

Women in Business and Technology

Transcript of Episode 019 - Exploring accountability with Keita Williams and Steve Petitpas

Featuring: Keita Williams, Steve Petitpas

Summary: Sonia recaps her recent experience at Beyond 98052: When the Customer Isn't You, an event focused on inclusive marketing hosted by BlackLight, a community of black marketers at Microsoft. Then, Colleen chats with the Founder and Chief Strategist of Success Bully, Keita Williams, about the criticality of community in forming and achieving big goals. Sonia interviews GM of Microsoft Digital Stores and Microsoft.com Services Steve Petitpas about his role as a Co-Executive Sponsor of diversity and inclusion.

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Colleen O'Brien, Sonia Dara

(Music.)

NARRATION: The inclusion part is how do we create an environment where people help everyone else to understand their differences, and where we show that those are appreciated and they're sought after? Because as I see in a lot of cases, different dimensions of diversity are invisible. And so people can help other people know about those dimensions, but you're only really going to want to do that if you're in an environment where you feel like it's going to be respected and appreciated.

(Music.)

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Before we dive into the show, we just wanted to let you all know that we'll be recording on site at Seattle's Women in Tech Regatta, which is taking place around the city here from April 23rd through the 27th.

SONIA DARA: We're looking forward to hearing from amazing speakers at the event, including Cynthia Tee, Monica Guzman, and Microsoft's very own Kal Viswanathan and Rakhi Voria.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: If you're planning to be there, too, we'd love to meet up. Tweet at us, and we'll make it happen. My Twitter handle is @colleenobrien.

SONIA DARA: And mine is @sonia_dara. And for more information about the event, visit www.womenintechregatta.com.

(Music.)

NARRATION: You are listening to the *Women in Business and Technology* podcast from Microsoft. In each episode, you will hear from women in amazing technology and business roles, as well as male allies, who are helping make the industries more inclusive, and bringing you tips on how to build a successful career in a supportive community. Welcome to *Women in Business and Technology*.

(Music.)

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Welcome to Episode 19 of *Women in Business and Technology*. I'm Colleen O'Brien.

SONIA DARA: And I'm Sonia Dara.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: We're kicking off this episode with a conversation that I had with Keita Williams, the founder and chief strategist of Success Bully. We talked about her accountability practice and the energized community that's forming around the Success Bully Podcast.

So a quick plug there. The Success Bully Podcast is part of the Large Network, a podcast network created, produced, and hosted by women. So congrats to Tina Nole on the launch. I know that she was instrumental in the creation of the Success Bully Podcast, and the Large Network is her brain child, so congrats, Tina.

SONIA DARA: Yes. A big congrats to Tina and Keita for the podcast and all the success over there.

So after that part, I'll jump into an interview I had with Steve Petitpas, the general manager of Microsoft Digital Stores and Microsoft.com Services. Steve is a co-executive sponsor of diversity and inclusion on the Marketing and Consumer Business team here at Microsoft.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Finally, we'll wrap things up in our Cutting Edge segment with a discussion about a new study from LivePerson, which showed that only 4 percent of surveyed consumers could name a woman tech leader. Womp-womp!

SONIA DARA: Womp-womp! But before we jump in, I just want to reflect on an amazing day I had earlier this month at an event hosted by BlackLight. BlackLight is a community of black employees here in the marketing division at Microsoft, and the event was called Beyond 98052, which is our Redmond ZIP code.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: That's so cute.

SONIA DARA: When the customer isn't you, and talking about inclusive marketing in an ever-growing global marketplace. So it was really awesome, a great set of speakers, internal as well as some badass external speakers.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yeah, I saw a lot of the social media. I was really jealous --

SONIA DARA: Blowing up.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: -- that I wasn't able to attend. Who was your favorite speaker who you saw that day?

SONIA DARA: I loved all of them, and we had some great range, but one of my favorites was Luvvie Ajayi, also known as Awesomely Luvvie. And she talked about how you maintain authentic brand, how we need to think about and empathize with the audience whenever you're posting, whether it's specifically on social media. And she mentioned how there have been a couple of pretty notable hiccups in the advertising world in the last couple of months.

And what she really wanted to drive home, and what I loved, is that you really need diversity at every level in your company to make sure that we have inclusive marketing. So I know on our team, we're looking to make sure that there is more representation across to make sure our advertising and our marketing is a better representation as well.

So I loved the day, learned a ton, excited for the next one they have coming up.

(Music.)

NARRATION: Community Connect, get involved and stay connected.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: I am thrilled to welcome to the studio today the founder and chief strategies of Success Bully, Keita Williams. Keita, thank you for being here.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Oh, thank you for having me. It's a pleasure.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: I know that success Bully is a fast-growing accountability practice and content provider dedicated to supporting visionaries in their personal and professional goal attainment.

