

Women in Business and Technology

Transcript of Episode 026 - Connecting at Microsoft Inspire with Corporate Vice President Gavriella Schuster

Guests: Christine Bongard, Gavriella Schuster

Summary: Sonia and Colleen head to Las Vegas for Microsoft Inspire, the company's biggest partner event. Global Chairperson Christine Bongard shares more about the International Association of Microsoft Channel Partners Women in Technology community. Colleen interviews Microsoft's Corporate Vice President of the One Commercial Partner team, Gavriella Schuster.

Find audio and more information at Microsoft.com/WIBT

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: My career planning has always been around make sure that I'm learning something new, that I'm pushing myself and challenging myself, and anytime I feel like I'm too much of a subject matter expert, anytime that I feel like I'm too comfortable or life is getting too easy, then I know it's time to get a new job.

SONIA DARA: Microsoft Ignite is a conference for IT implementers and influencers, enterprise developers and data professionals.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Attendees will get the latest insights and learn new skills from technology leaders shaping the future of cloud, data, business intelligence, teamwork, and productivity.

SONIA DARA: The event will be held from September 24 through the 28 in Orlando, Florida. For more information and to register, visit Microsoft.com/ignite.

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 industry more inclusive, and bringing you tips on how to build a successful career in a supportive community.

Welcome to Women in Business and Technology.

SONIA DARA: Welcome to episode 26 of Women in Business & Technology. I'm Sonia Dara

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And I'm Colleen O'Brien.

We're in Las Vegas, recording on the expo floor at Microsoft Inspire, the largest event for active and prospective Microsoft Partners.

SONIA DARA: The event draws roughly 18,000 attendees from over 140 countries together for a week of networking, creating leads and partnerships, and in-depth learning on business-building strategy.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: In this episode, we'll learn more about the Women in Technology community affiliated with the International Association of Microsoft Channel Partners, or IAMCP. They host some great programming at Microsoft Inspire, and I'm looking forward to attending those events and learning more about the organization.

SONIA DARA: And we'll hear from Gavriella Schuster, the Corporate Vice President of the One Commercial partner organization at Microsoft. Inspire is a huge event for her team, so we're really excited that we get the chance to speak with her.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: But before we jump in, Sonia, will you tell our listeners about your morning?

SONIA DARA: Yeah, of course. So this morning was a little nontraditional. I had the opportunity to participate in Satya Nadella's keynote this morning. I was in a demo talking about modern meetings and this vision we have for the future of meetings and how we can bring in remote participants better.

And I talked about Cortana and Teams and even we had this one demo with a partner who had created HoloBeam where you actually ala Star Trek or Star Wars or the Kingsman where you can actually have a hologram of a remote participant in the meeting room with you. It was awesome, really cool. I'm glad it went -- I think it went smoothly.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: It did. Yeah, congratulations. It was such a cool demo. You guys did great work and it was awesome to see you on the stage.

SONIA DARA: Awesome. Thank you for coming.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Satya's keynote was awesome. I really enjoyed it. He covered everything from Project Natick, which is Microsoft's self-sustaining, underwater datacenter, something that's really important to us over in the Azure organization.

SONIA DARA: Yep.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: And also this really cool HoloLens demo that enables first-line workers to be more efficient and safe on the job. It was amazing to see holograms coming to life on the main stage.

So if you want to see Satya's presentation and or from the event, visit microsoft.com/Inspire.

NARRATION: Community Connect. Get involved and stay connected.

SONIA DARA: The international Association of Microsoft Channel Partners Women in Technology organization, or IAMCP WIT, has three major goals: One, to build and maintain a successful global business network; two, to inspire and mentor women to achieve their career goals; and three, to support young women and girls to pursue fulfilling careers in the tech industry.

IAMCP WIT hosted great onsite programming at Microsoft Inspire, including a booth and lounge in the Community Hub, mentor circles, business leadership sessions, a Happy Hour featuring communications expert Nancy Watt, an awards ceremony, and a charity luncheon to support Harvest for Humanity.

The luncheon featured a panel with former guests of our show Kathleen Hogan and Julia White, as well as Gavriella Schuster, the executive sponsor of IAMCP WIT, who we'll hear from later in the episode.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella was a surprise guest at the event, offering his male allyship alongside Microsoft's Executive Vice President of Global Sales, Marketing, and Operations, Jean-Philippe Courtois.

