Episode 2: The workplace gender gap

We have the will, but we have to now step into the moment and just do it. It's just a question of just doing it.

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Podcasting from New York City, just a few blocks from the World Trade Center. This Eye on I&D, a new podcast brought to you from the human capital experts at Willis Towers Watson. We designed the series with a single goal in mind, to help you, our colleagues in HR, and those passionate about inclusion and diversity explore the hottest and perhaps uncomfortable topics in I&D. Why? So you can help your employees and colleagues bring their best and whole selves to work every day.

I'm John Jones, leader of Willis Towers Watson's talent business here in North America and your podcast host. I'm thrilled to be joined in our studio by two impressive panelists as we take on the topic of gender in the workplace and the I&D gap across industries. First, I'd like to introduce Kim Azzarelli, co-founder of Seneca Women, a strategy firm focused on advancing women and girls and co-author of the book Fast Forward-- How Women Can Achieve Power and Purpose, and host of the Fast Forward podcast.

Thank you. It's wonderful to be here.

We're also joined by Julie Gebauer, global leader of our human capital and benefits business segment at Willis Towers Watson. Thanks for joining us today, Julie.

Thank you, John. I'm so delighted that you're hosting us.

Let's get started. Kim, at our HR Accelerate Conference back in June, you were a panelist on our I&D discussion, and you said bias isn't always intentional, and sometimes it is the result of having the viewpoint of only one group.

Yes.

Can you elaborate a little bit on that?

Sure. Sure, well thanks for having me. And I'm so happy to be here with Julie. What we found is that over a long period of time, historically, many things have been designed from one perspective, and that's a male perspective. We often say-- I often joke "why am I late for work and cold when I got there?" Late for work, because the workday is designed to not coincide perfectly with the school day, which I don't think anyone would design today, and so I'm late for work, and then cold when I get there because the temperature is set to the metabolic rate of men, right?

So nobody is sitting around being intentional in that case, but these are design flaws and those systemic design flaws can create a lot of problems. And so that's one of the reasons why it's so key to have a diverse leadership around a table, because diversity brings perspectives that maybe some people don't think about.

That's great. One of the things that I think about as we get into this topic is, is it hard to address these, or is it just the lack of passion to address these more rapidly than organizations are addressing today? So in other words, you just brought up two really good points. Why is that so difficult for organizations to address in a more thoughtful and systemic way? Why are they challenged by some basic changes that could be made?

I would say, it's hard and easy at the same time, and some changes are harder than others, obviously. I think the hard part to date has been the lack of recognition that these issues are there. You know, we were kind of creatures of habit, and we're used to doing things the way we do them, and business is hard to change, and it works in a certain way. No one really thinks, oh, yeah, I should think about how the workday aligns with the school day. It doesn't occur to people.

But when you point it out, the changes are really easy. They're actually easy to implement, but then they have to be intentional. And I think hopefully we'll get into talking about that, why isn't it happening as fast as we all like to see. And I know Julie and I have perspective on that.

The point about educating and bringing awareness to the topic is incredibly important. I think the vast majority of business leaders in the developed world, in particular, but even beyond that, understand there is a business case for diversity and inclusion, inclusion and diversity. And at the same time, they don't understand what's getting in the way.

There are myths in our system that are viewed as fact, and it is really important to have the open discussion, the education on the topics so that everyone, men and women, understand things like how building temperatures are set and how day schedules can impact one's ability to be productive at work. But there are other, even as important topics, like we can't address the issue at mid-career level in terms of getting greater representation, because that's when women go off and have families, and they don't all come back to work.

Well, let's look at the data and see how many men and women are actually participating in the workforce at that career level before we jump to the conclusion that we can't do anything about it, because that's--

There's a huge drop off, and we don't even know there is one.

Exactly.

WillisTowersWatson ‖‖'‖'‖‖

Right. So tell us a little bit about your careers and how you kind of came up in respective organizations and how you thought about gender maybe 15 years ago, versus how you think about gender today.

That's a super interesting question.

Yeah, it is.

