

Women in Business and Technology

Transcript of Episode 003 - How can a leadership coach help you?

Guests: Frances Donegan-Ryan, Carrie George

Summary: In this episode we learn where you can be part of a supportive community and how a professional coach can help you. First, Sonia gets insights on the community building company, Janes of Digital. Second, Colleen shares her conversation with insightful leadership coach, Carrie George. Her insights can help you move forward and understand how to take down barriers.

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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 in a supportive community.

Welcome to Women in Business and Technology.

[MUSIC]

>> Hey everyone, welcome to episode three, I'm Sonja Adara.

>> And I'm Colleen O'Brien.

This week in our Community Connect segment we'll chat with Frances Donegan-Ryan about Janes of Digital.

>> We'll then hear from Carrie George about her experience as a leadership coach.

And wrap things up with a conversation about the infamous manifesto from former Google employee James Damore in Cutting Edge.

>> Community Connect, get involved and stay connected.

>> I recently connected with Frances Donegan-Ryan, the lead of the Global Bing Ads Fan program.

As part of her work,

Frances manages Janes of Digital, an event series that aims to promote inclusion in the online advertising industry.

Francis gave us a little bit of a background on how Janes of Digital was born.

>> Industry conferences can be a really, what's the best word?

[LAUGH] It can be an aggressive, or an unwelcoming, or feel like an unsafe event if you're a woman.

Particularly if you're there on your own and you don't have colleagues with you.

And particularly if it's your first one.

Cuz you're not sure what to expect.

And many of us are expected to attend industry events and

industry conferences as part of our personal development,
as part of our role.

I myself have to go to actually represent Bing Ads.

And so the thought was instead of the one night where there's
kind of a night club party, and it doesn't feel quite safe or
welcoming to go, what if we threw another, still funky,
swanky, still got cocktails and wine, event.

But where we actually created space to have conversations
about topics and issues and challenges that women
face in this online advertising search world.

Because that was really our industry focus.

And I think the number one tenant was that we would talk
about really meaningful issues.

But we would also be really inclusive, so
the event is open to men and women.

>> While events range in size and
skill, Janes of Digital has locked on an awesome format to
cater to many different networking styles.

>> We never have it in a corporate office,
we always have it in another fun space so that you don't feel,
sort of constricted by being your work self.

You can be your authentic self.

And we open the doors as you can meet and chat with people,
grab a cocktail.

And then we also provide professional headshots at
every Janes of Digital, so you can really walk out
with something tangible for your career.

So you can use it for your social media, you can use it for your speaker profile.

And we hope that helps women kind of get a leg up on that side as well.

Then we do the panel, and

I always wanna make sure there's time at the end.

So we have another 30, 45 minutes at the end for more chatting to really follow up on things that we've heard in conversations,

to get your photo if you haven't gotten it already.

And we definitely wanna make sure that we represent all types of people.

So there's a lot of people who are uncomfortable asking a question in front of a group, or who would prefer one-on-one conversations with panelists or with each other.

So I want to respect that and make space for that.

And then we try and

do interviews with people afterwards, obviously, so we need a little time.

But lots of nibbles, and foods, and drinks, and a really open and safe environment for anybody to attend and to experience everything we have.

And interact with people in the way that they're most comfortable and excited to do.

>> The Janes of Digital team wasn't seeing sufficiently diverse panels at these industry conferences, so they decided to host their own.

And they're considering

inclusion along a few different parameters.

>> When I would attend these industry events,

there were very few women on stage.

They might be sort of 20 to 25% of the total speaker slots.

And that includes sitting on panels, moderating panels,
leading training.

And in fact, I rarely if ever, saw a female keynote speech.

And so,

really part of it was we're not seeing ourselves represented.

We're not seeing ourselves represented on stage,
as leaders in this industry.

And then you have that sort of chicken and
egg where you would apply to be a speaker and they're like,
well, you don't have experience.