Christine Bongard, the Global Chairperson of IAMCP WIT, shared her excitement about the growth of the organization.

CHRISTINE BONGARD: I'm super excited about the growth of our organization. The past three years, we have seen our communities grow from four to 70 communities around the globe. I have targeted a goal to get to 100 within the next year, so we are on a mission to bring on 30 new communities this year. And our memberships have gone from a couple hundred people to a couple thousand.

So we've seen tremendous growth over the past couple of years, and after our experience at Microsoft Inspire recently, the interest in our group, I think we had a thousand people sign up for more information at our lounge. And we have at least 20, 25 interested communities to get up and off the ground. The future is bright and we're very, very excited.

SONIA DARA: IAMCP WIT will host their inaugural women's day conference on March 8, 2019 in Kansas City, Missouri.

To learn about that event and the broader organization, visit TheWitNetwork.com. And that's T-h-e-w-i-t network.com.

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

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: I am thrilled to welcome to the show the Corporate Vice President of the One Commercial Partner Team, Gavriella Schuster.

Gavriella, welcome to the show.

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: Thank you.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Can you tell our listeners a bit more about your job?

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: I am responsible for building Microsoft's partner ecosystem around the world. And so a partner for Microsoft is somebody who helps a customer to understand Microsoft's technology, who builds an application on top of our platform, who goes and helps a customer to implement a solution with technology or does a managed service for them. Basically, they can outsource their whole IT to this organization and that would be a Microsoft partner. And it can also be somebody who's just reselling software or services or even hardware to a customer.

And so those are all examples of Microsoft partners, and my job is to recruit those kinds of organizations to explore working with Microsoft, partnering with Microsoft using our technology as their platform, and then helping them to build their businesses, build their go-to-market and connect with customers.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: With such a focus on the partner audience, I imagine that Microsoft Inspire must be an incredible annual milestone for you and your team. How does your organization think about the event and what were your big goals for this week?

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: This is the biggest moment for us. We plan for it all year long. We start at the beginning in August on what are the key message we're going to want to land at Inspire next year, and then we start working with all of the organizations around Microsoft to make sure that if that means that we have to drive build new programs, launch new products, create new services, and even with our field driving specific success, that that is baked into our plan for the year, so that we know we're going to land with those key messages by the end of the year.

Jeff, my communications manager, and I also think through what are the kinds of partner stories we're going to want to hear and want to tell, and we basically plan my travel all around making sure we meet with those kinds of partners, that I can hear their stories, that I can help them out, and then we track and follow them.

And then when Inspire comes, we start ferreting through that to say, now what's really going to land the messages that we want to get to.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: So it's an entire year of planning?

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: It is an entire year of planning. And then it all comes together this week.

And the key things that we always want to share with our partners here, you know, what are the innovations coming for them, where is going to be the next big opportunity for their business, how do we help them keep moving, keep growing, keep learning, and then what are the kinds of investments and resources that we're going to pour into them to help them continue to grow their business.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: With a year of planning and then execution this week under your belt, how are you feeling right now?

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: You know, I feel great. I feel great. Because I heard such great stories from our partners. There's such a high energy. They are excited about the success that they've had, the innovation ahead. They're energized about our future. They do believe Microsoft is the partner to bet with and that we continue to deliver for them. And that's the most I could ask for.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Well, congratulations --

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: Thank you.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: -- on such a successful week.

Gabriella, after holding multiple sales and marketing roles at the company, you really honed your focus on the partner audience a few years ago. Can you share some of your philosophy around the career planning that got you to this specialization in developing the partner business?

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: Absolutely. You know, my whole career -- I'll take a step back. When I was a junior in college, my dad lost his job. He was about my age when he lost his job. And it was a powerful moment for me, because he had been in the medical field, in a very specialized field, and he had a really hard time kind of picking himself back up and finding the next thing.

And I decided at that moment that the job, the career that I wanted to have was going to have to be one where I was always learning and was very diverse, so that even if the company I was working for decided after 10, 15, 20, 25 years that they no longer needed my services, that I had enough in my toolbelt that I could go do anything.

And so my career planning has always been around make sure that I'm learning something new, that I'm pushing myself and challenging myself, and anytime I feel like I'm too much of a subject matter expert, anytime that I feel like I'm too comfortable or life is getting too easy, then I know it's time to get a new job. So that has been the driving force behind my entire career.

