

Women in Business and Technology

Transcript of Episode 002 - Unboxing the future of STEM

Guests: Charu Jangid, Kina McAllister

In this episode, Colleen and Sonia unpack the future of STEM by hearing from a scientist-turned-entrepreneur about her passion for developing the next generation of steminists. You will also learn how to build your community in advance of and at events by leveraging the power of LinkedIn. Finally, Sonia and Colleen reflect on the importance of making women role models in STEM more visible to young girls.

Find audio and more information at Microsoft.com/WIBT

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You're listening to the Women in Business and
Technology podcast from Microsoft.

In each episode, you'll hear from women in amazing tech and
business roles, as well as male allies who are helping make
the industries more inclusive.

We're diving into programs that promote greater diversity in
the pipeline and bringing you tips on building a successful
career and a supportive community.

Welcome to Women in Business and Technology.

[MUSIC]

Welcome to episode two of the Women in Business and
Technology podcast.

I'm Coleen O'Brien.

>> And I'm Sonia Dara.

>> In this episode, we'll kick it off in our Community Connect segment with LinkedIn product manager, Charu Jangid, who offers some great tips on LinkedIn profile optimization strategy. We then have a conversation in our interview segment with amazing entrepreneur Kina McAllister, the founder and CEO of StemBox.

>> And to wrap it up in our Cutting Edge segment, we'll be talking about the most recent NASA class, as well as Margot Lee Shetterly's recent appearance here at Microsoft. She's the bestselling author of Hidden Figures. Sonia, I know that you recently returned from some travel. Can you share with our audience what you were up to?

>> I was pretty fortunate enough to be invited to participate in Satya Nadella's keynote back at Microsoft Inspire, our worldwide partner conference. I was super flattered. I got to present for the first time alongside Satya, in front of 17,000 partners and employees, which was a huge honor. And I think one of the coolest parts of it was that all four of the demoers during his keynote were actually women. And Twitter took note in a really positive way, and it was great seeing how many people responded. And I got to present alongside my favorite CDP, Julia White. And one of my favorite tweets,

it was actually from a gentleman who said he was so inspired he wanted to share this demo with his six-year old daughter.

>> I tuned in live to watch you at Microsoft Inspire, to watch your demo, and it was amazing to see you on stage.

It made me really proud to be your friend.

And it's great to hear that there was such a positive response to the representation in the demo.

[MUSIC]

>> Community Connect, get involved and stay connected.

[MUSIC]

>> Microsoft Ignite is an upcoming conference and a great way to get connected with other women in business and technology.

It will take place September 25th through the 29th in Orlando, Florida.

And honestly, it's gonna be an awesome opportunity to hear in-depth technical news and ideas and to learn about new tools for innovation.

>> I was really excited to hear that there's some dedicated programming for women in business and technology at the event this year, including a women's lounge.

Our special guests will be dropping back throughout the conference.

If you're attending, visit the women's lounge to catch a live feed of some of the great women in business and

technology program, or to network with other attendees, of course, with some food and beverage.

One of the sessions that I'm most looking forward to at Microsoft Ignite is the LinkedIn Profile Optimization Session with program manager Charu Jangid.

>> We had the opportunity to catch up with Charu over Skype, who told us a little bit more about her upcoming presentation.

>> You can think of this as gonna be like a working session.

Where you could on-the-spot edit your profile and bring it to a place where you're ready for the rest of the day's conference to start building those connections to make sure that you making the most out of the platforms.

>> Charu explains some of the ways to use LinkedIn in advance of conferences.

Her first tip,

get your profile in shape before you start networking.

So skills is one of the most important sections on your profile.

And the reason for this is that a lot of the people,

like employers or recruiters,

and people pretty much on the other side who are searching for candidates are searching by skills.

And so making sure that you have at least five skills

on your profile and you have the ones that you really wanna be found for, I think it's easy to sort of accumulate,

I would say a backlog sometimes of skills.

Making sure that the skills that matter for you are in your profile.

You can reorder them in your profiles.

So, again, making sure that they're up top, the ones that you really want people to find you for.

So I think that's very important for being found.

One of the, I think,

stats that we see is that people who have at least 5 skills that are relevant to the work that they're doing are being found almost 30 times more than people that don't.

So I think that's a really quick optimization that people can do to start boosting their profile.

>> Charu also encourages attendees to prep for the conference by searching for the hashtag #MSIgnite.