But before we do that, I want to just address what you're saying about the myths, because I think this is a really important point. I couldn't agree more with what Julie was just saying about the myths, that there are these myths that are holding us back, and those sort of seemingly innocuous myths have huge, huge implications. And so I know Julie's aware of this that we worked with P&G to build this sort of awareness around these five myths that are holding women back in the workplace, and Julie touched on one of them, which is you know child care and the idea that children don't do well when women work, and in fact, the data shows it's the actual opposite that children do better when both parents work.

But there's other myths that are really, really harmful, and I think the one that for me is most interesting is this idea of if women would just lean in more, if they would just present better, if they would just be more confident, they would get ahead. But in fact, we know that fixing the women is not the issue, that there are systemic issues. We call this the fix the women myth.

And the second myth is this idea that there are not enough women in the pipeline, qualified women the pipeline for top jobs. And we know, and I know that Julie has the data on that, that we have enough women at all levels of society to fill those top seats, and it's not happening. But we're used to saying, well, it's a pipeline issue. We just don't have enough women.

I really enjoyed listening to Carolyn Tastad talk about pipeline, and she talks about it in terms of Fortune 500 and CEO representation. So OK, Fortune 500, that's 500 companies. Let's do the math. If we want to get to parity, that means we need 250 women. OK, let's see, how many do we have? Say it's 50. So we need 200 women, and you're telling me that we can't find 200 qualified women to run companies on this entire planet?

On a base of 40 million women.

I don't think so.

Yeah.

Right. That is fascinating, and the Journal reported recently this will be the first year that women out graduate men out of four year universities. So there's clearly qualified women out there. And to your earlier point, there is always this focus on we'll get them when they're young, right? We'll get them when they're young, and we'll build them, and so 10 years from now, we can achieve what we want to achieve or 20 years from now.

But that really then gets back to your point, Kim, around fixing the women. So the women we have now have to be fixed somehow, so they can accommodate our business organization the way we want them to accommodate it.

And you're a firm that's focused on data, and I think Julie's point is the right point, which is this is simple math, the way Carolyn and Deanna Bass, we all talk about this pipeline myth is that it's simple math. We need to do the math, and the math doesn't lie. We have enough women, qualified women in the pipeline to fill these top jobs. So now to your earlier question, what's holding us back? Is it hard or is it easy?

It's an easy solution. The hard thing is to have the resolve to do it, and I think this is, again, what Julie and I agree on, which is that we have to get more intentional. Otherwise, it will take another 219 years, as we all know, to have equality in the workplace. And we're about to hit the 100th anniversary of suffrage. We can't wait 200 more years for equality.

So you talked about people graduating college and equal men and women, and you talked about the duration of time. And I'm going to come back to your question, John, about at the start of our careers, how did we think about this? I entered the workforce 36 years ago or so, and I, at that point, didn't feel there was a women's issue or a gender parity issue. I'd gone through a small high school system. I insisted on joining the boys' cross-country team because there wasn't a girls' one, and I got my way.

And I went through a great program at the University of Nebraska, equal numbers of men and women graduating, same opportunities. So when I joined this company under the name TPF&C 33 years ago, I was invited to a women's group. And I thought, women's group? What are they talking about?

And I reflect back, and I don't know if it was naiveté, if it was arrogance, if it was being selfish or some combination of the three. I said, I don't need the women's group. That's your generation's issue. I got this. We're going to be fine. That's how I entered the workforce.

And it did not hit me that we still have a gender issue in the workplace for a number of years. And here I sit today, saying I'm in a position now of privilege, where I can really have influence, and I need to have influence, and I worry about the women entering the workforce today having that same Julie Gebauer attitude of 36 years ago.

Of course, now Julia runs a $3.3 billion business, and when Melanne Verveer and I wrote this book Fast Forward four years ago, we wanted to really articulate first the business case of why we needed women in positions of power and what women would do when they entered into positions of power and of course, the business case about how women drive economies because of their purchasing power and everything else.