I've heard you describe yourself as a professional butt-kicker. Can you explain to our listeners what you do in that role and why you think about goal pursuit as a team effort?

KEITA WILLIAMS: Oh, wow! Now hearing that, I like wrote that, and so -- (laughter) that's huge.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: You did write that.

KEITA WILLIAMS: I wrote that!

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: That's straight from your website.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Visionaries, yes! Well, first of all, as a professional butt-kicker, what inspired me to start Success Bully was my biggest professional failure.

I had fallen completely on my face professionally and had one of those career setbacks where you're, like, "I don't know if I'm ever going to come back from this." Maybe I'll go back to school and teach math to sixth graders. I didn't know what my next move was going to be.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right.

KEITA WILLIAMS: But what I did know is that with any goal, when you break it down into pieces, you can achieve it. And when you have that extra layer of accountability, it skyrockets you. And so that was the "ah-hah" moment for me was my own failure. And then I started kind of testing it with friends and family and putting them on action plans. And I said it as a joke last year at the F-Bomb Breakfast Club, and it's been rockin' and rollin' ever since.

So I work with individuals, we get real clear on the goal. So we do smart goals. So, like, we do it for work all the time.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right.

KEITA WILLIAMS: We very rarely do it personally. And so I recently was working with someone and they were, like, "I want more visibility at work." I'm, like, "What does that mean? Like, do you want to have 10,000 Instagram followers? Like, what exactly do you mean?" Oh, you want to be on a promotion track? What are those pieces that you need to get that promotion? All right, so then let's back that up.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yeah.

KEITA WILLIAMS: What do we need to do in the next 90 days to get there? Let's see benchmarks at 90, 60, and 30 days and then we do weekly action plans, and then I follow up. A lot of follow up.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: The follow up is key. So you're saying that you're coming into the picture to help people get more specific about what their goals are and to have that external accountability partner to help them make sure they're making progress against that plan?

KEITA WILLIAMS: Precisely. I think there's something to be said about that accountability piece. Some of us are, like, self-motivated and can get it done, but when you have that risk of disappointing someone else, it really kind of supercharges things.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yeah.

KEITA WILLIAMS: And it, fundamentally, we all know what we need to do to get the job done. Fundamentally. There are very few projects that you go, "I have no idea how to get there." Very few of those. When you have that level of accountability, it makes you think about your excuses.

So when you really think about it, if you're like, "Oh, well, I got really busy at work, and then my dog died, and then you know, there was a snow storm." Some of those things are within your scope of control, and then there are those outside influences. Now, the things that are in your scope of control, I got really busy. That's a lie. You didn't prioritize your time correctly.

Your dog dying is an act of nature, so you can manage your emotions around it, and you have to compartmentalize.

Snow storm, yeah, that's out of your scope of control, but if you knew it was coming, you could have bought snacks so you wouldn't be at home hungry, you know?

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Interesting.

KEITA WILLIAMS: So when you have to explain to someone else why you didn't get it done, you realize how many excuses you have.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Absolutely. You started the Success Bully Podcast over a year ago now.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Yeah.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And you're creating weekly shows that range from three to 30 minutes long. The episodes, for me, are these delectable, bite-sized nuggets of wisdom.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Delectable even! (Laughter.)

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yes. You're sharing strategies for people in pursuit of their goals. And in this segment of our show, in Community Connect, we typically talk about communities that are meeting up in real life or who are interacting online, but there is, undeniably, a community building up around your show. What is your relationship to the Success Bully listener community and do you feel a responsibility for community management?

KEITA WILLIAMS: Oh, absolutely. I think it's really interesting how this is resonating. Right? That I get an opportunity to have these really amazing conversations with women in leadership and female founders who have taken an idea and made it something and are scaling it.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yes.

KEITA WILLIAMS: And that's exciting. And there's a recipe for success, right? While there's a recipe, there's no mystery to it. There are really a common red thread among my guests. And so I feel a responsibility to my listeners and the community to share that recipe and to share those pieces. And if it touches someone to action or helps them get unstuck, I feel like my job is done.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: I love that answer. I've heard you say before, you talk about the responsibility of leaders to foster that next generation. And what I see you doing is establishing a place in this community of leaders in the Seattle area and beyond, and taking this platform that you've created to bring that wisdom to the masses. So I very much --

KEITA WILLIAMS: Thank you! (Laughter.) That made me all warm and fuzzy. I feel like a Milky Way bar in here, all gooey in the center. (Laughter.)

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: So you've created this show of truly amazing guests. How do you decide from your greater community who you'd like to invite into the Success Bully family?

KEITA WILLIAMS: Yeah, so I'd like to tell you that I have this like formula. (Laughter.) I think although I'm very much a talker, and I can talk it up, you know? I really enjoy listening to great stories. And so even as a kid, I had this thing where I had this natural curiosity and I would ask more follow-up questions than necessary.