>> A lot of people also write content.

So, for instance, they'll use the conference hashtag and post something about, this is what I'm looking forward to at the conference, or they're giving a talk.

Sometimes they might actually give kind of like a pre-article on what they're gonna talk about to build interest.

So people know that this talk is happening.

So I think it's both great for being discovered around, hey, I'm gonna be at this conference,

let me see who else is gonna be there.

And also for reaching out to the people you wanna build that connection with beforehand.

>> Charu's final recommendation.

Leave the business cards at home.

>> When you're meeting with someone and you kind of have that desire to follow up with them, instead of doing something offline, just get their information immediately and connect with them on LinkedIn.

And one of the good things about how you send that connection request is we let you customize an invite.

And so when you're sending someone a connection request, having that context of, yes, we met at this conference and this is what we talked about, is really important.

Because they're also meeting lots of people.

>> To learn more about Microsoft Ignite and Charu's session, visit microsoft.com/ignite.

[MUSIC]

All right, let's see what we have here.

>> This is the rocket box from StemBox.

As you can see, the packaging is pretty STEM-centric.

There's the DNA double helix and a microscope.

Even some beakers and calculators,

all of the things you need to get science done.

>> Yeah, looks like there's some how-to cards that breakdown, let's see, the chemistry and physics of rocket launches, okay, casual.

Also spotlights two famous female rocket scientists, so
Mary Sherman Morgan and Rosa Obregon, pretty cool.

Digging a little deeper, we have, safety goggles,
can't forget those, very important.

And it looks like we have even some packets of, whoa, okay,
baking soda, citric acid,
basically everything you need to get started.

[LAUGH] >> Yeah,
there are materials to launch a mini-rocket as
well as a water bottle rocket.

And an additional activity here around calculating launch height
with trigonometry.

>> [LAUGH] Cool, this kit also comes with a great NASA patch
and a remove before flight keychain.

So it looks like after you complete all your experiments,
you have these great badges of honor to basically
show the world how great of a scientist you are, pretty cool.

>> I had the opportunity to sit down with the mastermind behind
these science experiment boxes, Kina McAllistar.

Kina, welcome.

>> Thank you, it's super exciting to be here.

>> You are the founder and CEO of StemBox.

Can you tell our listeners a little bit about your company?

>> StemBox is a monthly subscription box.

And we send little girls who are 7 to 12 years old
monthly science experiments.

So every box has something different that has all of
the components necessary to complete a sophisticated science
experiment, authentic lab wear to go with it.

And when we can,

Fun accessories to tie science back into their everyday lives.

>> Why did you decide on this form factor of
a subscription box instead of videos or a book?

Why was this box so important to you?

For me growing up I had been exposed to science Kits, and
they had a lot of impact on me and my interest in science.

One of the problems I felt like I kept running into was
that there was always a component missing, and
that was super frustrating.

And then the other aspect of it, there were two more, actually.

One was that they weren't really catered to my interests already,
which was frustrating.

So, the boxes that were for girls that were the products,
they just weren't as hard-hitting science, I think,
as they should have been for girls my age.

They are usually makeup or glitter associated,
which is fine for girls if that's what they like.

But for girls looking for
something else, that should exist.

And the other part of it that was frustrating was not getting
enough variation between all the different kits out there.

So they were all different ideas of what a chemistry kit would

be, but not all of them would tap into different subjects like engineering all the time, or entomology or ocean research.

Those weren't as widely available.

So for StemBox, the point was how can we number one, keep this a constant theme in their life?

How can we get girls exposed to it on a regular basis?

How can we give them a variety of topics?

And how can we make sure that they don't miss out on a piece that's really important, or

at least one that they don't have to go to the store to get.

And that's where the idea for a subscription box came.

Because it's super exciting as a kid to get mail.

And it's one of the things that gives you ownership

of whatever's in that box regardless of what it

is when you're a kid.

And that was where that all came from.

>> You mentioned entomology, and

I know that you recently partnered with The Bug Chicks, who are, in their words, two entomologists who teach about the incredible world of insects, spiders and other arthropods.

We at Microsoft love The Bug Chicks.

They recently recorded a video for us talking about how they use Windows 10 to run their business.

So I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about your partnership with The Bug Chicks.

How you met them, how you decided that this would be a good partnership for StemBox.