But what we found was that women in positions of power often want to use their power for purpose and in the process of sort of redefining what power means. And so the more Julie's we have in the world-- not that we kind of replicate Julie-- but we do have women in the C-suite, and these women, like Julie, understand that they have this ability to really shape companies, and they can use their power for purpose.

And I think that is where we're at in this moment, where we could accelerate because we have the business case, the data's in. We have women in positions of leadership like Julie, and then I would say we have technology. And through that intersection of those three could help us, as we say, fast forward.

However, to your earlier point, if we're not intentional about what we're doing, we could lose this moment. And I think that's the moment we're in. We're in a very delicate moment.

If I'm running an organization, and I know I've got a problem, a traditional approach would be I know I'm going to go find someone, and I'm going to assign them the problem, and then they're going to come back to me in a year and tell me what they accomplished, which isn't really a great way of solving the problem. If I'm in the C-suite, and I want to address this, because I know I have not addressed gender diversity in my organization, what are the building blocks of what I need to do first?

So there's not like a one-size-fits-all strategy. You have to know your culture. That's like first and foremost. You have got to understand your culture. And you have to be honest with yourself. You have to not have a bunch of yes people around telling you things are great, you're doing great, it's all great, and then one day you wake up, there's a huge problem.

So I think you have to open your mind and really understand your culture better. That is number one. And then you have to think "what are the pain points?" Like, what's the sticking point in that organization? What's going to resonate with that culture? Is it the managers in the middle? Is it you never thought about equal promotion in the right way, or you're not doing those very intentional things that those really important intersection points, because it's not just about rah, rah. You know, it's not just about telling stories, and we want stories, and we need all of that for motivational stuff.

But we also use very intentional actions at different points in an organization. And there's not one-size-fits-all. So the first thing I would say to anybody is you have to be honest with yourself, and you have to be able to listen to what's going on, because your employees know. They know. You think they don't know. They know. And you may not know. And that's the worst place you want to be as a CEO, because your customers know, your employees know.

There is nothing non-transparent today. Everything is out there. So it's only you who may not be-- and it may be the people right below you who are not seeing things clearly. So I think the first thing is you have to see things clearly, and that's obviously driven by data.

Right.

Data, data, data, and I think I'll let Julie speak a little bit about that.

So Kim, I was just-- to be honest, you have to measure it. You have to know the data. You have to know where you stand today. And can't just do a broad brush, like, oh look, it looks good, like I have 50% of my employees are women, and they seem happy.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

[INAUDIBLE] the satisfaction factor.

You have to dig in and get to how does my company look piece by piece, level by level? And be honest with yourself and look-- fast forward. Look ahead, and see if I keep doing what I'm doing, how will it change? And if it isn't getting better in the direction that I want it to, that means I have something to do today.

Maybe I've done enough already that if I look forward, my new practices are going to get me to where I want to go in five years, and great. So on top of that, you said be honest and be intentional. So be honest, look at the data as part of that honesty. Then be intentional, Kim, I think is building in really clear processes that help individuals avoid the pitfalls in talent processes.

So when we are looking for senior level positions, we shouldn't assume that because our natural haunts give us a slate of white males, that those are the only people. We should actually put in a requirement that the slates for senior talent are diverse slates, that they include women and other underrepresented groups, because if we don't, if we keep going to our usual haunts, those levels--

They're perpetuated.

--are going to continue to look just like us. It's how we recruit, how we select, how we reward, how we promote. The lead in study recently that McKinsey helped sponsor around women in the workplace just fascinating, because what they show is that at entry level management, for every 100 men being promoted to entry level management, there are 79 women and only 63 women of color.

So at those numbers, we can all do basic math. We're never going to catch up, so we have to--

It's over, game over at the beginning.

So be intentional on those processes. Don't be promoting 100 men for every 79 women and think that that's somehow going to get you to parity in the future.

Yeah, I think this is such an important point. And so we've been so single minded about how we promote who we promote and who we recruit. But this idea that you can go outside your industry, you could find someone with great skills that are transferable and just be open minded should not be such a revelation. But that's the intentionality that Julie's talking about. You have to get intentional and say to yourself, I only need to fill 10 spots to get to 40%, 10 people, you know, in an organization of 200,000. I need 10.

