

40. Francine Feder on building strong teams, handling rejection, work/ life balance, marketing + women's sports, and respecting your team

Michelle Harris: [00:00:00] From Bosstrack, it's Her HypeSquad, a show about amazing women who've made incredible strides as leaders in their industry. They're here to support you and your leadership growth to encourage you and hype you up as part of your hype squad. Hello, this is Michelle Harris back with a new episode of Her HypeSquad with Bosstrack.

This week I talk with Francine Feder, marketing executive, about building strong teams, understanding your team's motivations, handling rejection, marketing and women's sports, respecting your team, promoting work life balance, and so much more. Francine has so much insight, experience, and advice to share from her many years of experience.

But before we get into our conversation, let me tell you a little bit about Francine. Francine is currently working as an independent marketing consultant [00:01:00] after her 20 plus year career with Foot Locker, including 12 years at the VP level, leading diverse marketing teams across brand strategy, creative and content, public relations, digital marketing, paid media, social media, influencer and talent marketing and events.

She is an award winning marketer whose accolades include numerous Cannes Lions, Sports Clios, and the Effie Award for sustained success for Foot Locker campaigns that have garnered national press and recognition. Her current consulting assignments include, amongst others, a role as the VP of Athlete Storytelling and Business Administration.

Development for Athlete Driven and an integrated marketing agency specializing in working with brands using athletes at the center and also serving as an executive advisor to Diseo, a decentralized social media startup platform. Francine lives in New York. With her husband and her goldendoodle dog, Huey.

She is an avid traveler, wine, food, fitness, and boating enthusiast. [00:02:00] If you enjoy my conversation with Francine, be sure to subscribe to our channel and help more people find us by sharing this episode with others or by leaving a review or subscribe to our weekly newsletter filled with things we found that we're excited about and we're inspired by along with valuable leadership advice to watch, listen to, or read.

It's a little bit of joy for your inbox each Monday. You can subscribe at www.thebosstrack.com/weeklyjoy. Now without further delay, here's my conversation with Francine Feder. Hi Francine. Thank you so much for joining us here on Her HypeSquad with Bosstrack.

Francine Feder: Thanks Michelle. Nice to see you.

Good morning.

Michelle Harris: Good morning, and I'm so excited to get into our conversation. We're going to be talking about building and empowering strong teams, and I'm really looking forward to all the perspective that you can provide on that topic, but I would love for you to share a little bit about yourself to the audience before we get [00:03:00] started, just so they can hear a little bit about you and your own words.

Francine Feder: Sure. Um, I'm Francine Feder. I was up until very recently, I had a very long tenure at Foot Locker of, you know, some various marketing roles. Most recently it was, the Vice President of consumer connections, where I headed up our creative content, PR influencer, event marketing team. So fairly large team of, of about 60 people.

Great career, especially I think for women in, the sports industry right now and really, you know, learning how to deal with different, types of people and, everything from retail to sports marketing to athlete marketing to, women's marketing. And it, it was a really, really, great experience, You know, everything kind of comes to an end at some point or another.

And it was, really time for me to look [00:04:00] at a different chapter. And currently I'm consulting, which has been nice. It's not to say I am not going to go back to a corporate role at some point here or there. But for now, I'm, working with a couple of different companies. Um, one, most notably, an agency called Athlete Driven where I really was able to take my passion for sports and athlete marketing and providing a role for them there to help grow their business, manage and work with athletes.

So that's been, that's been really fun. And, um, another startup I'm working for called which is a social commerce platform that I think you're going to hear really good things about soon. So it's been exciting, after working at at 1 organization to really, tackle a different depth and breadth of things and quite frankly, also enjoy my summer a bit and walk my [00:05:00] dog and, do a lot of fun things.

Michelle Harris: So that's great. Well, before we get into the conversation, I have a few questions from that. 1st of all, what kind of dog?

Francine Feder: Oh, he's a golden doodle. He's three. And his name? Huey. Huey.

Michelle Harris: Oh, that's so cute.

Francine Feder: So everyone who knows me knows it's all about Huey. It's, it's his world. We're just living in it right now.

That's the way it always is. Especially I think dogs, um, they just hold this special place in people's hearts.

Yeah. I was never a dog owner before this and my husband was as a kid, so he really wanted it. And now it's my dog. It's not his dog.

Michelle Harris: And also, you mentioned a passion for, sports, were you, was that driven from, your background?

Did you, were you in sports or just something?

