74.04 Sally Helgesen - Downsides of pursuing mastery
- 74.05 Sally Helgesen - Leveraging relationships to move forward

- 74.06 Sally Helgesen - Delivering performance Vs unlocking potential
- 74.07 Sally Helgesen - Impact of COVID on Women vs. Men
- 74.08 Sally Helgesen - Executive presence
- 74.09 Sally Helgesen - Leakage in the leadership pipeline near the very top
- 74.10 Sally Helgesen - Changing the game vs. playing by "club rules"
- 74.11 Sally Helgesen - Insights for parents as they bring up boys and girls

About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock the human potential of senior executive's / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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