And so I would do that with complete strangers, and I would come away with a friend. In the space of the Success Bully podcast the way that I kind of think about guests is, like, who has an amazing story? And what's interesting about that story? And how do I want to share their story in a unique way? Let's get vulnerable, let's get real. Entrepreneurship is probably the most challenging thing I've taken on, I don't even know if I'm good at it. (Laughter.)

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Well, you're doing such a good job of, you know, building a great group of people around you who are really great at it.

KEITA WILLIAMS: It all about the power drive.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yes.

KEITA WILLIAMS: And I feel like what I get out of every episode and every interview is I feel like I walk away with something that I can use immediately, and I find myself parroting what I've learned. Connie Maynard from JAG Jeans had this thing about the three Cs. Did you operate with commitment, consistency, and did you communicate well?

And I use that as a lens now where I'm, like, "Am I in the three Cs right now?" And just being able to have those conversations, and I can walk away with something that I can use as an entrepreneur, that's such a gift.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right.

KEITA WILLIAMS: It's a gift.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Absolutely. Speaking of the power tribe, I want to dive into that a little more deeply.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Okay.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: I first came to know of you when you hosted a live podcast recording at The Riveter.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Oh, yes, that was fun times.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: The Riveter is, of course, the woman-forward, co-working space headquartered here in Seattle. And you were moderating this conversation with two local entrepreneurs, Tina Nole and Amy Nelson.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Yes.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And the three of you talked about how you manage the stress of entrepreneurship. You personally talked about throwing up a signal flare to your power tribe. What exactly does that mean?

KEITA WILLIAMS: Okay. So signal flare -- and I've seen this across the board with a number of entrepreneurs, that we get into like -- they call it the "pit of despair," or like

this spiral where you're like second-guessing your moves and you're on this island by yourself.

Well, you don't have to be on an island by yourself. So when I say "signal flare," if I was on my island of entrepreneurship and I have a flare gun, I shoot off my flare and say, "Hey, I need help," or, "Hey, I'm struggling," or "This just happened." Usually it's one of my tales of mishaps.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And this is just coming as like a text to your friends?

KEITA WILLIAMS: Yeah. I will text it. Sometimes I'll put it on Facebook, try not to do that too much because that's kind of doing its own thing. And in some cases, it's a phone call. Like, "Hey, you have a second to chat?"

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right.

KEITA WILLIAMS: And I think that we all need a support network. And just being clear that, hey, I need help. Or, hey, I'm stuck. Or, "I've had a bad day, here's why." And sometimes I do the reverse. And like I just send out random encouragement text messages where just, like, "You're rockin' it, girl!" And just like randomly send them out to a few of my power tribe members just because, like, sometimes you need the know that you're doing a great job.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yes, absolutely. So you're not only taking from the power tribe --

KEITA WILLIAMS: Oh, yeah, you've got to get -- it's a 360, you can't just show up to take, you have to give as well.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Some of the key themes of your show and your broader accountability practice include ruling your time, self-discipline, controlling emotions, and getting from dreams into action. One of my favorite podcast episodes from success bully is entitled, "If you don't A-S-K, you don't G-E-T." Where you explore this phenomenon of women not making big asks, you know, for things like funding or mentorship or job referrals.

Again, you bring in this concept of your power tribe and talking about this over brunch. Why is it important that we're talking to our broader communities about topics like this, about making big asks, about crowdsourcing ideas?

KEITA WILLIAMS: I think why it's important, you are one person away from your dream.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: I love that.

KEITA WILLIAMS: You are literally one question from the right person away from that next step. And I think being more clear about what it is you want, you know what to ask for and you know sometimes it's a series of asks. It's not always one big ask, it might be incremental asks. But if you don't know what you want, it's hard to make those.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right.

KEITA WILLIAMS: So first thing, know what you want. Second thing, people want to help.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Women especially want to help each other, right? We're more collaborative. And I'm making broad-stroke statements, so whatever. (Laughter.)

But the way to activate your community is being really clear and being, you know, my big ask right now is, like, subscribe and share. That's my --

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: We're familiar with that ask.

KEITA WILLIAMS: That's my big ask. And, like, if I want to get real jazzy pants, it's pull out your phone, go to Apple Podcasts right now, and subscribe. That's a clear ask and it doesn't cost you anything.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right.