>> This is a fun story, so
my mom has always been a big fan of The Bug Chicks ever
since they started running their commercials with you.
And she called me the second, I think, she saw it, and said,
you should work The Bug Chicks.
And I was like, okay, Mom, I'll get to that.
I'm super busy, but I promise it's on my agenda.
And every time she called me, she'd end the phone call with,
have you called The Bug Chicks yet?
I finally reached out to them on their website, and
they were amazing.
They got back to us and said,
of course we'd love to make a box with StemBox.
We kind of took it from there, and
creating an entomology grade collection for girls.
Teaching them how to go out and collect bugs properly,
how to pin them in a way that contributes to science and
isn't just pinning bugs for the sake of pretty decoration.
So working with them was really awesome.
I think they had a lot of great tips for me as business owners
about I need to be taking into account with my business.
And they're also just fantastic role models for other women
out there who are trying to even out playing fields.
And they do cater to boys and girls.
But what I love about their message is that
they are very inclusive of boys.
Because they think boys need to see what female
role models look like in leadership.
And I thought that was a really strong point, and

something that I wanted to take back with me in my business.

>> So, Kina,

I know that you graduated from Seattle University with a degree in general science, focused on chemistry and biology.

Have you always been interested in science, even when you were growing up?

>> Definitely, [LAUGH] I think it started when

I was as young as seven, maybe five.

One year I begged my parents for this microscope.

And it was a really simple, light reflecting microscope.

It wasn't even electrically powered.

When I got it for Christmas, I spent most of my time the following months just finding everything small, from ants to my sister's blood [LAUGH] from her fingers when I could.

And just trying to explore what was around me and not really having any guide about, how to start on it.

But just having an open field to go into without any preconceived ideas of what I should be looking at.

I think that kind of started me down the emotional path of science is exciting.

And that there's a lot to see that I have never seen before.

And it's just all around a really empowering field to be a part of.

>> It's a feeling you carry with you, I think, as you start to age and go through your education and things get harder.

Especially when you're in a class, and
you're one of the only girls in your physics class.
And you're having a hard time.
And you're like, maybe I don't belong here.
But then you think back to when you were younger and
you were working with your dad in the garage on things.
And you realize, no, I've been doing this for years.
I do belong here and this is for me.
That experience, coupled with the way my parents were,
how they engaged with us in terms of science and
critical thinking, I think was very important.
I think a great example of that was a trip my dad took us to
the park, and we used to go and feed these ducks.
And one day, just not even really thinking about it,
asking him, do ducks have ears?
And either he didn't know the answer and
he really wanted to know, [LAUGH] or
he was holding out on us to teach us how to learn the stuff.
He took us to the library and
he made us after our trip, he taught us how to use research
databases on computers to find answers to our questions.

>> Wow. >> This is all before Google was
a huge deal, [LAUGH] it was more like those encyclopedia CD ROMs.
But yeah, ducks have ears, and that's something that sounds so
trivial.
But just the fact of being able to ask a question and
go find an answer for yourself, I think, is something that is
not always played up enough when you talk about education and

inspiring kids to pursue a field like STEM.

I think there's a lot of pressure on kids to memorize and get amazing grades.

But, I think, what's even more important than just the grades, is actually fostering a passion for it and finding their innate love of science.

Every kid has it, cuz every kid starts as a scientist.

And it's just a question of how do they interpret that and mold that into their career path.

>> I love that story, you have this curiosity and your dad not only fostered the curiosity, but showed you how to use tools to track it down.

I do wonder, you mentioned being one of the only girls in your physics class.

At what point did that curiosity, that interest in science, did that start having a gendered lens for you?

>> Subconsciously,

I would say that started as early as middle school.

Not really being aware that there was a gendered situation happening, but

when girls would go into their tests really stressed.

And then come out of it or go into a math class and say I'm not good at math.

And then they're in one of the highest math classes, and they still don't think they're good at math.

And that the boys generally seemed to be more confident in their abilities.

And the same to the test taking is they seemed to come out of their tests and

be really confident like, I did a great job, I aced it.

And the girls would just huddle together and be like, my god, did you get this or

that and really over analyzed their ability on that test.

So I would say that started happening as soon as middle school.

And then when I started noticing things was definitely, I think, not until college.

And that was always an interesting experience.

Because when you are a singular data point, it's hard to feel like your experience is valid.

