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An experienced tech exec, Shellye Archambeau serves on the boards of Verizon and Nordstrom as well as several other companies. She is the former CEO of MetricStream, a Silicon Valley-based governance, risk, and compliance software company that, during her tenure, grew from a fledgling startup into a global market leader. Anticipating the launch of her first book, *Unapologetically Ambitious: Take Risks, Break Barriers and Create Success on Your Own Terms* (2020), she speaks with Stanford professor Tina Seelig about how to advocate for oneself, find mentors and sponsors, beat imposter syndrome, and build an impactful career.



Transcript

Announcer You are defines how you build.. 00:00:05,780 Host On this episode, 00:00:07,800 We're joined by Shellye Archambeau.. Shelley sits on the boards of Verizon and Nordstrom and her first book "Unapologetically Ambitious" comes out on October 6th.. Here's hosts and Stanford professor Tina Seelig.. - So you've got this exciting new book coming out.. 00:00:23,180 I know that this is something that you've been working on for a very long time.. Can you tell us a little bit about the origin of the book and what inspired you to write it? - Absolutely.. 00:00:33,430 Well, Tina, I have tried throughout my career to actually be accessible.. I've been so fortunate to have a lotta help and support along the way.. So when people reached out, I was always trying to be responsive but as I got more and more responsibility, it became harder and harder to actually spend time and meet with people..

I still responded.. Matter of fact, I still do, but actually having that cup a coffee, let people pick my brain, this story, it was hard.. And I said, you know what? When I get to phase two, I'm going to write it down.. I'm going to share the strategies and the approaches that I used, how I leveraged different techniques and even some hacks, if you will, to really improve my odds to get what I aspire to because I want everyone to have the opportunity to achieve their aspirations.. So that's why I wrote the book.. - Well I can't wait to read it.. 00:01:25,190 Let's take a minute to dive in to your story so that people understand where you've come from and why your career has been so exceptional.. So there are not many success stories of minority, female CEOs, or executives in Silicon Valley and beyond.. What are some of the opportunities and challenges that you faced in your career? And how did you start finding your unique strengths? - oh goodness.. 00:01:49,000 So yes, I will tell you, I started out in the technology industry right from the beginning..

And we think today it's male dominated.. Ha, let me tell you roll the clock back 20, 30 years, it was even worse.. So the hardest part initially was frankly just being taken seriously, you know, getting that credibility.. I can remember here I am and I actually started out in sales because I joined IBM and every CEO I'd done my work, I wanted to be CEO one day and every CEO had started out in sales.. So I said, all right, that's the path to power.. I'm starting out in sales.. So my very first account is the Southland Corporation.. 7-Eleven stores is the company that they used to own.. And I walk in and here I am, I'm young right? Fresh out of college and the whole bit.. I walk in, all of the men are in suits and cowboy boots..

I can find one female in management in the entire IT department and I didn't see any people of color.. So here I am and people are calling me sweetheart and sweet pea and honey, and right? So I'm thinking, ah, this isn't gonna work.. And so I find that I had to actually call people on it in a very professional, right, not in your face way, because I had to have relationships with these people.. So learning how to actually establish myself right up front was important and it's something that I used all the way through.. - So how did you do that? 00:03:16,860 I mean, let's get to the tactics.. What did you do to establish yourself? And how did you know that sales was the right way in the door? - Right, so first on sales, 00:03:28,260 that was because honestly all the CEOs at IBM started out in sales.. So I just assumed therefore that was the path to take.. It wasn't like I said, oh I want to be a salesperson.. No, no, no, I just saw it as a step to ultimately getting a role.. And I will tell you, I still believe to this day everybody should have a job in sales..

You learn so much that you will leverage forever but we can come back to that in a minute.. With regards to what I did, let me give you an example.. I'm in a meeting with a gentleman and his name is, and you can't make this up, Mac McElroy.. All

right so Mac and I are sitting down talking and he calls me sweet pea.. Right, so you asked me a question.. It says, so and so sweat pea, da da da da.. (sighs) Right? So when it's my turn to speak, I look at him and I pause not to the point where it's uncomfortable, but just enough so he knows, okay, something's happening, right? And then I said, Mac, my name is Shellye.. And then I went on with the answer.. And what I learned was and by the way, he never called me that again.. He always called me Shellye after that..