And how are you supposed to get that experience [LAUGH] if
you're not getting accepted?

So when we very first launched the event, we're like,
if we have a panel, which we do at every event,
then that gives a woman experience speaking and
then they can add that to their resume.

So it had a very tangible real purpose
to support women in the industry.

And then we had a transgender woman on our Seattle panel.

We've had other people on the panel who
have talked about what it's like to be an immigrant.

Who have talked about what it's like to be
gay in a very masculine charged industry.

People have talked about race.

In fact, our last panel in June was pretty much entirely focused on race.

And how do you even begin to have those conversations if you're curious, if you don't know how to talk to somebody of a different race, or you have questions but you don't know how to ask them?

>> To learn more about the upcoming Janes of Digital events, follow @JanesofDigital on Twitter.

You can find all the archived panel recordings at janesofdigital.org

[MUSIC]

>> Carrie welcome to the show, we're so excited to have you join us today.

>> Well, thank you, I'm excited to be here.

You are a leadership coach, as well as an executive coach at Harvard Business School.

Will you tell our listeners a bit more about the coaching profession and what a typical day on the job looks like for you?

>> As a leadership coach and an executive coach, I focus on professional clients. And my specific target audience is professional women. The work I do at Harvard Business School is with women in a program called the Women's Leadership Forum that's an executive education program.

And that program brings in women from all over the world and they get two hours of coaching a day.

And so I work with a team of four women, typically.

And we tackle, for each woman, a problem they're dealing with on the job or in their personal lives.

>> Interesting, and why have you decided to narrow your focus to a woman's specific audience?

>> Well, I'm interested in the issues around women in business.

And having been a women in business for many years, I have experienced first hand some of the joys of that. But also some of the difficult issues surrounding being a woman in the workforce.

And as I've done more and more research and more and more reading on topics of women in the workplace, I've really felt some things strike home over the last Ten years or so.

And in the research work that's being done around women in the work place, I'm just fascinated by the issues.

But I'm specifically interested in some of the ways women confront challenges.

Some of the ways women tackle issues, and some of the issues that women face that might be a little bit different from the issues men face.

>> And you touched on a few of them, but what are the concerns or problems that many of your clients are bringing to the table to talk about with you?

>> So specifically, for example, one issue that there's been a lot of research on is women's styles versus men's styles.

So a typical woman might be

less assertive, less aggressive than a typical man.

And of course it's all generalizations, so

of course there are exceptions to everything.

So I've worked with a number of women on how to make their voice heard in the workplace, without giving up who they are.

Absolutely critical that a person to succeed and

be productive, a woman or man for

that matter, has to feel at home in the workplace,

has to feel accepted, and wanted, and encouraged.

And in order to to experience those things,

a woman can't sacrifice who she is.

She can't be that aggressive,

type A person if she's not an aggressive, type A person.

That said, there are things women can do

to help have their voices be heard for example.

So some of the ways women can make their voices heard in the workplace include things like seeking allies in meetings.

If for example, Colleen, you said something,

I noticed it was talked over and

I noticed that Joe came up with the same idea two minutes later.

I might say, Joe,

that was great that you picked up on Colleen's idea.

Working with allies, and they don't all have to be women,

there are plenty of stories where it can be men

helping women with that kind of thing.

Another thing is practice.

Find those moments to make your contributions.

And if you have an idea, forced yourself to present your idea.

How many times have you sat in a meeting,
heard somebody say something, and thought to yourself,,
I thought of that, but I just wasn't sure [LAUGH].

>> [LAUGH] Right.

>> So having the confidence to speak up when you have something
to say, helps.

>> Right, we talk about that here at Microsoft as sort of
an inclusive behavior around meetings.

It's that not everyone needs to contribute in the meeting
itself, if you're not as good at thinking on your feet.

A great way to participate is putting your thoughts
together in writing and sending that message thereafter.

>> Yeah and I think that's marvelous to hear.