And then what I love about what I do now is that I could not be having a bigger impact in any role anywhere. A few years ago, I actually did reflect when I hit 20 year at Microsoft, is it time for me to do something different, can I give back to the community in a different way.

And I looked at a number of like nonprofit organizations and other things that I could do, and I realized that in the job that I have at Microsoft to build and create economic opportunity for businesses and people all over the world, to touch the lives of these partners, help them make their businesses better, help them identify the next big opportunity, whether they're in Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Morocco or Ecuador, and then the level of energy I get back from these partners about their excitement about the future and what they're able to do for their customers, I realize that I could not touch more lives than I do in the job that I have.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yeah, one of the stunning stats from Satya's corenote on Wednesday, the joint corenote for both Microsoft Inspire and Microsoft Ready, I think he said the people in this room employ 70 million people. And that was -- I was staggered, I couldn't believe that number. It's really powerful.

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: Yes.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Thank you for sharing that philosophy. I understand that having parents with a less than stable career can be a fear-based value, and it sounds like you've really leaned into the growth mindset of Microsoft in figuring out how can I continue to grow in my career. That's really admirable.

You graduated with your degree in psychology from the University of Michigan. And after a few years in healthcare, you made your way into the technology industry. What specifically attracted you to tech and how did your background in psychology prepare you for a career in this field?

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: It's a great question. So I moved to Seattle -- I'm originally from Boston. I moved to Seattle and I was working in the healthcare industry. And there was a small company called Aldus Corporation down in downtown Seattle. And I was like, what is software? (Laughter.) And I started to explore what they did, and I was like, wow, there's something really cool, really new to learn.

And what they were doing was taking everything you could do, all the printing, the newspaper industry, and they were transforming that without a printing press, doing everything on the computer. And I thought, that's a really cool thing to get involved in.

So I started working at Aldus and then they got bought by Adobe and then Adobe led me to Microsoft. That was the beginning. It was just, wow, that's a really cool new thing to do, and I think there's a lot to learn there.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Excellent. Yeah, just some curiosity brought you into technology.

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: Yeah.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: I also didn't realize that you were from Boston. I grew up in Woburn, Massachusetts.

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: Oh, okay. Yeah, I grew up in Natick.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Excellent, awesome.

So earlier this year, you sat on a panel at the Ingram Micro Cloud Summit on the topic of challenges that women face in technology and strategies for success. Can you speak to any of the challenges that you've experienced as an underrepresented person in this industry?

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: Yeah. I mean, so when I started in the software industry in 1991, I mean, every place you went it was just men, there were no women. And you go into a conference, you're in a room full of men.

And some of the challenges were they would totally dismiss you, not even take you seriously at all. They would talk over you.

And so what I learned from that is in the first minute of every conversation I had to establish my credibility. I had to talk about who I was, what I did, what I've done, and get that into the very first few minutes of an elevator pitch so that somebody would be like, "Oh, wait," right?

Even when I first started at Microsoft and I started traveling internationally, and there are biases that are a lot more acceptable in other parts of the world, especially back in the mid-'90s, where I just remember I went to one country -- I won't name the country -- I went to one country where I was traveling with a male colleague. I was more senior to him and there was not one person that talked to me during that whole trip. I could have been wearing like the Harry Potter invisibility cloak, right? And I was like, so that country's off my list, I have never gone back. (Laughter.)

But I think that what I learned from that, one, is that I had to speak up, that I had to have a point of view, that I had to believe in myself because nobody was going to like just open the door for me and offer for me to speak. And so I had to learn to just jump right in there, have a point of view, and believe that the reason I was wherever I was is because I added value to that conversation and so I was going to add value to the conversation.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yeah, it's really powerful to hear that specific anecdote. You know, no one assumes that you're the expert, and having to prove yourself continuously can be a little exhausting to have to do that.

One of the comments that you made on that panel that was particularly well-received was this notion of creating a big, bold plan. Can you share a little bit more about that strategy and how it has shown up in your career planning?

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: I believe, first, that if you don't know where you're going, you will clearly never get there, right? If you left your house in the morning and you didn't know what your destination was, you wouldn't get there.

And it's the same with your career. So you should always have a plan for the next thing and the next thing, even if you change your mind along the way. And so what that informs for you is what do you have to learn in order to get there.