So what I learned and what I took to always do when I found myself in those situations was address it.. But you have to do it in a professional, polite way.. You don't want people to feel uncomfortable because if you do it in a way where they feel they've been called out, you know, for instance, then you've kind of messed up a relationship that you're going to have to figure out how you fix.. Because if they're uncomfortable around you, because they're embarrassed then you're going to have a tough time creating a relationship.. So you want to do these things, but you need to do it in a way in which you aren't putting people back on their heels or making them embarrassed or doing anything that creates discomfort because it takes too long to rectify that.. - I think that is a really important lesson 00:05:18,810 because it's it there's often a instinct to want to say, you know what? I'm going to be really aggressive, you know, I'm going to be really tough.. I'm going to put you in your place, but it just backfires.. The key is you want to make sure that people want to work with you.. But you were very clear and you sort of held your ground in a polite and professional way.. Just taking a little bit of extra time to make it clear that you actually needed to be listened to..

- Right.. 00:05:48,380 I want to bring up here and maybe we'll get to it later also, but sales is interesting.. 'Cause I wanna, I wanna double click on this.. First of all, we're all salespeople, no matter what we're doing and coming in, right, I mean, you're selling a book right now, okay, is that in every role, having those skills is really important.. And understanding that also in sales, there are very clear metrics for success, right? So I'm sure that if you were successful there, it was very, very clear what you had actually accomplished.. Can you talk a little bit about that? - That's absolutely true.. 00:06:21,470 And I'll be candid, I didn't even think about that when I took the job.. But because you're on quota and you have numbers and metrics, it's all real clear.. And most companies, when they have reps on quota, they're racked and stacked.. I mean that people know who's making quota and who's not, it's all very objective in terms of who's doing well and who's not, right? So yes, that is super helpful..

But the other thing that I found to be really helpful in sales is you will learn that being told no is not the end of the world.. And you learn how to ask for what you want and what you need.. And honestly those two lessons, there's a lot more that you learn too, but those two are ones that you that I leveraged all the way through because what I've realized is if you're not getting a no, you're not asking for enough.. And if you do go to no it gives you a chance to say, why not? And there is so much power in why not? Because then people have to explain which means it gives you a chance to learn, to understand, to put together a plan.. You know, all that no means is not now.. - Right, not yet, not yet.. 00:07:38,313 Yeah, not now, net, not, but it doesn't mean like no forever finite never.. And all you have to do is to figure out, well, how do I make the time right or the circumstance right or my skills right or the experience right or whatever? How do I solve for that? And then you get a yes.. - Now, did you train for this? 00:08:01,810 I mean, was there training to teach you how to be a good salesperson or was it something that you just learned on the job? - Now fortunately back when I joined IBM, 00:08:10,260 there was real training.. So that yes we got trained on how to be a salesperson..

And frankly, that was some of the best training I ever got.. Like I said, you use it all the way through.. - So we have a question 00:08:23,780 from one of the students who wanted to address this question of how you present yourself, especially as a woman of color where often people want to paint a picture of you as being aggressive or dominant.. How do you overcome that prejudice as opposed to, you know, people sort of making assumptions about how you're going to be engaged in the workplace.. - Yeah, so, you know, it's hard.. 00:08:48,410 I know that frankly, being a minority female, whenever I walk into a new situation, people already have a set of assumptions in their mind.. Now you just can't let that be a barrier to how you approach things, but just realize it's the case and then do what you need to do.. So let me give you examples.. One of the things that I've found is many times being you know, I'll call it super direct is tough for women, because people will think that, all right, you're being just too aggressive right, if you're super direct.. So figure out how to be direct and just not super..

I mean, one of the things that I've found is being direct a lot of the times it can be in your voice.. So I actually found that if I really want people to pay attention, I start talking but then as I finished my point, my voice actually gets softer.. Now what happens? Why do I do that? - People have to let them closer.. 00:09:54,290 - That's right, they have to listen closer.. 00:09:57,810 And oh by the way, then I'm not a loud Black woman right? So there are, there are things that you can do in terms of to, to still stay true to who you are but just realize how to adjust for the culture.. And that's what I call it.. It's just like if you were to go to Tokyo or you were to go to France or you were to go to South Africa and you were trying to do business you don't have to change who you are but you do need to learn how to fit within the culture and be heard and understood within the culture.. Well, frankly, working in a male dominated environment same thing, it's just a culture.. - Well, so you've had lots of experiences.. 00:10:35,430 I mean, starting an IBM and you worked at Blockbuster, lots of other companies..