And I was doing consulting work at Microsoft quite few years
ago, and that definitely was not the ethic at the time.

And I've watched that change over the years, and
I'm really thrilled to see the effort Microsoft is making in
that regard.

>> Definitely, we are in a cultural revolution for sure.

So, Carrie, you graduated from HBS yourself,
before returning as an executive coach.

Did you notice any significant changes in the academic

environment in the time between your graduation and returning?

>> Yes, I think there have been some significant things.

I think in terms of the focus of the coursework that's evolved as the business world has evolved, there's a lot more entrepreneurship now for example than there ever used to be.

But, some other specific things that I've seen are a real effort with women and minorities to become more inclusive, in a way that goes beyond just the admissions office.

Dean Noria Of Harvard Business School came in, I don't know six or seven years ago, with the expressed charge of increasing the comfort level of women at the business school.

Apparently this had been complained about over the years.

And so he put in place various initiatives that have just been marvelous.

For example,

he actually had people go into the classroom and measure the time that women spoke in the classroom versus men.

And then use that data to train the professors on how to encourage non-participants to participate.

And to overcome some of those things like the man talking over the women about ideas.

They trained the professors and could show the professors where they were letting that happen.

Whereas before that data was available they just didn't see that.

Now, when I was in business school there just wasn't any consciousness of that.

Hey we made it in, we were on our own.

Nobody was really aware of some of the things that have been learned about more subtle forms of sexism.

Anything over was jumped on right way.

But I don't think we understood some of these ways that were less obvious.

>> No one had a stopwatch in the classroom and was timing how much men versus women [CROSSTALK]

>> [LAUGH] And

they're not doing that on an ongoing basis.

But and here's another one, for an example, Harvard Business School uses the case study method, and in fact it's a big source of revenue for the business school.

And when Dean Noria got there, he had someone do a little research and found that women were primary characters in 9% of the cases they used.

And this was in, I think 2011, so it's not that long ago.

9%, if you think about the people you work with, a lot more than 9% of them are women, so they are way under represented.

When I was in business school, I didn't think about the fact that they were under represented.

And yet, I can't remember all that many cases that featured women in important decision-making roles.

So that's something they've done to address that, is made a very concentrated effort to increase the presence of women in case studies.

>> That's fantastic.

>> Yeah, thank you.

>> I love that [LAUGH] >> Carrie,
you graduate from Harvard Business School, and worked for
a few large firms before jumping into entrepreneurship.
What led you down that path?

>> I was really ready to do something different.
I think I was a little bit a child of the 70s,
and had come from a family that didn't have any
business people in it actually.
And so when I went to college and then went to business school
and then went to Baining Company, I grew tremendously.
It was all new to me, it was all exciting for me.
And then I felt a little bit of an urge to go back to what some
might call the real world, [LAUGH].
Not that the other parts of the world aren't real as well, but
I had an interest in getting back to working with people in
all levels of an organization.
And so, my husband and I actually bought a company from
a gentleman who was retiring, and over the next 15 years we
grew that company, We, I think about tripled it in size.
And employed all sorts of different people and
really implemented strategic plans, just all the things you
do in a business and I loved doing it from the ground up.
After a while, I got ready to go back and think about, instead
of having a broad exposure to many different function areas.
I got more interested in coming back to a bigger business world

where the problems were maybe larger in terms of their impact on the world than I could have in a smaller business.

So both sides of my business career just have been great for me.

I've loved working on the shop floor and

I've loved working in the C-suite as a consultant and as a coach, both sides have been great.

>> Many early stage professionals in technology, really struggle with whether or not they should return to school to get an MBA.

>> Mm-hm. >> And

you can sort of attribute that to some of the great leadership in the industry right now.

Of course, Bill Gates and

Mark Zuckerberg don't have their undergraduate degrees.

>> Mm-hm.

>> So it's sometimes hard to understand the return on investment in this industry [LAUGH] of going back to school.