Then I also believe that it shouldn't just be about the everyday of what it would mean to get there, right? Okay, so realistically how much revenue can we drive this year, realistically how many customers could we add this year?

I also think you have to have like what would raving success look like, right? If you were out of this world, reach for the stars successful, what would that be, right? So what would the headlines be?

So back when I was running our Windows Vista commercial business, oh man, we were - it was hard. We'll just say it was hard.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Sure.

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: And our goal when we were getting ready to release Windows 7 was that people would say, you know, Microsoft's back, Windows 7 is -- you know, it's a must-deploy product, and every single desktop should be running Windows 7, and if they're not running Microsoft Desktop Optimization Pack alongside Windows 7, you are totally missing out.

So we had like these big, bold goals. And of course, you know, here we were sitting on like the years that we were just coming off with Windows Vista, and that was crazy talk,

right? And we were like, no, we want Gartner to say that, we want CRN to have a headline, and we had all of these like littered around the office.

And we got there. Like within seven eight months, we got there, because we knew, like we knew that's where we wanted to go, and we did everything we could to get to that.

So that was the beginning of we should always do this. And so for every single project we just started putting out these big, bold goals, and I actually just rolled them out to my OCP field team on Saturday, and it was crickets in the room when I was talking about these things. And I said, look, this is -- I'm not giving you your scorecard and I'm not putting this in anybody's commitments; this is just this is what we should dream for, and here are 12 things that we could dream for, pick your favorite one, keep it in your mind every day, and you will get there.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yeah. I mean, if you don't have it top of mind, then you can't even be working toward that possible success. We create these ceilings for ourselves, and it's such a great strategy to aim even higher.

The panel that you sat on, that panel at Ingram Micro Cloud Summit, is just one of the many demonstrations of your commitment to making tech a more inclusive industry for women.

I know that you are also the executive sponsor of the International Association of Microsoft Channel Partners Windows in Technology community.

Can you share more about your motivation to make this industry more inclusive?

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: Absolutely. You know, I believe everybody has a story, every person on this planet has value, and getting everybody's voice heard makes us more human, helps us understand what it's going to take to make us all more successful.

And so we need to create work environments where, one, people feel like they're coming to see their friends every day, right? If you don't enjoy the people you work with, if you don't enjoy the work that you do, then you're not going to do your best work, you're not going to bring your best self.

And so you have to have an environment where people can be authentic. And so that means it has to be inclusive, they have to feel welcome, they have to feel empowered.

And when you bring in all of the different voices, when you bring in people's individual stories, we are all unique, we are all diverse. And so you have more women around the table, more minorities around the table, you have underrepresented populations in the room, you are going to build more inclusive solutions, you are going to create a more

inclusive environment, and you're going to be able to reach more customers, because you understand how to craft a message that everybody can understand.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yeah, I think Satya mentioned yesterday, you know, if we want to serve a global population of customers, our workforce needs to represent that global population.

I personally really appreciate all of the work that you're doing, so thank you very much.

Gabriella, with such a big career, do you feel any pressure of responsibility to do the work of representation and to demonstrate that leadership and success is possible for a woman in tech?

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: Yes, I do. Earlier in my career, I felt a responsibility towards my daughter. My daughter's 19 now, but when I first had her and I thought, you know, all my friends were deciding, "Oh, I'm not going to work, because I want to stay home," and I had this big debate about what do I do.

And I was like, you know what, I can do this, and I want to show my daughter that she can have a challenging and fulfilling life and career and continue to challenge and grow and learn and be an amazing parent. And that's what I'm going to do and I'm going to do that for her. And so my initial impetus was very personal, it was about doing that for my daughter.

And then as I have really gone through all of the things I have in terms of having to make my way as a woman in the tech industry, and then seeing the numbers that are alarming about how actually they're declining, women in the tech industry is declining, and that this is the highest growth industry and those numbers are declining, I feel a tremendous responsibility to bring more women into this industry and to not just personally be a role model but to really highlight all of the different women all around the world who are doing this today.

Because everybody needs to see someone who's like them, and we don't have the same ambitions, we don't come from the same place, we don't dress the same, right, we don't pursue our careers in the same way. People need to see people who are doing it in a way that would be authentic to them and see it can be done, right?

If you just looked at Michelle Obama and said, well, I want -- well, I want to be like her, I want to be successful like that, your life might not fit that mold and it would be hard. But you've got to find someone to look up to who has a similar background that you do.

