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Context to the nugget conversation

Sally speaks about the phenomenon where women, when given positive feedback, might unnecessarily divert it to other causes or shine the light on other team members without adequate acknowledgement of their role in the outcomes. She speaks about the downsides of this behaviour.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (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?

Sally Helgesen (JG): 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.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I have noticed that we in general are very poor when it comes to both giving and receiving positive feedback. How to give positive feedback is possibly a topic for a different conversation but the notion of accepting positive feedback is an interesting one. In the book, Sally speaks about a simple suggestion from Marshall Goldsmith where we say Thank you and not a word more. Very often we end up filling it up with all kinds of commentary that dilutes the moment and how people perceive our presence and our capabilities. Be comfortable with the silence that ensues after you say Thank you and pause and resist the temptation to fill it with some commentary that might end up being dilutive. Something for me to reflect on in the way I tackle feedback.

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.

End of nugget transcription

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Sally Helgesen - Nuggets

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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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Podcast Transcript [74.03 Sally Helgesen - Reluctance in accepting credit](#)

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