Where the validity starts to come from, though, for yourself anyways, is when you start talking to other women about their experiences, and you start to share them.

Because, a lot of times what happens is really embarrassing, or you feel insecure about it and you don't wanna talk about it.

But the stuff you need to start talking to the other women in your classes,

or your career path, you start to realize, it's not just me.

And that was a really valuable part for me, starting to understand that things would happen.

>> And what were some of those stories that you were swapping with your classmates?

Like what was making you feel that solidarity with the other women in class?

>> For me, one of the things that I was frustrated about in college, it was that our labs, it was a small school, a judgement school, so the funding for lab space wasn't huge.

And, they didn't have open applications for the labs where I was going to school.

So I really wanted to be in research, and I would personally go to these professors and say, do you have room, do you have room?

But what happened is that they tended to go out and find their own students on their own, based on who they knew, and fill those spaces up without advertising it.

And through this it became this very difficult field to navigate, to know really what was going on.

And I still to this day can't necessarily say it's a boy girl situation at that school, but I did have one incident there that was pretty striking, and it was when I went to interview for one of those labs.

I was told there was space in this lab from a professor I trusted.

And I showed up to this meeting, and I read all this guy's papers, and I was on time.

And when I opened the door, he'd forgotten we had a meeting.

And he had my interview with me, but he didn't, I offered him my papers and my research, and he didn't wanna read it.

He didn't want to see my resume, and he just kind of cut to the chase and said, I don't have room here for you, but you're Hispanic, right?

And I said, yeah, and he goes, okay,
well I know a chica that can help another chica out.

>> What?

>> [LAUGH] I don't think he's a bad person, and this is always
one of those things I think that it was just so thoughtless.

And how it just made me feel so small.

He couldn't help me but maybe somebody who was more like me
and have more responsibility to me would be willing to do more.

Which was an interesting feeling and I definitely
thought that this is a lab where I could see myself working.

And then to be told by somebody, Just like off the bat that
there's no room, was just kind of jarring.

So there's a lot of variables and factors in that experience,
but what I can tell you is I felt very small in that moment,
because somebody just narrowed me down to a gender and my race.

And they were very deliberate about it, and it didn't feel
if this was a field that was happening at a higher level,
I could see myself continuing on and.

>> Despite these hurdles, or these overt or
unconscious biases that you had to deal with in college,
you kept pursuing science post graduation.

Can you tell us a little bit about how you thought about
charting your career with your newly minted degree.

>> I had mentioned before
that research was what I wanted to do.

And so

I did end up graduating without research experience in a lab.

What I ended up doing was writing a literature based research paper on a subject about gene therapies for HIV.

And it turns out one of the resources I had used for my paper was a lab based in Seattle, and that professor, that primary investigator of that lab, was giving a talk.

And so I ended up going to not just, like, one of his talks and asking him a ton of questions, but two.

And it was at the second talk I went to and asked him questions that he recognized me, because I was asking really obnoxious questions that weren't intended for the kind of setting they were in.

It was more like let's make the public familiar with this topic.

And so after the second time I went to talk to him, I just kind of talking myself up to asking for a job.

And I just asked him if I could wash his dishes, and he's laughing [LAUGH].

And his response was just like way better than I ever could have thought it was.

But he said yeah, why don't you come in tomorrow and we're always looking for good people in our lab.

And there actually wasn't that position available when I asked for it, so I ended up making that position for myself by showing up and interning for three months every day.

>> Amazing.

>> It was a really interesting experience, and something that

taught me that there are ways to do what you want to do, you just have to be creative, there's not always a straight and narrow.

>> Yeah, it sounds like you showed up super prepared, you knew all the content, you knew what you wanted, and you asked for it.

It didn't exist, so you made it up, I love that story.

>> Yeah and

I think it was one of the best things I've done in my life so far was working in that lab.

I've a short little life, I'm 26.

But out of the years I think that those 2 and a half years that I spent at that research lab, I learned so much about what we were studying with gene therapies and HIV.

And not only that but

I learned what does it mean to be a scientist.

And I learned there are differences in the workforce for women and men.

And going back to what you had asked me earlier about noticing differences, this is one of the moments when I did start to very consciously ask the women around me when I started if they had any experiences.

Because I didn't want to be blindsided about something or just not know and continue ignorantly.

And it was very startling to find out that most if not all of the women had some form of a story of feeling marginalized or treated differently because of their gender.