Like, okay, we're both from New England, right? Like you've got to find someone who kind of has that similarity where you say, I could do that, I have all those same kinds of experiences, right?

And so the more women we can bring up and out and showcase and tell the stories, the more the chance we have of getting young girls to see someone they can relate to and be like, "I want to be like her."

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yes, it's one of our goals with this show is to represent as many different stories as we can. And as someone whose pursuit of role models and career success started with my own mother, I'm sure that your daughter will also go on to figure out what platform she has to inspire the next generation, too.

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: I hope so.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: I really enjoy reading the articles that you publish on LinkedIn, especially the post on the topic of prioritization.

I have a two-part question. Number one, is inbox zero truly achievable?

And number two, how do you stay committed to ruthless prioritization?

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: So, you know, I learned the power of prioritization back when my second child was born. When my son was born, I was like incredibly overwhelmed, right, and I thought, okay, time again to consider can I put work back into this mix or is it time for me to just be a fulltime mom? And I was like, you know what, I think it's possible, but this is going to take a whole new level of prioritization.

So I took five months off for my maternity leave, and when I came back into the office, I realized that things that were pressing and urgent when I left were still not done. And I thought, well, I guess they must not have been that pressing and urgent.

And that was like it was truly a turning point for me, because I realized that people always ask for something next week or this month. Because they can't actually plan out when they want it, they just if they tell you that, then they feel like, well, then it will get done, right?

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Right.

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: So what I realized is if you're just good at delivering on what you say you're going to do, and you give them realistic timelines, people just go, okay. Like if somebody asks you to do something, you say, okay, I can get that done in three weeks, and then they go, okay. Or they're like, I urgently need to talk to you. You just say, okay, so the next opportunity I have to talk to you is in two weeks, that work? Oh yeah, that's fine. Wait, I mean, like you just realize that nobody really has a sense of time, and so you put it in your time, you take back control of your life, you take back control of your calendar, you understand what your boundaries are.

I have dinner with my family every single night.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Amazing.

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: I leave work by 5:30 every single day. And I told my team, you know, if working out every day, getting to have dinner with your family, and not working on a Sunday sounds like a luxury to you, you need to reevaluate your priorities.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: That is such a nice sentiment to come from leadership.

I read an interview with you on ManagedSolution.com. where you shared some of your mentoring philosophy. You explained that when people ask you to coffee or ask to shadow you, that you always say yes.

Why and how have you continued to prioritize this despite the increasing demands on your time as a rising leader?

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: Well, you know, I have done that because for two things. One, people have always done that for me, and it has made a big difference in my life and in my career. And so I feel like I have an obligation to do that as well.

Two, because I actually get a lot of value out of meeting new people, learning about their experiences, learning about their stories. And so I always enjoy that time. It's some of the most kind of nourishing for your soul kind of time.

And, you know what, you can fit in anything, right? I mean, I do do a lot of calls that we call drivetime calls, right, where I carpool so I'm not always the driver. And so when I'm not the driver, I'll take a call on the way in or on the way home.

And then, you know, that time from 7:15 to 8:00 in the morning, 8:15 in the morning, generally no one's around. And so if somebody wants to come meet with me, we'll just have a cup of coffee, right?

And then the shadowing, like that's the easiest request people make, right, because, I mean, I'm fine having somebody follow me around. Like you want to be in my crazy day, that's awesome. (Laughter.)

And then I'll just give them some time in the beginning and the end of the day so I can kind of tell them what's going to happen and we can do a quick debrief about what did you see, what did you learn. And I always -- it's like a coaching session for me, because I always learn a little bit more about like, well, when you did this or when you said this, and I'll be like, "Oh, hmm, good or bad, right?" It's a note to self, right?

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yeah. The Women of Office Organization, they started this program called Reverse Mentorship, because they wanted to break down this expectation that mentorship is always coming from an elder or a more senior person. And they as an organization realized they had a lot to learn about the Millennial audience in order to serve the Millennial audience. So I thought that was a really great initiative that they rolled out.

You have spent over 20 years here at Microsoft, and you've built an incredibly successful career from launching Windows Server 2000 and Windows 7 to managing the Cloud, Server & Tools business for the entire U.S.

When you look back, what are you most proud of?

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: You know, I think what I'm most proud of is my ability to reinvent myself every couple years, to continue to push myself. I made that commitment when I first started my career, that I was going to always learn something new, that I wasn't going to settle for being comfortable, and I have been able to do that.