And if they're not here, if you really don't have anybody in your 200,000 person pool, certainly you can find 10 across the global landscape.

Yeah.

I think that's right. And the unconventional candidate-- and I don't mean this just from gender diversity, but going outside your industry to find different points of view and maybe a different educational background can really positively influence that industry or your organization. So I'm based in Detroit,

do a lot of work with the autos. One of the biggest challenges is how do we attract people to the auto industry.

And it's been an industry where folks have not been interested in getting into for a long time. The downturn back in 2008, 2009 really kind of sent that industry spiraling, although it's had a very healthy run for seven or eight years. It was one where it's perceived as old school. And for organizations to really get over that old school mentality, they have to recruit not from groups of engineers that want to be working in the auto industry, because there's not enough of them. They have to really go after high tech organizations or--

And now they're companies.

Now they're tech companies. I mean, so much of it is tech, but also so much of it is still building a truck. So they're at a pivot point where they really need to expand beyond that.

I find what you're saying is so exciting, because I'm excited about the world right now and this limitless possibilities of everything we're building when we're talking about technology and AI, and I even spent a lot of time with Apple these last couple of years, and I'm just excited about the direction the world could take if we have sort of good people leading. And so for me, I could imagine a world in which you have people used to be, again, very like this is auto and this is pharma and this is-- but I think now, people's minds are open, and I think we have to get rid of the old excuses and just think that we could reinvent.

And I always use the joke, which isn't a joke. It's kind of true that I grew up in New York City. And for the first 40 years of my life or so, you know, I took a lot of cabs, I'll admit it. And then Uber, Lyft, and Via, and name your ride sharing of choice changed the way I commuted. I mean, of course, I still take taxis, but I'm just saying, that whole world didn't exist seven years ago, eight years ago, whatever it is.

So think about how quickly everything is changing for us, the way we think about everything from this year to next year, it will be different. And so we can't get stuck in these very old ways of thinking, and frankly, leaders who do, they're not going to win. I mean, it's going to be game over for them, because you just can't compete in that world. So we've got to-- and this is where I do think the business case comes in again. It's in our best interest, everybody's best interest-- there is no loser in this scenario. This is a win-win.

But if we keep sticking to these same myths, to these same ways of doing things, you know, we could talk for the rest of our lives. And I think Julie and I should just do something else for a living because what are we talking about? And one of the most powerful things I heard, and I know I mentioned to you before, was that when the Arab Spring became the Arab Fall, and women were part of the Arab Spring, and it was women who were into Tahrir Square and so many things happened because of these women.

And there's something about that idea of we need to be there, and we need to raise all these issues, but then we really have to be intentional in the designs, in the substantive things that we're doing, because otherwise this is all going to be a nice fad, and we just may not have the results we want. So we've got to be raising the issue and then be super smart about it.

WillisTowersWatson I.I'I.I.I

You teed up an interesting point around fad. So 80% of organizations are focusing their diversity and inclusion programs on improving gender parity, according to our survey back in 2018 are getting compensation right survey. That would not have been the case probably five years ago. And in fact, you know one of my first jobs in HR 30 years ago was affirmative action reporting for an organization, and gender wasn't in that mix.

And now we hear 87% of organizations are focused on the gender issue or gender challenge within their organizations. Is that because everyone just got immediate awareness? Why is this the moment that we need to do that? What happened?

I remember when I was first starting to focus on these issues in a business sense was in 2005 when we were talking about-- I don't remember the book The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid. But you know, that was a really important thought that don't look at the developing world as a philanthropic gesture. This is where the growth is happening in the world. This is a powerful economic force. And I felt the same way about women then, and I think what's happened over the last 10 years is that we've been able to make the case that women are one of the biggest economic forces in the world today.

And so the business case, which we sort of say is you know-- why do we even need to make the business case? Well, we do because we had to convince an entire world that it's really important to invest in women, both from an economic-- we want to lift economies, if we want to have social progress in the world. We have to do it.