And then when I asked the men if they noticed anything,

they would always just be like, no, everything is great.

And that to me was so interesting how the guys, and you wouldn't expect them to, for not going through this.

But they genuinely did not see things happening that women were dealing with on a daily basis.

And that to me was a really big reason why that, coupled with the experiment in the lab Interview that I told you about earlier, was a huge catalyst for me wanting to do something about making this field more inviting, and at an earlier age, empowering women to pursue it.

Because the way it is right now, it does not feel like it is built to allow women to be who they are, without some fear of judgment or bias laying into it.

>> Could you talk a little bit more about that?

It sounds like your leading in here to your jump into entrepreneurship.

What was going on at the time that you felt like you could have a larger impact on the science world, as an entrepreneur than you could at your day job?

>> I had some friends at the time who were very entrepreneurial.

And it was never something that I wanted to do and it sounds so weird now.

But I didn't like entrepreneurship.

I grew up as a scientist and I thought that my path would always be work in a lab, go get your graduate degree, PhD, and then start as a post doc.

And then continue on your merry little way and
do all the science you want to do.

But, my entrepreneur friends, when I told them the story
about getting into my first job, really
encouraged me to talk to people about it on a larger platform.

So, I engaged in something called a town hall, and
you give a five-minute talk about something.

And it doesn't have to be anything necessarily political
or motivating,

it could just be how to teach people how to use YouTube.

And I decided to talk about my experience.

And afterwards so many people, men and women came up to me and
thanked me for talking about it, and told me their own stories.

And to me that was hugely validating,
because I was probably 21 at the time, 22, and
I felt like what I am going to do about it?

I'm just supposed to be this piece of the machine that's just
trying to change it from the inside if I can.

>> What was the specific topic?

>> I talked honestly about breaking into the field and
feeling marginalized a little bit.

It's always, hard like I mentioned earlier to feel super
confident, talking about your experiences in the field because
you're always like do I sound crazy?

And do I sound like I'm just paranoid and making things up?

>> Yeah, focus group of one this is just my experience, yeah,

I get it.

>> Right, so

taking that chance and going on stage and showing my experience.

And just being very clear, I don't know if it's like this for everybody, but this is what happened to me.

That was what brought a lot of people together to talk to me about what had happened to them, and to find that bigger dataset, where I felt more confident in moving forward.

Yes, this is not a field that currently equal for men and women.

>> Was that validation sort of what put you on the path toward STEM Box?

Toward figure out what you could do to make your message resonate a little bit more broadly?

>> Yeah, so, after that talk it was probably a few months in between that and then when things started to move forward.

And then the idea for a product came up.

Because I think there's a lot of value in talking and sharing your experiences on mediums like YouTube or blogging.

But, I think that if you can put something physical in somebody's hands, especially a kid's hands, the impact there is for a lifetime if you do it right.

And so that's how it transitioned from more than just an idea, and feeling of wanting to pursue equality and turning it into something like, how can we actually make this a reality and put this into kids' hands.

And based on all the other reasons for making a subscription box that we talked about earlier, that's where the idea for the company came from.

>> And I know that you did your initial launch on Kickstarter.

Some of the most recent venture capital numbers show that women receive less than 3% of all venture capital dollars.

I'm wondering if you were really intentional about going down the crowd funding route, versus seeking any investment externally >> it could be that I have always felt the need to do more than the required reading to prove that I am a good student.

And so for me part of that was validating that my product is a good product that people want.

And so before we even did a Kickstarter, I would go personally to Whole Foods and stand in their aisles and ask people if they kids who liked to do science after school.

And I did that for a couple of weeks before I actually started building things to find out if my time was worth it.

>> Like you were just hanging out in line at Home Goods [LAUGH] >> [LAUGH] I was just there like chip aisle and find people who look like they have kids.

And so, I was surprised I can still shop there.

>> [LAUGH] >> But, [LAUGH] it worked out, It was a really good way to kind of get some ground-level traction with the company and the idea of people really responding to it.

And from there, once we had an email list of just a few people, it was a matter of testing a product.

And so I took those emails and not only that, but I would actually go around to every coffee shop in Seattle and it's Seattle so there's a lot of coffee shops after work.

And post flyers for our first workshop to have girls in and test the product.

And the first workshop sold out in a day after it had been live for three days.

>> Wow. >> So it felt really awesome to see that.