Can you talk a little bit about those different experiences and what you learned in each one of them or something you take away from that range of opportunities you had? - Oh absolutely.. 00:10:51,000 So IBM where I spent actually almost 14 years, the big things I learned at IBM was as I said, how to sell, so how to sell your ideas, get things done, et cetera.. I also learned

how to ask for what I wanted.. And I learned how to build relationships.. And then when I went to Blockbuster, my big learnings there were, I had always had a strong network, but my network was always within IBM 'cause it's a huge company and I was being moved around a lot.. So I really didn't build a big network outside of IBM.. And when I got to Blockbuster, that was my big learning, was, wait a minute, I needed to have people outside of this company who can also give me perspective and advice and all of those things to help me do a good job at the job, right, that I held.. So that was one.. And then heading off, and then, and then the other thing is just learning about the whole technology and working in environments where people don't actually have strong technology perspectives.. 'Cause that was true at Blockbuster..

And then getting to Silicon Valley, oh gosh, so much.. Because that's where yes, I was the Chief Marketing Officer and EVP of sales at two newly public companies, NorthPoint, as well as LoudCloud.. So that's really where I learned about talking to investors, right, pitching to boards, indeed, understanding what's important.. How do you scale? And at the same time, put processes and things behind it to make sure you don't like scale right off the cliff.. And then MetricStream, I just learned a ton because that was such a broken company when I got there.. And a lot of frankly, all the little things I had gained along the way really came together to help me execute as a strong leader at MetricStream.. - That's great.. 00:12:34,170 Now I know that one of the things that is such a powerful tool, I'm sure in all of these roles is learning how to negotiate and to advocate for yourself.. How do you approach negotiations? I know this is something that is often you know, missed in teaching in school, teaching people actually how to negotiate for themselves.. Can you give maybe an example of a negotiation that you've had about a new role or promotion that turned out to be pivotal in your career? - Absolutely..

00:13:06,160 And I guess the one I'll pick, there were a few but the one that I will pick because it's the one frankly I'm most proud of is when here I am in Dallas, Texas I'm at Blockbuster and I'm trying to get to Silicon Valley.. So I have an opportunity for the Chief Marketing Officer role at a company called NorthPoint.. NorthPoint was back when you did high speed internet, one of the first DSL lines, et cetera.. So they wanted, I'm not sorry not Chief Marketing Officer, they wanted EVP of sales.. So they wanted EVP of sales.. And I was like, okay, right this I can do.. Company's exciting the whole bit, Benchmark capital, lots of good people in terms of around it.. But I asked them what, how are you going to measure success, and I'm talking to the CEO, how are we going to measure success of this role? And what she said was, it was a she, she said, I want growth right, so grow revenue, grow lines, et cetera, and we need to improve our cost of sale.. We need to get more efficient.. I said, okay, if that's what you want to do then I have to have marketing as well..

And she goes, well, we already have marketing people.. And I said I understand that.. But if you want not just growth but you also want to optimize the cost of sale, marketing plays a key role in that and I need to have both.. Well, they gave him both.. So I became the EVP of sales and the Chief Marketing Officer.. But it didn't stop there.. 'Cause then I said okay, they came back to me and said, great you now have the roles, here's the comp, here's this right? And I said, yes, I just need one more thing.. You need me to be successful quickly 'cause the market is moving so fast.. The best way I can do that is I need to bring my assistant with me because she absolutely enables me to optimize my work, myself and my schedule, et cetera, right? So bottom line is not only did they move me and my family and give me a job twice as broad as they initially planned, but they moved my assistant and her family from Texas to Silicon Valley.. - Fabulous, I think a really interesting lesson in there 00:15:03,570 is A being really clear about what you do want, like actually real life, you know, being very thoughtful beforehand and being willing to ask for it..

- Right.. 00:15:18,620 but you, if you didn't ask, you were never going to know whether that was possible.. Exactly right.. And that's what I tell people, if you aren't getting nos, you're not asking for enough.. So it's okay to get to a no.. If they have told me no well, that would have been no different than if I never asked them in the first place.. Right? - Right.. 00:15:36,810 - So always ask.. 00:15:39,370 - Yeah and it's, I mean it's fascinating.. 00:15:41,500 They had already made the decision that they wanted you, right? They had already made that decision..

And so once they were already committed you now we're in a place where you could say okay, you know, in order to make this work here's some things I really need to be successful.. And I like the fact that you framed it that way.. You want me to be successful here, here's what I need to be successful for you.. - Absolutely, you always have to.. 00:16:05,650 It's the win-win part of it, Tina.. You always have to make sure that you're clear when you're negotiating and having conversations, what's in it for the other party.. Right, why should they do it? You want them to actually want to do it.. It's not just give you something but you want them to want to do it.. And that's why it's so important.. So two points that you raised, one is yes, always make sure it's the win- win, but the other is know your power and when you have your power..