So I think the business case helped us a lot. I think it's really important, and I think it's what's going to help sort of advance the world more generally. Companies, in particular, have recognized that this is not optional.

So people have been talking to business case for a decade now.

Yes.

It seems like just yesterday, but it's been about a decade.

And took that long to get traction.

Right. And I think leaders are also looking now say, hold on, I did some things a decade ago, and I'm where I was a decade ago, and nothing's changed. So I have to look again and really dig into what is causing this, and it gets to unconscious bias, full education about what are the issues that are at the heart of it and being intentional about change and measuring it ongoing. We are in a world of big data, data at our fingertips, and we should be able to now track progress.

So I think that has changed. I think government has gotten involved. And I think there is no doubt that the shaming and blaming or whatever you might call it in the UK, that it's from there what I would call-- some people would disagree with me-- brilliant piece of disclosure legislation that says show us a number. Show us a number about your pay gap, and there are all sorts of layers to what goes into that pay gap, but it's a number.

And that number says, am I paying the same thing, same amount, equal pay for equal jobs? Do I have appropriate representation at all levels? And they put a new disclosure law out there, and that's happening in many places around the world. And so yes, from a business case perspective, a lot of leaders get it. It's not optional.

And then when there is a law, it makes it even less optional. So those are a couple of things that come to my mind about why--

So true.

Why now.

So true. I'm a disclosures lawyer. I'm a securities lawyer.

I know.

So I really love when we talk disclosure. And so my dream, and I remember when I was a disclosure lawyer, and I was still at Avon, and I was the corporate secretary. I was sitting on a beach, and I was bringing the proxy, and I was thinking, wouldn't it be so great if one day, there was a disclosure around these issues. But it was so far-- this was 15 years ago. It wasn't even a glimmer in anyone's eye, trust me on that.

But I have to give credit to my partner at Seneca Women, Ambassador Verveer, because Melanne Verveer, I think she saw early, very early early, that it would be a partnership between the public sector and the private sector, which is what Julie just articulated, and that the public sector has a really important role to play. And What I've learned from Ambassador Verveer over all these years is you kind of have to meet people where they are. But then once you can educate them into why it makes sense, then the doors can open.

As it relates to kind of pay parity, that doesn't really tell the entire story. There are other metrics. There are other things that have to go into that. We touched on some of them a little earlier. But what are those? What are some of those things that we have to look at beyond are we just paying people the right way?

Julie probably speak to the data from Willis Towers Watson, but I would say there's-- you know, everything is about sort of high potential, right? Its payment, but it's sort of what's your future. I mean, what role can you play in this company that we have? I think people, unfortunately, and I think this is why we're not seeing as much progress, people are getting stuck.

Pay equity is obviously front center. That should be a fundamental. We shouldn't even be talking about this. We're wasting our time almost that we have to talk about this. We need to talk about getting women into positions that are going to give them the power that they need to have influence and to grow their careers.

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And I think when I was writing the book with Melanne, I remember there was a point we looked each other and we said, are we actually writing a book about why it makes sense for women to have equality at work? Like sometimes you ask yourself, like, Julie, do we really--

Right, spell this out?

But sometimes we do. And I really think it goes back to the first question you asked us when we started the conversation, which is there are systemic issues that we need to open our eyes to, and of course, they're sometimes intentional bias issues. And that's a whole other conversation that we haven't had, but for today, we're talking about what are these systemic flaws. And they're deep, and they're deep seated, and they're deep rooted, and it takes leaders who can have the influence that they can have to really change the minds of others, to just open their eyes.

I don't think anybody sits around and says, God, I really-- I don't want to promote any women. Let's just not promote the women this year. Nobody wants it. Everybody wants men and women a better world.

There are other basic metrics to look at. What percentage of people are applying to our management jobs? And is it appropriate across men and women, across every country of the world? How are we promoting people? Are the rates of promotion appropriate? Are they at parity for men and women? Are we transferring people around to different development opportunities appropriately equal for men and women?