And so doing the Kickstarter was an extension of that process of talking to people in Whole Foods and getting them to try the product.

The Kickstarter was going to be the ultimate.

Is this the viable product?

Do people really want this?

Would they put their money where their mouth is?

And it turned out that yes, people do want this product.

And they love the idea and format of it so much that they're willing to back it even when they don't have kids or they don't necessarily understand everything about this subject, that's fine.

But the Kickstarter, for us, was definitely another extension of product validation.

I actually didn't start fundraising until, it was October 2016, I took in my first investment track, and it's just because it's a startup.

And I think the more i've gone on in my business, the more I've learned that startups are, number one, expensive, [LAUGH] and then number two, they cost money to grow.

And as fantastic as all of our press has been, and all of our customers, the goal of this company is to get as many girls in the stand as possible.

Or at least to inspire them to believe in their abilities in this kind of medium, so they take their skills wherever they want.

And not enough money can be spent on that, [LAUGH] in my opinion.

>> Got it, Kina, I love this theme that is sort of come up thoroughout our conversation that there are many people who are raising their hands to support you.

Who aren't necessarily your target audience, or someone who has the same lived experience as you have.

It seems like this Uber goal of promoting the importance of getting more diverse voices into the science field, is something that a lot of people believe in.

And you've sort of alluded to this throughout the conversation, but I wonder if you could share what your aspiration is for your business, in sort of a societal sense?

Like, what does success look like, long term, or maybe even short term for you?

What will STEM Box help us solve for.

>> Short term,

I think I would be able to say I would successful if

I maybe changed on girl's mind about pursuing science.

So if she would try form of science a couple of months ago and said she hated science and was done with it.

But then got one of our kits and maybe shark research or something and changed her mind and

decided to pursue that avenue, I would feel a little successful.

And in a larger scale, I believe that StemBox should be in every girl's home, and it should just be part of the popular culture of, you turned seven, you get your first StemBox [LAUGH].

>> [LAUGH] >> And obviously, that's a pie in the sky idea, but why not?

>> I love it. Yeah, as a rite of passage, get your first StemBox, I love that [LAUGH].

Can you talk about mentorship in the entrepreneurial world more generally.

How have you tracked down mentors, and do you think about being a mentor yourself?

>> For me, when I started my company, I was looking around in my immediate community. So friends and people who I was just comfortable and familiar with and sharing this scary idea. And taking their advice, and that ultimately grew once you start making something into them wanting to help you along to the next step. So from there I was introduced to some other folks who were helpful.

And eventually what ended up happening,
I know this is kind of not in that same vein.
But someone reached out to me on LinkedIn after
our Kickstarter finished up, and he said,
I have a lot of experience in getting products out there, so
if you're interested in a chat, let me know.
And it was totally unsolicited, and I was caught off-guard, and
didn't know what to think.
So I took the meeting, and I went.
And It turns out this guy Mark has been our advisor and
one of my mentors since the beginning now,
he has just been phenomenal.
He's helped us setup our fulfillment center,
he helps us figure out our new contracts when we move to
places like Iowa.
So that mentorship actually came in just through LinkedIn which
was really not what I expected.

>> And Kina, do you think that it's because you were telling
your story publicly that people were just reaching out and
offering to help.

Like how do you think came about?

>> I think that had a lot to do with in there.
The fact that Stembox's focus is so much on helping girls get
into an even playing field appeals to a lot of people,
especially in the Seattle area where we started.
So there were a lot of in-bob requests for people who wanted
to advise us and become mentors, and obviously, It would be so

great to take everybody on as a mentor.

But one of the other valuable things that I've learned is knowing when it's not a good fit for somebody.

I think that there are times when certain mentors are very helpful for you and your product and your company.

And then at some point something changes, you go on to a different aspect of your career and they're still on your team.

But you don't have them as much for help which is totally fine and it's something that I have become comfortable with which is just keeping people on board.

But making sure that they understand we're doing something different right now, but when we come back to that, please we would love your help.

And people are very open to that, and I think knowing that you don't always have to be barraging them with questions is a very helpful thing.

Because I feel a lot of pressure sometimes to really utilize these people who have approached me.

And to give them as much value as I can in asking them questions and trying to figure out what I can add to the conversation besides just taking from them.

>> It's sort of like this concept of a seasonality of mentorship, bringing people into the game when you can use their strengths, but not barraging them with questions otherwise and figuring out how to make it a mutual conversation.