KEITA WILLIAMS: It'll take you 45 seconds if you really don't know where it is on your phone.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yeah. And, you know, on this topic of crowdsourcing these big, hard questions, I read these books, number one, *Women Don't Ask*, which was all about, you know, the data behind women not asking for promotions, not asking for salary increases. But then they followed it up with this book called *Ask for More*.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Yeah.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And I loved that book because it gave me all of these ideas of the places where I could be asking for more.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Right.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And if I'm in my own head thinking about where could I be asking for more, it's really limiting the ideas that might have. It's one head, but reading that book, I had exposure to all of these other perspectives of the world and other examples of

where people were asking. So I love that. I love sourcing these questions with your power tribe.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. And then I think when you're in the community and you're sourcing and you're, like, we actually do this before anybody eats their brunch. Like, when I have my little potluck brunch, don't touch the baked French toast until we do a round of ask and offer. (Laughter.)

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Ooh!

KEITA WILLIAMS: So it's, you know, you're not just asking, you also have to offer something, right?

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yes.

KEITA WILLIAMS: And for me, like, I have a tech PR background, so I'm always, you know, if you want me to read something, do you need help with positioning? That's my immediate offer. But with the ask, when you have a community that's listening to your ask, there's always someone that's like, "You sure you don't want to ask for more? Why didn't you ask for this?"

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right.

KEITA WILLIAMS: So why are you asking for a \$5,000 increase? Why don't you ask for \$10,000?

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yes.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Or why did you limit yourself to national, why don't you go international? And I think there's something to be said that, like, sometimes we put like little guardrails and limits on things. One of my favorite conversations early on was with Megan McNally. Where, like, I had my concept for what Success Bully was going to be, and she literally looked me in the eye and said, "You're thinking too small. You're thinking way too small."

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right.

KEITA WILLIAMS: And to challenge that idea of what's big, what's small, I immediately were like, oh, wait, I wanted this cute little thing that I would do cute little things with. But, actually, it's a lot bigger than me, and it can impact a number of women of different ages and backgrounds to, like, take that next step, to push yourself a little further, to leverage your community, to know that you can do it.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yeah. Your power tribe is not just giving you different or new ideas, but also helping to build on the ones that you have.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Oh, absolutely.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And push you to get a little bit more ambitious.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Iron sharpens iron.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Megan McNally said I think one of my favorite things ever, and I think is particularly important to say here. She talked about how women's menstrual cycles are like their ambition. (Laughter.) They tend to synch up when we're around each other. (Laughter.)

KEITA WILLIAMS: That's so true. That is so true. I think the five people you spend the most time with, that is a reflection of where you're going.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yes.

KEITA WILLIAMS: And so I want to be the friend that up-levels, and I hope that my friends hold me to that level of accountability and push me farther because, like, this puppy's going. I couldn't quit if I wanted to. It's all over the Internet. (Laughter.)

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Speaking of the Internet.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Yes, the Interwebs.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Where can our listeners find you on the Internet?

KEITA WILLIAMS: Ah, yes. Yes. I am @successbully.com. I know some people think it's "successfully" but it's "Success Bully."

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Bully.

KEITA WILLIAMS: I'm on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, all at Success Bully.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Excellent.

KEITA WILLIAMS: And there's content.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yes.

KEITA WILLIAMS: And I'm wildly photogenic. (Laughter.)

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And if this hasn't been clear already, I am a huge fan of the Success Bully podcast. Keita is always bringing her listeners into the tree of trust on the show and getting really vulnerable with the audience, and then wrapping things up with really actionable insights in the Tip Jar segment. So be sure to check that out.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Oh, thank you. Thank you.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Keita, thanks so much for coming into the studio today.

KEITA WILLIAMS: Yay! Thank you.

(Music.)

NARRATION: And now, let's get on with the interview.

(Music.)

SONIA DARA: I'm very pleased to welcome Steve Petitpas to the studio today. We're very excited to have you here. So, Steve, what does your role as general manager, GM, of Microsoft Digital stores and Microsoft.com Services entail? Can you give us a brief, like, day-in-the-life example?

STEVE PETITPAS: Sure thing, Sonia, and thanks again for having me. I'm delighted to be here. I am a big fan of your podcasts, I've really been enjoying them.

So I work in the Microsoft Digital Stores organization, which is part of the company where we sell our products directly to our customers through digital channels. So for a lot of people, that means our online Web store, or it might mean purchasing through our Xbox consoles where we have a Microsoft Store available on the Xbox, or even through our Windows 10 product, where there's also a store.

And my team provides a set of services that support that e-commerce business. And so those services include things like how we produce and localize and publish our websites and our content, but it also includes quite a bit of work in analytics. It's a digital basically, so there's a lot of data that gets spat out.

And then there's a set of services that apply both to stores, but that my team also manages on behalf of the marketing group, and to some extent Microsoft more broadly. Some of that does include analytics, so our tagging and how that works across Microsoft.com, so some of the very foundational analytics services, as well as things like accessibility and experimentation.

SONIA DARA: So prior to coming to Microsoft, you were a marketing director at Quaker Oats, managing the consumer and channel marketing for Cap'n Crunch cereals.