What about attrition rates? Are we losing more women than men? What about hiring mid-career, those opportunity hires we have where someone just became available? Do they always happen to be white males? Or is there an appropriate mix of people at that opportunity hire level? And who's in our succession pipeline? What is the representation in our succession pipeline? And is it that same magical woman who's on everyone's succession slate, or do we have enough women to properly fill our succession pipeline?

Those are numbers that I would look at it, and I would not look at it for the whole company. I would break the company apart. What is happening in various parts of the world, in various business segments, and the like? And that's when you can get to, do I have an issue with how I'm positioning my company in the marketplace? I'm just not getting the people interested in coming here? Is it something about the value proposition and keeping people here and so on?

Yeah, there's one other statistic that I think you kind of alluded to, and I think it's really important to point out, which is that are women not taking the opportunities that they're being offered? Because we hear all the time, like, well, we offered it, but she wasn't that interested, or she declined the opportunity, and that's always like, well, you know, she didn't really raise her hand for that, or she says she's not ready for that role.

And I think most companies have this director level problem. It's really around the director level where you see like major stuck, right before you get to that vice president level, right around there. Every company I talked to in the world has the same issues. So again, you have to think this is somewhat systemic.

And this whole question of we gave her the chance, but she didn't want to take it, and I think we have to unpack that. And I think that's something that I know, again, we've spent time on in terms of this pipeline myth, which is, why is it that we believe the guy who says I'm ready for the top job, put me in, and we don't believe the woman when she's not as enthusiastic, and she says, let me think about this.

And I think you had a great example of that. And then there was one also I remember from Davos, where someone had asked a question of a couple of their direct reports, and that person said, you know, the woman said, well, I'll get back to you on that. I need to think about, and the guy said, oh, absolutely. We should do it. Put me in. And the right answer was I got to think about that, I'll come back to you. The wrong answer was, I'm on it. But we always tend to favor this sort of put me in, Coach attitude. And so we lose a lot of great people in the process.

We're applying those rules that you had mentioned earlier. Like there's a set of rules that says these are the behaviors that we expect to see.

100%.

So if we have behavior outside the norm, we question what's their passion around this?

She's not ready.

We write them off for that very reason.

Great story about a specific interview question someone interviewing for top finance job. CEO asks a question along the lines of we've got this cost issue, we need to take out this much money, can you do it? Male interview candidate, absolutely.

Right.

Without a lot of details about how.

Woman, I don't have enough information to answer that question.

Exactly.

Here's how I would go about determining it. CEO wanted to hire the yes man.

Yes, exactly.

And not hire the I need to think about it woman. Ultimately because he had the right coaching from HR to think about unconscious bias versus what was the right answer, he ended up hiring the woman, which was the right answer, because in an hour interview or two hour interview with high level information, you can't make a commitment that yes, I can do that.

WillisTowersWatson **I.I'I'I.I**

Right. And that's the culture, right? That's the culture that's been rewarded. That idea of-- I went to law school, so for me, I always think about the reasonable man standard. That was the reasonable man is the law, like liability and all these other things. And so are we always using men and male behavior as a reasonable standard and everything else is other? You know, that's kind of a fundamental principle that we're seeing is creating problems in the workplace.

And so those leaders who get educated about how to educate themselves and their direct reports on not letting someone say, I'm ready, put me in, and then put them in, but rather, think wait, maybe that person is actually not ready, and the person who says they're not really ready-- you're a leader. You should be able to see the reality of the situation and not just take everything at face value.

And Kim, until that becomes natural behavior, having HR sit on your shoulder as your conscience to ask those questions for senior leaders is a really good thing. There's something, though, that you've done at Seneca Women, which I think is terrific, because it provides that virtual person on your shoulder to help you through situations like that, and that's the Seneca Connect App that you've created.

Thank you. Yeah, well, we've spent a lot of time on that, and I appreciate you asking us about that. We've spent about the last year or so working with Apple, and they've been just amazing partners. And we actually helped Apple build this entrepreneurship camp for women, which I highly recommend to anybody listening to the podcast. You should definitely go check it out.