I think that's a really, a valuable skill in being a mentee is figuring out how to keep the knowledge flowing both ways.

>> And one of the most valuable things I think I learned from one of my advisers was, she is amazing and super helpful. But he made a very good point, which is that don't make me reach out to you because sometimes if you're the one asking for help it's really important to be proactive in asking for it. It's not your adviser's job or your mentor's job to come find you and say, what can I help you with? It's your job to approach them and be consistent. So I think that was another thing that I wasn't expecting, but he had a very good point, cuz he was one of my more regular mentors. And he still is and he now has email alerts for me [LAUGH] so I never forget to email him again.

>> Got it, so you've scheduled these sort of accountability checks to make sure you're keeping up with your mentors, is that what I'm hearing?

>> Yeah, so I have set reminders on my calendar and I get pinged about once a month that says, set a meeting with so and so this week cuz I have a handful of different people who I contact regularly for advice. And I try to make sure that I am at least on a monthly email or to get up to date and in touch and rallying everybody in a certain group email, that kind of updates everybody on our metrics and where we stand.

>> I think that's great,

I sometimes try to put blocks on my calendar like, make sure that you're connecting on LinkedIn with people you met this week, or keep your mentors posted on your progress.

It's something that can sort of fall to the bottom of our to-do list, and I love that strategy of scheduling it on your calendar to make sure you're holding yourself accountable to maintaining your network.

For people who are now looking to you as their steminist role model, what advice do you have for young girls who are considering an interest in STEM, or pursuing a STEM-centric career?

>> I think that one of the most important things that girls can remember when they're pursuing this field is that it is, number one, it is a hard field, and women have been doing hard things forever, so you can do it.

And then, the second thing is that if you don't like the day-to-day idea of a research lab, or what is stereotypically a introverted field.

Like, as it stand that is totally reasonable and that doesn't mean you won't be a good scientist or a good steminist.

I think it means that you can find opportunities that relate to what you love doing outside of a research lab and connect those back to science.

So for instance, you could be an illustrator for a science magazine because those have, they have a great need for that.

You could be a consultant on a movie set, or a sci-fi, something like that, and keeping that in mind, that science is

all around you and you can do a lot to contribute to that field.

>> That is great advice, yeah,
no matter what your interest is or your passion or skill set is,
there's a way for that to intersect with a STEM field.

Think that's great advice.

Kina have you personally witnessed any of your customers
opening a STEM box and can you describe that experience?

>> I have gotten videos from people who videotaped
their daughters opening their boxes and
going through the experiments.

And not to get too emotional, but every time,
I usually kind of choke up and tear up a little,
because it just seems so unreal.

Because it's a very small company right now, and then
to see these girls opening it and getting excited about what
they're seeing, is just, that's more than I could ever ask for.

One of my favorite responses to our boxes have been one girl's
Teach the box.

So they'll go to the experiment and
they'll film it and they'll talk to the camera and
make their own YouTube videos with it and teach people on
the internet how to do the experiment which is amazing.

Other things that I have heard from parents are that
we include, like I mentioned,
fun accessories in our boxes from time to time.

And we did a bacterial culture box last June and
we included a little E.coli, so it was a little plushy,

and it was basically a stuffed bacteria doll.

And this little girl would take it to bed with her every night

and so, just little simple things

like that where a little girl falls in love with her E.coli.

It's just, my gosh, I don't think I could ever be happier to

see a little kid with E.coli.

>> [LAUGH] >> [LAUGH]

>> Obviously it was so plushy,

but it's just, it's wonderful to see them being excited.

And one of the things we started doing is including steminist of the month in our boxes.

So they basically have a bio on the back of our postcards, and their parents don't tell them that they're going to be the steminist of the month, so they film reaction videos.

>> Wow. >> And that is super fun.

[LAUGH] >> Definitely sounds like a tear jerker, happy tears right now.

>> I know, it's really amazing to see how excited girls get for science and that,

if I have anything to do with that I am a happy camper.

>> Kina, where can people find you online?

>> You can go mystembox.com, and that's our website where you can go and subscribe, you can go watch our tutorial videos boxes,

where we fill everyone in on what we're doing.

And you can learn more about the resources attached to that experiment, outside of the box.

And we're on Facebook, you can just look for myStemBox on Instagram, also myStemBox, and Twitter we are StemBox.