And Microsoft has afforded me the opportunity to cross six different disciplines. This is I think my 14th job in 23 years.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Wow

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: Right? The opportunity to continually explore something new, learn something new, and give me the opportunity to go into fields that I had no experience in, right?

When I moved from enterprise services into the U.S. subsidiary the first time to launch our new licensing in the year 2000, I didn't know anything about licensing and I'd never worked in sales. And they were like, "Well, that's okay, but you know about like launching things and you're good at starting new things, so that would be all we really care about, right?"

And so, you know, I've learned a lot of really transferable skills, and I think people undervalue what those transferrable skills are, because they think it's about the content, but it's never about the content. You can learn the content. It's about like do you understand the customer, do you know how to listen, do you know what an engineer is talking about. It's that stuff that's all transferrable.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yeah. You know, I started my career in the marketing organization but then spent some time in our Corporate External and Legal Affairs team, and now sit on the Azure engineering team. And I very much appreciate that I've been able to have that mobility at the company. And you're right, you know, it's a set of skills and it can be applied to different content, different businesses along the way.

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: Absolutely.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: With such a broad view of the industry, I'm curious about what trends you're witnessing. And if you could leave our listeners with one piece of advice grounded in those trends, what would it be?

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: Well, you know, sitting through the corenote on Monday listening to Brad Smith talk about what's ahead, it felt like we are on the cusp of every sci-fi novel we have ever read, right, that this is the moment where we decide do we do good or evil, right, are we going to get all lazy and let machines think for us or are we actually going to just use it to augment ourselves, are we going to be able to live forever because AI and technology will make everyone live forever, right? It's like it's the weirdest thing, right?

But the opportunity for us to be at this moment, it is something that I don't think any generation has ever experienced. And being at the center of the tech industry at this moment where I don't even think it's going to take five years for the world to look completely different, and to be able to say, I experienced that, I was part of that change, I drove that, and I was able to make sure that we stayed on a path for good, that's an experience very few people ever get.

And so what I would say is people should jump in with both feet to be part of the tech industry, because there is no better place and no better time to be part of the change.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Yeah, Toni Townes-Whitley sometimes shares the statistic that AI and machine learning will displace women from jobs more quickly than men, at a higher rate than men. And I'm really proud to work at a company that's thinking about the morality of artificial intelligence and making the right decision, taking responsibility with all of this great opportunity.

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: Yeah, absolutely. And so, I mean, that's sad. Like we already don't have enough people in tech industry, you know, enough women coming in, and then we're going to go displace women out of other jobs that aren't in the tech industry. That's part of that responsibility you talked about before. We have to do everything we can to help women see what that opportunity is, feel welcome into our industry, and to feel like they can contribute in a very significant way. Regardless of what age they are, they can take those transferable skills and move into this industry.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Absolutely.

Gavriella, thank you so much for taking the time with us today. Where can our listeners find you on the Internet?

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: So, you know, I have the luxury of having probably a very, very unique name, because if you search for Gavriella Schuster and you spell it right, you will only and always come up with me. (Laughter.) And so I'm fairly easy to find. You can find me on LinkedIn under my name.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Excellent. Thank you so much for being here today.

GAVRIELLA SCHUSTER: You're welcome. Thank you.

SONIA DARA: Well listeners, that about wraps it up for us here on the ground at Microsoft Inspire. It's been an amazing few days of meeting with partners, hearing about technology and program innovation, and getting the latest on Microsoft's vision and strategy

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: Between sessions on everything from sales to AI, it was great to connect with Gavriella Schuster and to learn more about the International Association of Microsoft Channel Partners Women in Technology Community.

SONIA DARA: Thanks to you our listeners for tuning into another episode. Please remember to rate, review, and share our show on Apple podcasts, or wherever fine podcasts can be found.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN: If you have any feedback or questions, you can email us at wibt@microsoft.com or tweet us @MicrosoftWomen.

SONIA DARA: Your mission for this episode, if you choose to accept it, is to work on your elevator pitch. This mission was inspired by an onsite activity here at Microsoft Inspire. Attendees could get a professional video recording of their pitch at the "Elevate Your Pitch" booth to share as a digital networking tool. Work on yours and share it with the partner community by using the hashtag #MSElevateYourPitch.

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