If I had asked for that, like right up front, it never woulda happened.. - Right.. 00:16:42,360 and I need to bring my assistant.. They're like, goodbye Shellye, see you later.. But once they were already committed you now had the power to be able to ask for what you wanted.. - Absolutely.. 00:16:55,310 super important for you to take the time to consider that.. So you've obviously accomplished so much and you do so much.. How do you manage your time? Right, all of these boards.. I know that each one of these has gotta be a really big responsibility and time commitment..

All these leadership positions, how do you scale yourself and deal with the demand so that you just don't burn out? - It's, you know two things.. 00:17:23,070 One it's about prioritization and self care.. I learned the whole self care piece, the hard way.. So trust me.. When I say self care, self care.. In my late twenties, I literally burned myself out.. I ended up with some depression.. I had to see a clinical psychologist.. I mean, when I say burn myself out, I did.. And by the way, I talk about all

that in the book, because it's important to share..

This is not easy.. This is hard stuff.. And so I learned all right, gotta make sure I take care of myself.. So with that is the base, prioritization.. It really is about what's important.. And the way I always try to think about it is all right here's the list of things that need to get done.. What is really important? What am I the best person to do? 'Cause you know there's a lot of times there's things on your list and you're not necessarily the best person to do it.. Other people can do it doesn't mean you can't do it but there might be somebody else that's better to do it.. Which means you actually need to let go.. You can't do everything..

I don't do everything.. Nobody does everything.. The key is to be conscious about what you don't do versus letting things fall off your plate.. 'Cause letting things fall off the plate means you're not going to be doing a good job at whatever it is.. So be conscious and push stuff off your plate so that you control it.. - And have people 00:18:38,903 pull it off your plate, yeah.. - Exactly, be in control.. 00:18:49,360 But it really is, (sighs) it's making sure that you don't retain responsibility for everything.. You know I was in, I had a longterm marriage until my husband passed away.. I have two kids, right, I now have grandchildren..

But my point in sharing that is there were things that I never did, I did not have responsibility for and I did not do.. I'll give you an example.. From the time I got married, I did not do laundry.. Not once.. My husband might ask me oh Shellye, would you mind pushing the, moving one load from the washer to the dryer, right? So he might ask me that if I'm walking past where the laundry room is.. I did not do laundry.. So if I needed something and it was still dirty I just did without.. I was not going to touch laundry, 'cause that was not my job.. So being real clear about what you're going to do, what you're not going to do and then actually letting go, I have a picture on my wall to this day, it's my, one of my favorites of my daughter with her hair kinda messed up.. And let me explain what I mean..

When we divided and conquered.. So he now has hair duty.. Well, my husband is, you know, big, big hands.. He's never braided little girls thick curly hair, right? But he needed to learn.. So when he did it and it was kind of messed up did I redo it? No, she doesn't care.. And he's gotta learn.. If I went and redid it after he did it, then he wouldn't do it anymore, right, and then I still have the job.. So it's picture day and her hair is supposed to be braided and then kind of crossed over like a little crown.. Well, by the time it came time to take the pictures one braids hanging down, it's kind of unraveling, the other one's pinned up on the head because he didn't-- - And you know what, it's fabulous right? 00:20:32,061 - Right! 00:20:45,140 You do not need to be perfect about everything and don't worry.. This is the hardest part..

Are you listening? This is the hardest part.. - Okay.. 00:20:57,350 Because you either feel guilty or you feel judged, right? It's one of the two.. And at the end of the day, you decide you need to decide what you should be judged on.. And I decided that how my daughter's hair looked was not how I was going to be judged.. - That's great.. 00:21:16,120 So one of the students asked a question related to this.. He wants to know that as a student, how do I push things off my plate, right? You don't necessarily, you don't have it as a student, have someone you can delegate to.. How do you decide your priorities? You know if you've got a lotta interests and you've got a lotta people in your life, how do you decide when you're a young person and you can't delegate the laundry to someone else, how do you make that happen? Alright, so you actually still can and let me talk about that.. So when I went to Wharton, I was working 20 hours a week which is a lot when you're still a full time student..

So I understand, right? Here's the challenge.. The key really is prioritization.. And it means there's some things that you just can't do.. So I was really disciplined about all right, here's what has to be done when.. Now, what do I mean by you can still delegate? My roommate and I at my suggestion, we shared laundry duty.. All right, so it's like, okay, you do it, you know, this time you do both, right and then I'll do it.. But that way, you know what you do laundry half the time.. And it takes about the same amount of time.. You just take more washers or dryers, right, 'cause you're in the big area.. So there are things that you can still do in terms of sharing to create time for yourself, by frankly helping others, right? But the big thing is, look at how you really are spending your time and making sure that it matches with your priorities..