STEVE PETITPAS: Yum.

SONIA DARA: Yum. The consumer-packaged goods industry is often touted as being one of the best places to do the jobs of brand management and marketing. So what prompted you to make the switch to technology? And what guidance would you provide to marketers considering different industries.

STEVE PETITPAS: First, I will say that consumer packaged goods continues to be a great place to learn about marketing and about brand management.

The important context here is joined Microsoft in 1996. So that was back in the days when the Internet was just emerging. And I've always been a bit of a tinkerer with things, electronics, and so I was getting very interested in the Internet and just saw that as an opportunity to have the kind of interaction with consumers that I always really had kind of been excited about as a marketer. I mean, this whole notion of one-to-one, and using data to love better experience and personalize experiences. And I could just see that in packaged goods, the switch -- like the move to the Internet was just going to take a long time to happen.

And it just happened as I was starting to think about, you know, what do I want to be doing next? It was actually a friend of mine who was at Microsoft, contacted me about a great job opportunity. Actually, it was something that he was very interested in doing, but he and his wife -- his wife also was working at Microsoft at the time -- they had just landed opportunities for both of them with Microsoft in Paris.

SONIA DARA: Nice.

STEVE PETITPAS: And so his message was, "This is a great job, I would take it if I were going to stay, you should really look at it." And I came out and interviewed. And it was in what was called the Interactive Media Group at the time, so Internet business. I was just blown away by kind of the ambition, the excitement, the people that like every person I interviewed with was just really smart.

I was a little nervous because I also felt as a consumer marketer, these Microsoft people, they were going after this way faster than consumers are going to ready for, but it was an opportunity to kind of get ahead as opposed to lag.

That was a big part of what prompted me to make the switch, and I think it's a big part of why anybody should think about coming into technology is what's the pace that you want to be in? The exciting thing about technology is there's so many new things. In a lot of ways, I think our challenges are sort of the double-black-diamond slopes of marketing. I mean, Cap'n Crunch was a product that was introduced in the 1960s. Before Cap'n Crunch, I worked on Quaker Oatmeal, a product introduced in the 1800s.

SONIA DARA: Wow.

STEVE PETITPAS: The playbooks on those brands, they are enriching and educational, but there's a little less new to do there than you're going to find at a place like Microsoft.

SONIA DARA: So after graduating with a degree in English from Georgetown University, you got your MBA from Harvard Business School. Many young tech employees struggle to understand the return on investment and leaving a great job to pursue an MBA.

So Sheryl Sandberg has famously on Quora that, "MBAs are not necessary at Facebook, and I don't believe they're important for working in the tech industry."

So what are your thoughts on higher education and its relevance in the tech industry?

STEVE PETITPAS: I think about it mostly in terms of what's the relevance of higher education for you? I think a big part of pursuing any degree should be, "What's your interest in the actual journey?" There is regularly articles, there were a bunch of them in the fall of last year about the return on investment on an MBA -- I mean, particularly MBA, given how expensive that degree has become.

And that's, certainly, an important consideration, but I think it's also really important to think about what's the experience you're going to have during those two years? I had a great experience at HBS, the whole case study method, which really forces you to think on your feet, was very much the kind of experience and training that I wanted, and so I feel it's had a major impact on my career and on my skill set as a manager, and on my enjoyment of, like, working in the business world.

SONIA DARA: So in addition to your job managing digital stores and Microsoft.com, you are the co-executive sponsor of diversity and inclusion on the Marketing and Consumer Business team at Microsoft. Alongside our corporate vice president of brand, advertising, and research, Kathleen Hall. What are your responsibilities as an executive sponsor of diversity and inclusion?

STEVE PETITPAS: My role and Kathleen's role as the exec sponsors for D&I in our marketing group is we had to partner with our HR colleagues and with our chief marketing officer, Chris Capossela's leadership team on what are the places where we think are the most important opportunities for us to address from a diversity and inclusion standpoint?

So it's helping to work through what are kind of our plans and key initiatives in D&I, and then also how we think about progress. I think there's also a bit of an educational aspect to it. So there have been times when Kathleen or I will talk to Chris's leadership

team about different things we see happening in the companies or things that we think could be interesting opportunities.

So, for example, Hispanic marketing in the United States is something that I think we should be doing more of. There are some interesting things we've already been doing. Kathleen actually has been a leader for the company in that space through her work in advertising, but that's been an area we've talked about with Chris's leadership team as what could be a growth opportunity for the company, but that also would have benefits for inclusion and diversity within Microsoft itself.

SONIA DARA: So, specifically, how do you think Microsoft thinks about those words, "diversity and inclusion"?