Working in the Seattle area,

I'm sure that you have many clients working in technology.

So my question for you is, is an MBA still relevant and important in the technology field?

>> I've thought a lot about that and I think for many people it is, I don't think it is for everybody.

I think we look at Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg, and they're pretty special people.

We can't all be Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg.

[LAUGH] >> Really?

>> [LAUGH] Darn.

It would be nice, wouldn't it?

So I think an ideal education for a business person is to have a liberal arts undergraduate degree, and then a graduate degree in business if that's the side they wanna go into a technology oriented program, if that's the side they wanna go into.

Because that Liberal Arts undergraduate degree gives you really the critical thinking skills that I think people need in business, gives you the communication skills.

Writing is so critical in so much of the work.

If you can get your point across concisely and in an interesting way- [CROSSTALK].

>> And in a compelling way.

[LAUGH] >> Compelling way, that's a better word, compelling way.

>> Getting someone to open that email is-

>> Getting someone to open the email.

>> A very important skill to have.

>> [LAUGH] Yes, as Mark Twain said, if I had more time,
I'd write a shorter letter.

[LAUGH] Anyway, the training you get in an MBA program
is really learning the nuts and bolts of how business works.
And what are the parts of the business that maybe you're not
gonna be working in but that you need to understand so
that all those inner relationships are clear to you.
So that's a little bit about what you learn and
the value of that.

The other side of your question is really
kind of a return on investment issue.
Is it worth the money to go get an MBA or to go to some other
kind of graduate school that's relevant to your work?
And that depends on so many things,
it depends on where you're gonna go to school.
It depends on what your opportunities are before you
go to graduate school versus after you go to graduate school.
I think it pays to really understand how will your
opportunities be different.
If they're gonna be significantly different,
then go for it.

If your opportunities aren't gonna be significantly different
then you wanna do it if you're interested in doing it.
And if you think that learning the content is going to really
make a difference in how your career develops over time.

>> At University of Washington specifically, because so
many people are in the technology world here,

they've been pretty scrappy about figuring out programs that really fit into the lifestyle of a technology professional.

Whether it's through distance learning or part time learning, or night and weekend learning.

And I think it's really great that higher education is answering technology in a pretty innovative way.

>> When I was answering I was really concentrating on two year MBA programs where you go to school full time.

I do think they're tremendous opportunities and

I know UW is a leader in that.

To do executive MBA programs or

other learning opportunities that could get you the knowledge you need without sacrificing all that income and those years.

>> I was a graduate of the Technology Management MBA Program last year so I really- >> Congratulations [LAUGH].

>> Thank you, I really appreciate your answer to this return on investment question.

I know that you're leading a session at

Microsoft Ignite entitled,

In the Pursuit of Happiness Bring Your Whole Self to Work.

What can attendees expect from that session?

>> Well first let me say, I am so excited that Microsoft asked me to do that session and partly because I wanna do it.

But more I'm excited that Microsoft is pursuing the issues of happiness in the workplace.

There's a tremendous body of research that shows that happier employees are more productive employees.

So there's science backing up the fact that happiness is important.

There's also a tremendous body of research around whether we can control happiness.

And the latest research seems to indicate that happiness tends to be about 40% just who you are, the way you were born, your genetic makeup.

About 10% due to circumstances, and about 50% due to things you can control, your attitudes, things you choose to think about.

And so putting those two things together, the fact that productivity is a function of happiness.

And happiness is a function of thoughts we can control.

We've got a great weapon to work with in terms of making employees find more fulfillment and be better at their jobs.

So in the session, I plan to talk about some of that science, first of all, to just explain what that body of work is and what some of the key findings in that body of work are.

And then I want to get into really the practical side.

What can you as a person do to make yourself happier at work and

what can you as a manager do to make yourself happier at work.

And some of those things have to do with bringing your whole self to work.