Many times it actually doesn't.. You have the list, but if you really map back for the week how did I spend my time compared to what my priorities were? A lotta times, it actually doesn't match.. - Really good point.. 00:22:54,930 Now I wanna go to a question that one of the students asked is you know, you've been given the opportunity sometimes they're really big opportunities and they might be sort of beyond your current capabilities.. How do you deal with the uncertainties around taking a big leap when the job you're taking feels much bigger than something you've ever done before? You know sorta, how do you get over those insecurities? - Right, so two things.. 00:23:22,490 One I call you know, in general that's really called imposter syndrome, right? Which is when you think that, ooh, I really don't have all that I need to be able to do this.. Or somebody is gonna figure it, if I take this job somebody's gonna figure out I don't know as much as I've, you know as they think I know, all those things.. Which I also talk about a lot in the book because I've dealt with imposter syndrome, my entire life.. Studies show that just about everybody does but women in particular definitely experience it a lot more than men and women of color, according to studies actually experience it the most.. So how do you handle it? First of all, realize that a lot of people feel it..

So it's okay.. Second, realize every time, every time you take a big leap forward you're starting at the bottom rung of the next ladder.. And that's true for everyone.. And if you really want to make progress, you want to get to the top of a ladder, jump

to the bottom rung and go again.. If you keep just jumping mid rung you're not going to go very far, very fast.. So it's called taking risk, which is also okay.. But how do you get over it? So number one, realize everybody feels that way.. Number two, if somebody offered you the role then they obviously believe that you can do it.. Believe them, all right.. They're telling you they have confidence in you..

Believe them.. And if that's still not enough, fake it until you make it.. You know, walk in, put your shoulders back and say, okay, today I am playing the role of project manager of brand new company XYZ, right? And eventually you're going to figure it out.. And if that's still not good enough I tell people, get cheerleaders.. And I mean cheerleaders rah, rah, go Tina, go Betsy, go Dan, right? Cheerleaders, people who remind you when you're feeling totally incompetent and incapable and all this, remind you of who you are, remind you of the skills, the education, what you've actually done right? Building you up, because so much in the world today is tearing us down telling us how we're not quite and then fill in the blank.. We're not quite smart enough not quite techie enough, not quite pretty enough, not quite young enough, not quite I don't know, right, all these things, we're not enough.. Well, the good news is you really are.. And if you don't believe it, then have somebody, I don't care who it is, be your cheerleader.. I've had cheerleaders my whole life.. My husband was my biggest cheerleader..

And if you don't have one appoint somebody.. Say, okay, sis you're now my cheerleader.. And here's what this means because Shellye said, I need a cheerleader, right? So go get a cheerleader.. - So I really think this is important.. 00:25:57,980 And I think that there are two types of cheerleaders that people often don't distinguish between: mentors and sponsors.. I love the idea that a mentor is someone who basically gives you advice.. You know, you say, hey, help me figure out how to do this.. But sponsor those people who really help promote you.. You're the ones who are saying, you know, that Shellye I worked with her and she is doing an amazing job.. I see true potential there..

So can you tell us a little bit about the mentors and sponsors that you've had to help you on your way? Cause I think that behind every person who's successful, having mentors and sponsors ends up becoming a really secret weapon.. - Absolutely true.. 00:26:41,540 And yes I have had mentors and sponsors throughout and it is really, really important.. But let me share a story because it was a I learned a great lesson early, relatively early in my career, probably I don't know six years into my career or something like that.. I was at IBM and IBM decided that high potential employees And so they decided that they're going to ask the employees who would you like to be your mentor? Because a lot of other ways don't work.. So fine, I get the request, who do you want to be a mentor? Well, I picked a gentleman by the name of Roland Harris.. Roland was somebody, a couple levels above me.. I knew him.. I thought he liked me.. He said great..

Well, a couple days later I get a call.. It's Roland, Shellye.. Hi Roland.. Shellye, you put my name down to be your mentor.. And I'm thinking, well, yeah, Roland, I thought you liked me.. And he says, Shellye, you've got me go get somebody else.. And I went, oh.. So that taught me a couple things.. One, I had mentors I didn't even know, right, 'cause they weren't formal.. We never had a conversation about it..