But we also at the same time created an app, because what we had found was in doing this work over all these years and advising all these people and writing books and everything else we've done, if you really want to change culture, it has to be in the hands of everybody. You know, this isn't a job of a diversity inclusion officer. This is the job of everybody in an organization.

And so we created an app that would basically allow everyday for you to get some positive information, some positive actionable thing you can do, a tactic, a tip, a lesson, stories, fast forward in less than five minutes a day because nobody has time for more than that. But you know, it's something that I feel has changed my life, and I'm part of building the content for it. But it changes even my own perspective, even the things we talk about today.

One of the best stories I've heard happened right after World War II about the power of diversity-- and it's Tupperware. Earl Tupper started the company because he figured out that slag could be made into this really great plastic thing that you could shape and mold and create a bowl with a top that burped and stuff.

But when he designed it, back in '45, everything was run by men. So it was reviewed by men. It got this great review. But it was reviewed by men, read by men. The men who were running the stores put a lot of it on the shelves, but it didn't sell. And it took Brownie Wise, a salesperson, to get one of these as a gift, realize that there was some magic to it and figured out the way that this product could sell off was by explaining it to people who were cooking and who were working to save food and make meals last longer.

And so she talked to Earl, said I can make this sell. I'm going to sell it door to door. The end of the story is she became head of sales, and that company that was about to die because the product was

sitting on shelves actually became a large successful company. And it happened because of diversity and inclusion, because if it was just diversity, and Brownie was a salesperson, and he didn't listen to her, it wouldn't have worked.

Similar story of how Avon got started. The founder of Avon was selling encyclopedias. And this was in like 1895. OK, so this was before women had the right to vote. And he was giving a perfume with gift with purchase, and he realized that actually nobody really wanted his encyclopedias, but what they really wanted was his perfume. So very quickly, his top saleswoman said, listen, I have an idea. This whole encyclopedia thing, not so much. But why don't we focus on the cosmetics business?

And that became the Avon. For me, the reason why I love the stories of Avon and Tupperware and the reason why I love the business model is because they were in the business of empowering women. This idea of giving women earnings opportunity happened because he listened, and I think that's what we're really talking about here, just listening. Be honest with yourself as a leader. Listen to the people in your organization. Get the data, because the data won't lie, but then act on it, and act on it in these very intentional ways.

And at Seneca, we really believe that we had this moment, and you asked me why is it a moment right now? What's so special about this moment? And we are in this 100th anniversary of women's suffrage. We are about to reach the 25th anniversary of the Beijing women's platform, which is a very big deal and created fundamental human rights for people around the world in very significant ways through legal frameworks.

And we now have the business community wanting to lead. We didn't really have this level of leadership in the business community on this particular issue until recently. And so, we are at this moment where we have women in positions of power, and we have men in positions of power who want to make change. I think men and women both want this change.

And we have an entire multiple generations coming up who don't expect the world to be any different. They cannot imagine a world that Julie described 33 years ago. They cannot imagine there's going to be any barrier to their entry or barrier to their success. So it's a talent war issue. It's a customer design product issue. It has to change for companies to succeed, and companies are nimble. Companies are nimble.

And so in this moment when we have all this possibility, and we have technology, again, that's why we created Seneca Connect. We have the things that we're doing, thought leadership. We have the will. But we have to now step into the moment and just do it. It's just a question of just doing it. And I think people like Julie, organizations like Willis Towers Watson who are providing the roadmap, the data, et cetera-- I mean, this is why we love to partner with you, because we feel strongly that the right business leaders, the smart business leaders-- and I can go from P&G to Apple, I can go all around the country with the people that I work with who want to do something significant. So this is our moment, and we just can't afford to lose it.

It's a beautiful way to kind of wrap this up. Julie, do you have any final comments?

Ditto to what Kim said.

Thank you so much for having us here.

Thank you.

Thank you. I want to thank our listeners as well, and I want to remind everyone that our next episode coming up is "Speaking the Same Language at Work."

[MUSIC PLAYING]

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