>> It sounds like some of the science that you're going to address in your session is grounded in this study of

positive psychology.

And positive psychology is not new.

Martin Seligman, who's credited as the founder of the study, communicated his ideas pretty broadly in this 2004 TED Talk.

And just a few years later, Positive Psychology, taught by Tal Ben-Shahar, became Harvard University's most popular class.

I remember that when I was at school, that class was lotteried, not everyone could get in to it.

>> Wow!

But as society, we still need to be reminded to prioritize the stuff that makes life worth living.

>> Mm-hm.

>> Can you explain any trends that you see in the clients that you coach and why we need to continue to have this conversation about positive psychology?

Why isn't it a part of our social fabric yet?

I think new is relative.

2004 isn't that long ago in the scheme of things.

And positive psychology really wasn't around until this century.

The practice of psychology had been rooted in addressing abnormal psychologies or mental illness.

So, really psychology was all about curing people.

Taking that next step to, what does it take to have someone have a really good life, it's not just the absence of illness, there's a lot more to it.

And exploring that has taken a few years, and obviously this exploration is gonna go on.

I think the trends I see are much more interest in people finding fulfillment, people finding a purpose.

One of the pieces of research that's come out, and this comes from Martin Seligman, and there are different takes on it by different researchers.

But there are five things that it takes to have truly authentic happiness and abundant gratification, and those are his words.

Positive emotions, deep engagement, positive relationships.

Meaning or purpose and accomplishment.

And I have clients coming to me, talking about, what is my purpose, why am I doing this?

And wanting to really explore those issues.

I don't think 15 or

20 years ago I ever thought about what my purpose was.

My purpose was to have a job and go to work and come home and do whatever I was gonna do.

Now that is a huge topic.

>> I'm wondering when is the right time to make an investment in a coach and how to track down the right person for you.

>> When you wanna make the investment, or when one of two contusions exist.

One is you're unhappy, or your stuck, say you like most of your job but you're struggling with boss,

or you're struggling with a colleague or something like that.

There's a situation that you need to address.

That's when you'd seek out a coach.

The other condition is when things are going great and you're ready for the next challenge.

And I think that's a great time to get a coach involved and to work with you on what that challenge could look like, what direction do you wanna take, how do you wanna pursue that challenge?

>> What are some of the dynamics that bring about those success stories, is it that a coach provide me with some external accountability?

Is it that a coach knows the right questions to ask?

What was that play there?

So I think the first thing that a coach can add, the value a coach can add is helping that person work through what they're really feeling, what they're experiencing, and suss out what's behind that.

I'm unhappy, I think I'm unhappy because of X.

What is it about X?

If X weren't present, would you be happy?

They're really peeling the onion on trying to find what is behind a person's feelings.

Is something coaches tend to be really good at, and helping a person find what their real purpose is.

What do you really want?

And I mean, people don't have time to sit back and

reflect on those questions.

And when you have a coach, you have someone who's trained to talk through those issues with and help you figure them out.

Accountability is another thing you mentioned and that is huge because a lot of times, making change in your own life is hard.

Making change in your situation can be hard.

Making change in your attitudes can be hard.

Making changes in your perspective can be hard.

And a coach can help you hold yourself accountable.

The coach doesn't hold you accountable,
the coach helps you hold yourself accountable.

And that's a really valuable part of coaching for
a lot of people.

People don't make the time to
address those issues that can really change their lives.
They're too big.

They're too hard to tear down into bite size pieces and
that's where coach can come in.

>> Carrie, where can people find you on the Internet?

>> [LAUGH] Well, thank you for asking that.

[LAUGH] My website is carriegoals.com,
and my email address is carrieg@live.com.

And Carrie is spelled C-A-R-R-I-E.

>> Excellent.

>> Carrie, thank you so much for joining us today, we really

appreciate you making the time and joining us for the show.

>> Okay, thank you.

[MUSIC] >> Cutting Edge, our take on stories from the business and technology world.