And number two if I can have one, I can have two, I can have three, I can have as many mentors as possible.. And so that's what I started doing.. I said, all right fine.. I'm going to go get a bunch of mentors.. And I also learned don't ask people, 'cause they're going to typically say no 'cause they don't have time and they don't think you're going to be a good mentee which you're probably not.. And we can talk about that if you want to Tina.. But what I did is I adopted mentors.. I just started treating them like mentors.. When I realized that Roland was actually a mentor and I didn't know, I said, oh okay.. So I would just start asking people simple, easy questions you know or advice..

And then I always followed up and that's the key.. You have to follow up.. The mentors need something too.. This is not a one way thing.. This is a relationship.. So you need to get value and give value.. And the biggest value you can give a mentor, frankly is appreciation, is knowledge that intrinsically they helped.. 'Cause most people want to help deep within them.. So go adopt mentors.. Have as many as you can possibly support..

And then what happens a lot of times is as you work hard and do well and rise, many mentors can become sponsors because now they want to claim you.. It's like, oh yeah Shellye oh yeah.. I've been giving her advice on the side right? This is all me, you know, but that they do.. And they'll open doors for you.. So I've had many a mentor turn into a sponsor.. - Great and I'm going to guess that a lot of these people 00:29:19,430 just like those examples you gave are mentors but they don't have that label, right? There are lots of people in your life, in fact, there are people who might say to me hey, you were mentor, but I never saw myself as such, right? So you, the relationship doesn't have to be formalized.. - Exactly.. 00:29:39,740 or an informal sponsorship without having the formal label.. - Absolutely.. 00:29:43,570 - We have student who asks a very big, broad question..

00:29:45,150 What motivates you? You know what is it that keeps you driven to keep succeeding? All of this is a lot of work, a lot of energy, a lot of time.. What drives you? What motivates you? - Oh gosh.. 00:29:59,620 So there's a couple of things, honestly.. Early on because I was raised, you know, I believed growing up that the odds just weren't in my favor to get anything.. I didn't think the world expected much of me.. And therefore what drove me initially was frankly the credibility, right? I wanted to prove that I really was somebody and could make a difference and could make an impact.. And then as I got into my career, what really drove me to keep pushing and going forward is one, I like to win frankly and I set my goals.. So if I set a goal I'm going to go achieve the goal because that's who I am.. But what really helps me wake up in the morning,

excited, right, and work as hard as I do is the impact.. The best, you know, of all the things that I've done what gives me the biggest joy is knowing that there are people that have worked with me or engaged with me or that I've mentored or whatever that have gone on to achieve their aspirations, that are now CEOs, that are now starting their companies, right? Or that are now, whatever it is that they wanted to go do and they're doing it..

And that feels great.. So it really evolved from, I just want to be credible to yes I wanna achieve because I'm competitive and ambitious to really making an impact and how big and broad an impact can I make.. - So this leads into a question that was asked 00:31:26,820 by one of the students about using your position as a leader in a company to encourage social change, right? You're talking about having impact on individual people, but can you talk about the, how you might use the position you're in for broader issues around social justice that that might influence the companies that you're either leading or on the boards of? - Absolutely, 'cause I do that, I do that every day.. 00:31:54,190 You know, let's see currently, I could talk about currently.. So currently I'm an advisor now to Forbes Ignite.. So Forbes which I'm sure you're all familiar with, Forbes created this Forbes Ignite unit as unit missioned with let's figure out how we leverage the power of Forbes, the reach, the voice, et cetera to actually drive social change.. So Forbes reached out to me and was interested in my doing something with them that I wasn't interested in.. But I said, listen, what I am interested in is figuring out how can we improve relations between community and police? Cause I've always believed if we could, if business would just use their power they could make an incredible impact on local government, right? So Forbes got behind that.. So now we're actually driving this big initiative.. We're doing research the whole bit..

So stay tuned on what comes out of this, but you can absolutely leverage.. And then locally I've got a group of CEOs and some companies behind an initiative that we're working with San Jose on, that's too early to talk about, but also in the social justice space.. So the answer is I do that all the time.. - Wonderful, well so I want to talk a little bit 00:33:13,380 about your role on boards because that's a very prestigious and important role in a company.. Can you explain a little bit about what you do in your role as a member of a board of directors of a public company? - Absolutely.. 00:33:27,880 So a board role is really a governance role.. Our job, on behalf of the shareholders, is to make sure that the company has the right strategy, the right management in place, that they are operating under following the laws, but also operating within a good risk profile and are good corporate citizens, treat people right, I mean all those things, right, that you have there.. But we are a governance role.. The board doesn't do anything operationally.. You know people will ask questions like, well, gosh did you decide you this?..