STEVE PETITPAS: I have to caveat this by saying that I am not an official Microsoft spokesperson on diversity and inclusion, but I absolutely can talk about how I think about those words and how I think about them as a leader at Microsoft.

I think diversity is largely about differences. And it's about appreciating differences, actively seeking them out, and you know, wanting to make use of them for some kind of value. And I don't just mean value in like in an economic sense. I mean, there can be just a pure sort of enjoying meeting other people, I mean, kind of, you know, value to it. But it is that notion that there is a lot of differences, and I think most people see a very limited part of the spectrum of what's really out there.

I know for me, like, my involvement in D&I continues to be a journey and there is so much more than I ever realized was out there. And so really think a lot about this aspect of you have to be active on it, like actively looking for it and thinking about, "How could I put that to use? When might that point of view be helpful? Or when am I dealing with a situation where there have got to be several other perspectives on this that would be really helpful." And that's the diversity part.

I think the inclusion part is how do we create environment where people help everyone else to understand their differences, and where we show that those are appreciated and they're sought after. Because as I say in a lot of cases, different dimensions of diversity are invisible. And so people can help other people know about those dimensions, but you're only really going to want to do that if you're in an environment where unfortunately like it's going to be respected and appreciated, and that's what inclusion I think is all about.

SONIA DARA: So in your opinion, why is Microsoft making investments in diversity and inclusion?

STEVE PETITPAS: I think we are making investments in it for both -- what you might call like the values case side of it. You have the feeling that, hey, this is something that's just

good to do. It is the right thing to be doing. But also there's a compelling business case to this. And the business case around D&I I find particularly interesting. And maybe this is partly also because I sometimes get caught up in how does research work and data looking at things like that, but there's a compelling business case for the value of diversity.

The two kinds of diversity that have most been studied are gender diversity and racial diversity -- racial slash cultural -- and you do see strong correlations between organizations that are more diverse in those dimensions, particularly that leadership levels and in line kind of roles and company performance.

And so I think for Microsoft, when we think about our ambition of empowering people around the world, we know that the only way we can achieve that ambition is if we, ourselves, are representative of that set of customers that we seek to serve. And so I think Microsoft actually has a pretty clear point of view on how diversity and inclusion help us achieve our mission, which we believe is critical to achieving our business success. So there's a pretty straight shot at -- between connecting D&I to the business success and business outcomes that we want.

SONIA DARA: Why does the concept warrant executive sponsorship?

STEVE PETITPAS: Well, it warrants it because change is really hard in this space. That's what we see over, and over again. It's what you see if you look at our statistics, and it's what you see if you look at aggregated numbers that change comes slowly. If you want to drive that change faster, you really do have to have that executive sponsorship. People I think from the top saying, "This is how our culture is going to be, this is what we're going to start valuing more." People setting the example of I'm appreciating that range of opinions, those differences, I'm actively seeking them out.

It's not going to happen at the speed at which we would like it to happen if we just wait for it to happen from a kind of ground-up way. But the ground-up part is important, too. So everyone can be a leader on D&I, but it's particularly important, I think, that there's leadership on it coming at the executive level.

SONIA DARA: So do you personally identify as a male ally or advocate? If so, whatever are some ways you practice that allyship?

STEVE PETITPAS: I would say I aspire to be an ally, and there are times when I succeed, and there's probably times when -- in fact, there are times when I miss the opportunity to be an ally. I mean, it just passes me by. You know, I didn't see it or didn't realize it.

I more identify as an ally in training, would a way to put that. (Laughter.) And I think the ways that I try to practice it are to model that example of seeking out differences, and there are lots of opportunities to put oneself in situations -- let me back up.

It's a podcast, people can't see this, but I am a white, middle-aged male, okay? So for someone like me, there are lots of opportunities to put yourself in situations where you're not necessarily going to be like the majority. And those are very different from what you experience day to day.

SONIA DARA: Right.

STEVE PETITPAS: And I think that that's an important way of showing that you're an ally is showing up. And it's letting those people in those situations educate you.

And usually through that process, I find that it just kind of naturally comes up, "Hey, here's something we're trying to do or land. Maybe, you know, Steve you could help with that, have your point of view on it, or I can see an opportunity to help." And I think that's the beginnings of acting as an ally.

SONIA DARA: This actually just came up today. I host of Women of Devices monthly lunch.

STEVE PETITPAS: Great.

SONIA DARA: And it kind of came up where we're, like, "How do we think about inviting maybe our male counterparts to this meeting? Is it something that we would want? Do we want to do a separate meeting?"

And it was just like a point where you have the interest, is this meant to be a safe place just for the women, and kind of just figuring out the right balance, but it could eventually open to being where, hey, we do want to invite you in for some conversation and kind of open it up, but it's --

STEVE PETITPAS: And that's great. Those invitations are -- those are opportunities for breakthroughs for all parties involved.