>> Excellent, thank you so much for chatting with us here today.

I love that you are literally putting the tools into the hands of young girls to make them ardent steminist.

I can't wait to see what the impact of myStemBox is on our world.

So thank you again for being here today.

>> Thank you so much for taking the time and for all of your thoughtful questions, this has been really fun.

>> Excellent, bye, Kina.

[MUSIC]

>> Cutting edge, our take-home stories from the business and technology world.

[MUSIC] >> Sonya and

I were inspired by our rocket science STEM box to read up on the 2017 class of NASA astronauts, which includes five women and seven men.

>> Brit and Co ran an amazing article on the five women in the class earlier in July.

Profiling Kayla Barren, Zena Kardmen, Jasmine Moberly,

Laura O'Hara and Jessica Watkins.

Each astronaut had a great blurb and
an amazing photo in their gear.

>> A few things about this article really stood out to me.

The first of which was that Zena Kardmen talked about
Miss Frizzle whose a character of course in the amazing
television show,

The Magic School Bus as one of her heroes growing up.

And although I totally agree,

I really admire the curiosity of Miss Frizzle,

I think it's speaks to the lack of role models, or
the spotlighting of women role models in STEM STEM fields.

The article cites that 40% of girls between the ages of 1 to
10 are considering a career in STEM.

And it's really important that we have the role models for
them to be looking up to, to get there.

>> Contrary to what Xena had looking up to a 20-year-old
icon from a cartoon, which I did as well.

Ms. Frizzle's awesome.

Loral O'Hara though, one of the other astronauts,
was mentioning how she grew up in Houston and
had the Johnson Space Center right down the road.

And she was able to visit really often.

So she had a actual set of people she could look up to,
learn from, go to the space center.

She was a product of her environment.

And had this access which is different than what Xena had,

but I thought just as important,
if not kind of where she can hopefully start spreading that
from herself as being a real person as opposed to a cartoon
to start inspiring other young women.

>> Yeah, Loral's quote reminded me a lot about the conversation
that Margot Lee,
Shetterly sparked when she came to speak at Microsoft.
She's of course the best selling author of Hidden Figures.
And she came to campus as part of the Outside In speaker series
where Microsoft brings prominent thought leaders on campus to do
a little bit of lecturing, a little bit of conversation,
and some Q&A.

And Margot came in February of this year and
talked a lot about being the product of her own environment
growing up so close to NASA in Virginia.

And she had no cognitive dissonance about this phrase,
black female scientist.

It was something that she saw everyday.

So she didn't necessarily think it was special,
it was just very normal to her.

And it wasn't until she moved out of that environment,
that she realized how amazing and special these women were.

And wondered why we weren't acknowledging them or
celebrating them earlier on.

And that's why she made it part of her life's work to tell those
stories.

>> Yeah she mentions that they joined around 48,

is like the first scientist.

But we haven't quite heard about all of their work until now, and there's questions about of,

why hasn't the story been told before?

Some of it is rumors about classified work.

They couldn't share it, but a lot of it is sometimes their environment, so the women were separated from the men.

They had, technically, roles that were of a lower level, because they were the mathematicians as opposed to the analysts which were- >> The computers

>> The computers.

They were computers, literally.

Whereas the men have the more full-time roles as analysts and literally they would be the ones who would get some of the recognition.

So it took, like you said,

Margot Lee Shetterly's kinda life's work to be able to bring to life finally something this amazing.

And she talks about this concept of looking beyond.

And even they mention that in the book, as well as the movie, about looking beyond the person, their skin color.

Whether they're female.

Whether they work in XYZ part of the business.

And I think that was really important.

And she mentions that, in her speech as well here at Microsoft, that I think inspired a lot of people.

Everyone was very excited to hear how she even was able to bring her book to life as being a black woman, as well.

>> The thing that we love about this Britain co-article and Margot Lee Shetterly's conversation is that they both speak to the importance of shedding light on women who are really advancing the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

As Marian Wright Edelman, the founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund has famously been quoted as saying, you can't be what you can't see.

[MUSIC]

>> That was a great episode.

We look forward to hearing everyone's questions or feedback, anything you might want to share.

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>> Be sure to subscribe to the show on Apple Podcasts, Google Play, or wherever you get your podcasts.

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We look forward to connecting with you.

>> Thanks for listening.

[MUSIC]

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