Or do you approve to that? It's like, no, no, no.. We are really a governance role.. We approved the strategy, right? We approved budgets, you know all those kinds of things but the company actually executes.. So that's what the role of the board is.. Now the board has a lotta power, because the number one job of a board is hiring and firing the CEO.. So the CEO works for the board of directors and therefore you have the ability to ask questions, understand, right, what's happening, help drive priority and things like that.. Absolutely.. - Great, well it's super interesting.. 00:34:39,635 Now I know the students have very tactical questions that relate to their own personal lives.. So I'm going to make sure that we dive into those in our last time together..

- Okay.. 00:34:51,140 and it's a question I always like to ask is you know, what skills can you develop as a student now that's going to set the stage for your success later? That is sort of what do you wish you knew when you were 20? - Sure.. 00:35:05,540 Well there are a couple.. So one, I will tell you communications.. I can't tell you how important it is to be a good communicator.. And when I say be a good communicator, yes, am I talking on stage, et cetera? The answer is absolutely.. But it's beyond that.. It's in meetings.. It's in one-on-one are you effective? Are you clear, right? Are you concise? Can people understand? I mean, all being a good communicator is really important.. Two, courage..

You know, people think that folks are born with courage.. There isn't a human being on the planet that is born with courage.. Nature makes sure of that.. We're actually born scaredy cats.. That's how you protect yourself.. So if you have courage, it's because you've built that muscle.. And I will tell you there's not enough courage in the world.. And if you indeed develop courage, it will take you a long way.. It's one of the, you know, and on boards we get assessed, right? Use self assessments, peer assessments, you know, et cetera.. And one of the feedbacks that I get often is I'm admired for my courage..

So I will tell you, courage is something that you can absolutely start building now.. And what is courage? Courage is willing to do what's uncomfortable when you know it's right.. It's willing to speak up when you believe or feel something even though you're making yourself vulnerable, right? Courage is basically something that you can be building all the time because we all have situations in which we didn't do just that when we should have.. - Right, doing the hard thing, when it's the right thing 00:36:42,500 even though there might be some consequences and you don't might not know exactly what's going to happen.. So it's really great.. - Yes.. 00:36:47,063 - I love that.. 00:36:51,700 So the students who are also really curious about just their thinking about their own life and, you know, do I have to sacrifice my social life? Do I have to sacrifice you know, the things that bring me joy in my life in order to be successful? You know, or how do I make sure that when I'm doing these things that are not part of work, like socializing that align with my priorities.. - Okay, so first of all, 00:37:14,950 you've just hit a trigger word for me.. And that is sacrifice..

I don't like the word sacrifice.. If people ask Shellye have you made any sacrifices? My answer is no.. Now what have I made? I've made choices.. I've made trade-offs, absolutely and hard ones for sure.. But the reason I don't like the term

sacrifice is sacrifice to me, and I'm giving you my definition, sacrifice to me is when you do something on behalf of someone else, I do something for somebody else.. I sacrifice for you.. Well, as soon as I sacrifice for you, I have just given my power away, right? Because now I'm not in control.. I'm doing this for you, not for me.. Wrong.. We need to take ownership of our decisions..

We need to make choices and make trade offs and decisions that we own.. When you do that you keep your power.. So have I made tough trade offs and things? Absolutely have, but I own them and I did them with eyes wide open.. So when you say, how do you, how do you do all this? It really comes down to establishing what's important and then based upon that, right, it's taking action.. Now, let me tell you what's important to me, with everything that I've done, I'm a people person.. So I like getting together with people.. And I happen to like to eat.. I like to cook.. I like to entertain, drink wine.. I like all those things..

So I believe in integrating my life so I can do more things at the same time.. So I started at Gourmet Dinner Club when I moved to the Bay area.. I started a Gourmet Dinner Club.. Not that everybody would be great cooks but I started it because that allowed me to do in one event where I could cook, eat, drink wine socialize with people, right entertain all in one.. So think about how you can accomplish multiple things, in one way.. I love the performing arts.. So when we go see a ballet or a concert, et cetera Scotty and I, my husband and I, we'd rarely go alone.. More than that, I'd make outings out of a number of these things and we invite like 50 people.. I mean it's a big event.. I'm going to go anyway, right? So figure out how you actually put things together so that you can accomplish multiple tasks at the same time..