SONIA DARA: Steve, you were acknowledged as a significant contributor in developing the marketing leadership recruit program here at the company, which was document in a 2004 *World at Work* article entitled, *Building the Talent Pipeline at Microsoft*.

The program sought to diversity talent pool of marketing and company leaders by recruiting not only MBA candidates, but also training undergraduate hires as well.

I'm referencing this article because it shows that you're not a rookie when it comes to thinking about human capital strategy, but also because one of the program's take-aways, the necessity of clear executive directly and stakeholder engagement. So what

are some of the ways that you've brought senior leadership along to support diversity and inclusion initiatives?

STEVE PETITPAS: We're fortunate at Microsoft in that our senior leadership genuinely cares about diversity and inclusion. And so bringing them along for me has mostly meant spotting an opportunity that I think they might want to be aware of or where they might be able to help.

For example, the last year, the members of GLEAM, which is our LGBTQ organization at Microsoft, started talking to me about some help with how to market the pride events for Pride 2016. And it quickly became apparent to me that what they wanted to do really needed to be sponsored, or would benefit from being sponsored at a Microsoft level.

There's actually pretty good business opportunity being associated with Pride because of the millions of people who see the Pride events and the Pride parade. So if you just look it from just a pure reach kind of perspective, it makes sense to invest and participate up to a certain level.

And to get the funding, I contacted several of our senior executives. And within 24 hours, they had all committed to the money.

SONIA DARA: That's awesome, that's great.

STEVE PETITPAS: Yeah, it is awesome. They really walk the talk. I mean, we had a good business case, the people at GLEAM had put together a really good case on this, but I hesitate to call it "bringing them along," but our senior leadership wants to see those kinds of things.

SONIA DARA: Providing the opportunity, for example.

STEVE PETITPAS: Right. Right. At one point, I was at one of our ERG events for HOLA, which is our Hispanic/Latino ERG. HOLA events are always just a lot of fun, and usually involve food.

And at that event, I actually happened to win a raffle. And part of the raffle prize was a paella lunch, you know, hand made by one of our employees. And so I suggested to him, "Would you think about bringing that in for my manager," at the time was our chief marketing officer, for a lunch with his leadership team. Because I actually want to do a session with them on some of the Hispanic marketing things that we're doing, it would be really fun for them to also have this kind of, you know, culinary experience.

SONIA DARA: Yeah.

STEVE PETITPAS: And, again, that, you know, bringing people along to a really tasty lunch is hardly like, you know, a struggle. It's another example of our executives, they want those opportunities, and so I think it's mostly about just when you can spot something, you'd say, "Hey, you know, I think this could be valuable and of interest to our senior leaders," and give them another opportunity to show their sponsorship because it's so inspiring how committed they all are to driving this at Microsoft.

SONIA DARA: That's great. And just to dive deeper a little bit into GLEAM. An ERG, for our listeners, stands for "employee resource group," it's a Microsoft specific naming metric we have here. And so like you mentioned, Steve, you had helped kick off Pride last year in Redmond for a campus event. And you had this really great quote that you said, "We all know the power of relationships and of love, enabling people to overcome adversity and do amazing things in their life."

So you kind of touched upon this, but what has working with GLEAM and witnessing the quest for respect and relationship equality taught you?

STEVE PETITPAS: What's inspiring to me about an organization like GLEAM, there's a value there that really resonates with me, and it is the freedom for adults to have the relationships that they choose.

And I am fortunate that I have never felt that there's any kind of a threat, a legislative threat or social threat to my relationship with my wife. I mean, we never felt like we're in danger holding hands in public. That's not true for people in different kinds of relationships I mean in all parts of the world.

And so I think it takes a tremendous amount of courage to stand up for that, and that is a right that's important to all of us. Just because you've taken it for granted, and I guess working with GLEAM helped me realize that I had somewhat taken it for granted. Well, you don't want to be passive at that point. And I think it's just so important to show support for that and it just resonates with me, and that's another important part, I think of being involved in diversity and inclusion, find places where it really resonates with your values because that's where you will naturally be the most energized.

SONIA DARA: Do you have any advice for our listeners on how to become better advocates for diversity and inclusion?

STEVE PETITPAS: As I was saying earlier, I think getting involved, showing up. And if you're hesitant about it, thinking about why are you hesitant and what's the worst that can happen?

I have had plenty of missteps in this space, and plenty of times where I have said things where people have looked at me as though -- pretty that that's not, Steve, what you intended to say. (Laughter.)

But you know, people are always willing to help you, like, learn and move on. I mean, that is part of the process.

SONIA DARA: Good intent.

STEVE PETITPAS: Exactly, right. And you'll get credit for that. Also, I find it fascinating, the whole dynamic of strength in numbers. And if you're suddenly in the minority and you say something that's really not quite right, you'll generally get support for, okay, let's learn from that moment.