[MUSIC]

>> So as many of you probably know by now, in July 2017, former, now former, Google engineer James Dean Moore published a memo entitled, Google's Ideological Echo Chamber.

The memo gained some traction in August, but it was actually published in July.

And he starts off the memo by talking about how a lot of people who work in the tech industry are liberal minded and that he personally has faced some discriminated because of his more conservative viewpoints.

And many people actually believe that there's some merit to this argument.

>> Where people though started reacting to the manifesto was when he talks about one of the contributing factors to his argument is differences in distributions of traits between men and women. And how that might play a part in explaining why there's less than 50% representation of women in tech and leadership roles. So he kind of took this biological stance on why women might not have these leader roles in tech, especially in that's where a lot more of this flack came from and

where it started gaining a lot more traction in the media.

The engineer was actually subsequently fired.

And then on August 8th, Google CEO Sundar Pichai posted

a blog actually addressing the memo and his reasons for

firing the engineer which is also faced with a little bit

of questioning, especially from actual Google employees.

So just kinda quickly recite that part of the memo cuz I

think it's pretty important.

He says, to suggest a grip of our colleagues have traits that

make them less biologically suited

to that work is offensive and not okay.

It is contrary to our basic values and our code of conduct,

which expects each Googler to do their utmost to create

a workplace culture that is free of harassment, intimidation,

bias, and unlawful discrimination.

>> I love that he quoted the code of conduct here because

he's actually explaining that it's written into the foundation

of the organization, that it should be an inclusive space.

I also really appreciated this response from YouTube CEO,

Susan Wojcicki.

She wrote in an August 8th article in Fortune magazine this

really compelling and personal piece.

And I'm gonna read a quote from that piece.

As a company that has long supported free expression,

Google obviously stands by the right that employees

have to voice, publish or tweet their opinions.

But while people may have a right to express their beliefs

in public, that does not mean companies cannot take action

when women are subjected to comments that perpetuate negative stereotypes about them based on their gender.

I think it was really powerful that multiple leaders at the company took a stance against hateful language and hateful expression of data against other employees at this company.

And it's, at least around the water cooler here at Microsoft, it's obviously been a topic and I think people are expressing their opinions about it in different ways.

And one way which I thought was pretty helpful and a little cathartic is every month on my team there is a lunch we have, called the Women In Devices.

So that includes HoloLens, MR, Surface.

We have a Women in Devices lunch, and this is one of our topics.

Colleen had joined in as well, coming in from the engineering side.

We invited her. >> I crashed.

>> She crashed.

Much appreciated, and we kinda created a healthy discussion about this cuz I think it's on top of mine.

I think it's important to find a safe place to even discuss maybe something that potentially this guy might have been hoping it was safe discussion but

when someone starts questioning other fellow employees' value, it's important to, I think, appropriately discuss it.

So I found it pretty cathartic getting to discuss with other women, and it was also super valuable cuz we had female

leaders and managers and people CVP level in the conversation who are talking and discussing.

And I think it's important to foster healthy dialogue.

>> Yeah, it was a great conversation, really encouraging to see that a lot of your leadership was there.

It's walking the walk to show up to a small, casual gathering like that.

But really meaningful when you want to hear how your employees have been impacted by news like this.

So I really appreciated the invite.

>> Yeah, of course and it was nice to see how many of our male allies and coworkers also, at least reached out to me and made sure they could support however they could.

So it really resonated with me, and

I really appreciated the fact that my female leaders and people managers took the time out of their day to attend this meeting and to make sure their female employees and directs felt supported and respected in the wake of this memo.

[MUSIC]

That was another great episode, right?

>> I agree.

I'm also highly biased, but yeah [LAUGH], that was a pretty good episode.

To all of our listeners out there, we really appreciate you tuning in.

Please send us any feedback or questions you have and

you want answered on the air.

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[MUSIC]

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