That was-- - Yeah and there are 00:39:37,070 lots of ways to do that, aren't there? I mean I know some VCs who always take their meetings walking, right? So it's like, okay, I need to get exercise, I want to take this meeting, come and join me on this walk.. I do the same thing.. - I call 'em walks and talks.. 00:39:50,640 Yep, I fully, fully agree.. So just this think about, there's always ways to do it now.. Now, can you do absolutely everything? Do I get to see every single play and every single concert I want to see? Absolutely not.. But I do get out there when we can, not during COVID, but before that, I used to get out there and absolutely still do those things.. - So there's a question that a lotta people wanna know about 00:40:15,000 is about they're reflecting back on your talking about going through really tough times when you were younger.. And I mean listen, if you talk to almost anyone who's been successful they have at some point pushed themselves so hard that they finally cracked, they kind of hit their limits.. They found how far they could go..

How did you work through that? What was it that you had to do to get to the other side of that really difficult time? - I had to get help.. 00:40:42,490 I actually, I started, I went to see a psychologist and we had sessions and had to talk to try to understand.. And what I learned from that is that I was giving all of myself away.. I was.... How I was spending my time, what I was doing, I was just giving it all away.. I was doing almost nothing to feed my soul, right, and to feed myself.. And that's what I meant by self care is so important and I learned that the hard way.. So, you know, nobody does any of this stuff alone and it's all about finding the right kind of help for when you need it.. Because trust me you will need help all along the way.. I absolutely have..

- Yeah, I think that's really, really important.. 00:41:29,850 And also to understand that this is something that everybody you know, lots of people go through, right, hitting that wall and figuring out how they need to get help to get back up on their feet.. - Absolutely.. 00:41:49,123 but the question is how do you deal with direct competition? And I don't know whether we were talking about competition, like another company or another person maybe there's another sales person you're competing with.. I mean, do you perceive competition in the world? Do you see yourself as a competitive person? How do you engage with that? I know that oftentimes there are people who are very driven who are not competitive.. And also there are people who are competitive who are competitive, you know, as well as driven.. So how do you think about that? - So, first of all, I am the eldest of four.. 00:42:26,920 My parents had four children in less than five years.. Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom.. I'm competitive..

We're all competitive.. So yes, I'm definitely competitive, but you know, it's interesting.. I never, I don't know that I ever looked at it as I'm competing against a person for something, you know? So I would compete, yes, 'cause I want to finish on top, but I want to do better.. Like when you're in sales, you know, this person is 120% of quota and you're trying to get better.. And so yeah, I would compete that way.. I'm not sure I understand the question.. If the question is trying to get at, do I ever see myself as competing? It's like you and me for, you know, against the world? So only one of us is going to win and one is going to lose, I don't think I necessarily felt about things that way.. I've always felt there's enough opportunity out there for everybody eventually.. So I'm sorry, I'm probably not answering what you-- - No but I think this is a really good point 00:43:21,450 because I'm just going to be a little personal here about myself is that people often think I'm very competitive but I'm not at all, I'm very driven.. And I think that it's possible to be very driven but also seeing a place for everybody else to have success as well..

And it sounds like that's sort of what the way that you engage with the world.. - Mm hmm, yes I do.. 00:43:44,000 - Great, so as we head into the final few minutes here, 00:43:46,370 I wonder if you could tell us if you had a single super power, what would that be? What is your super power? Clearly you have been remarkably successful in your career and have just accomplished more than probably you ever even imagined you could.. What is the superpower that's allowed you to do this? - So it ends up being two and I know you asked for one.. 00:44:11,450 So if I had to give one, the first one is discipline.. I am

super disciplined.. And the other is courage, which I mentioned before.. So, but discipline plays a role because it allows me back to you set priorities and you live by the priorities.. If you're disciplined, you can do that.. You know example, I was a night person..

Coming outta college, I was a night person.. Well, when I had children, it was like oh if I stay a night person, I'm going to zero time for myself.. And so literally I even read up how to do this.. Every week you move your clock up, your timer, your wake up time 15 minutes kind of at a week and you can get yourself.. But I literally trained myself to become a morning person.. Not because that was something that I just aspired to do but it was self preservation, right? So you can be whatever you want to be.. But yeah, I'm very disciplined.. So I put a plan in place, I execute the plan and then I make decisions every day consistent with that which is another thing that a lotta people don't do.. And I talk about how to do that and how to think about that in the book as well because it's really about being intentional with your actions.. - Shellye can't thank you enough 00:45:21,510 for helping us kick off this year..

It has been truly an honor and a pleasure, and we wish you the very, very best of luck with the launch of your book.. (upbeat music)..