SONIA DARA: Just really quickly wanted to take it back to your day job as GM on Microsoft Digital Stores and Microsoft.com Services. Your team is responsible for a ton of analytics. Just a little bit.

STEVE PETITPAS: We are.

SONIA DARA: In fact, you gave a presentation on this a few years back at the eMetrics Summit in San Francisco entitled, *On the Hook for Results with the C-Suite*. Do you have any advice for our listeners on how to establish a measurement plan when it comes to thinking about diversity and inclusion programming?

STEVE PETITPAS: Sure. The first point is: Go where the data is or can be. And that tends to be more on the diversity side than on the inclusion side.

SONIA DARA: Okay.

STEVE PETITPAS: It's easier to measure representation along a lot of different kinds of dimensions. And then the second part is if an organization is trying to shift its diversity profile, go deep on the pipeline. Go deep on looking at the composition of the organization, how that's changing, and what's happening in terms of new people coming in, people exiting, and use that to start to figure out, like, where are you having some successes and where not? You know, which managers seem like they're increasing their diversity? Which ones, you know, aren't? And what's happening there? How much of that's the business situation of the person?

But I think that's focusing the diversity part, and then really focusing on that pipeline piece, and then also looking at the roles where you're landing, like, diverse people because the impact I think can be greater in some places than in others, and you also want to think about having that diversity distributed as much as you can manage that.

SONIA DARA: Where can our listeners find you on the Internet?

STEVE PETITPAS: The best place is LinkedIn. I check it regularly and I'm a big fan of LinkedIn, so that is the best place to get ahold of me.

SONIA DARA: Thank you so much for joining us.

STEVE PETITPAS: Sonia, thank you. It was a pleasure.

(Microsoft Build Advertisement.)

(Music.)

NARRATION: Cutting Edge, our take on stories in the business and technology world.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: In this Cutting Edge segment, we're discussing an article by Christopher Zara that was published in *Fast Company* on March 20th entitled, "People were asked to name women tech leaders. They said, "Alexa" and "Siri." (Laughter.)

SONIA DARA: Oh, man. Yeah, the article covers a new study from LivePerson, a company that specializes in brand engagement. They asked a representative sample of 1,000 American consumers whether they could name a famous woman leader in tech.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: While listeners of this podcast might think that that's an easy pitch of a question, only 8.3 percent of respondents said that they could name a prominent woman in tech.

SONIA DARA: Yeah, but it gets worse. Of those 8.3 percent who said that they could name a famous woman in tech leader, only about 4 percent actually could, and a quarter of those respondents offered the names of Siri or Alexa. In other words, for those people, the most famous woman in tech is a virtual assistant.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: To add insult to injury, 57 percent of the respondents were able to correctly identify a famous male leader in tech.

SONIA DARA: Let's not get too "shamey" here, maybe. Maybe you're struggling to recall some of your favorite women leaders in tech, but if you want to up your game, a quick Internet search will get you to the most recent *Forbes* list of the most powerful women in tech.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Another great resource that I like to consult is a post on The Next Web. You can find that at thenextweb.com, and it's called "The 100+ tech and business women speakers you need at your next event."

There are a lot of lists like this floating around the Internet. So whether you're sharing them with the conference organizers in your life, or honoring a tech leader with your

next #WomanCrushWednesday social media post. Let's get the word out about the amazing women leaders in this industry.

(Music.)

SONIA DARA: Thanks for tuning into another episode of *Women in Business and Technology*. Keita is such an energizing personality, and I am so glad we were able to host her here in the study.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And I really enjoyed hearing your conversation with Steve about his commitment to diversity and inclusion here at the company. Male allyship is a major theme that we set out to explore on this podcast, and I really appreciate that leaders like Steve are making the time to come and talk with us on the subject.

SONIA DARA: Yeah. And as always, listeners, please remember to rate, review, and subscribe to the show. All of those actions help more people find us.

And speaking of, you can find us on Apple Podcasts, Google Play, Spotify, YouTube, or wherever you listen to podcasts.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Our website is wibt.com, and if you have any feedback or questions, please e-mail us at wibt@microsoft.com, or tweet us @MicrosoftWomen.

SONIA DARA: Your mission for this episode, if you choose to accept it, is to add an AmazonSmile recipient. AmazonSmile is an automatic way for you to support charitable organizations with a portion of your purchase every time you shop at no cost to you. Just visit smile.amazon.com and consider adding a charity that supports girls or women.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: If you need a recommendation, my beneficiary is Reel Grrls, which is an organization that empowers young women and gender-nonconforming youth from diverse communities to realize their power, talent, and influence through media production.

SONIA DARA: So, listeners, let us know which charity you choose.

(Music.)

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