Francine Feder: I was a swimmer. I was a swimmer. But yeah, I was never, you know. The sport I mostly deal with [00:06:00] now is basketball and, that's not something I did. So that was more driven, professionally, but I always did love competitive sports. I'm a New Yorker through and through my father grew up.

two blocks from Yankee Stadium. So we were a very, so it was my father and my brother, and I would sit and watch sports with them. So I definitely had that ingrained in me. We, we went to Yankee Stadium as kids all the time. Giants, you know, all the New York teams. So,

Michelle Harris: Yeah. Oh yeah. New York is the perfect place to be for sports for sure.

Okay. So you talked about having a team of 60 people. I imagine, and this kind of gets into our discussion, that you had a very diverse group of people working for you in terms of, diversity of culture, diversity of age, diversity of where people were located, could you maybe [00:07:00] describe?

I mean, I think that might be a good setup for our conversation to describe like how, what that looked like for your team.

Francine Feder: Um, yeah, I had a very, a very diverse team and I think, you know, New York in and of itself is such a diverse place. So you definitely get that, from Foot Locker's perspective to our customer was incredibly diverse.

So you needed. To, you want to have people that actually reflect your customer base, because in a marketing role, you really need to understand how they think what their passion points are. So really, we, even from the New York team alone, we've had, my leadership team, I think was, uh, you know.

Asian American, Latinx, African American, all genders, LGBTQ and that was very, a very New York enclave there, but we had teams sitting in Florida, um, in, you know, the St. Petersburg area. I had. [00:08:00] Photographer and we did a photo studio or photo studio was in Junction City, Kansas.

So you definitely you had that geographic diversity as well. And at one point there was also a photo studio in Wisconsin. So had a little bit of middle of the country, Florida, New York, from a geography perspective. And then. I mean, it really was a very, you know, I like to our team look like America, and what America looks like right now.

Michelle Harris: Oh, that's that's I love that. And what about age? I know, there's been a lot of articles lately, and we've shared a few in our newsletter about intergenerational, work. And where did you also have a lot of generational differences?

Francine Feder: Yeah, we've had a lot, you know, everything, from Gen X to boomers.

So, uh, I mean, from Gen Z, sorry to boomers. Yeah. I'm a Gen Xer. Most of my, you know, my team were millennials and, the Gen Zs that were coming [00:09:00] up. I think it's so interesting how I think people love. To sort of pit the generations against each other. And I just say, you know what? It was funny.

I'm Gen X. And when I was kind of coming up in the workplace, it was, oh, the lost generation. I think you're always going to have that with, with the younger generations coming in there. Oh, they're lazy. They don't, you know, they don't want to work. They're like Gen X. It was all like, oh, they're just like, kind of drugged out and driftless.

And like, no, we worked our butts off. And, you know, you know, I was like, I had such a strong work ethic. And I mean, my parents were even like, before boomers, I forgot what they're called greatest, and I'm like, cool. And so I just I think it's a little unfair. I think in every generation, you're going to have your achievers and your people that [00:10:00] that don't.

Um, but I do think there are some fundamental things that we can learn from each other. Like, for 1 thing, I completely respect. Gen Z's boundaries, they, uh, I think they've brought something, you know, yes, in, in my day, it was, as a junior person in marketing, I, and we didn't have the phones and the things to, to take things home.

So in one sense, it was nice because you left the office and you left the office, but I would stay till eight, nine at night until something was done. And there were weeks where I worked, 70, 80 hours and. And today, and I don't know if it's a result of COVID thing or, or, all of the things that, that have come in play recently, but they have incredible respect for their own time, which I really, which I appreciate, and I actually think it's made the workplace better that way.

And it's made, I think it's made folks in my generation and [00:11:00] older, kind of stop and think for a minute, like, why do we, why do we have to be this crazy? You know,

Michelle Harris: I really agree with that. And it's so interesting. When I was coming up in my career, there were a lot of times where it was more about visibility, like you should stay till eight or nine.

Not because you actually had something to get done, but it was expected and to be seen. And, it didn't matter. And then they didn't care if you really were working on something or not. And that's so crazy. Like why?

Francine Feder: Yeah. They just wanted to know that you were there. It was get in before your boss and leave after him or her.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. Yeah. And I like what you said about, we're so similar at why, why like pitting generations against each other because I feel like that

has that has been done and overdone. And, and that's really what some of the articles and, speeches that we've been reviewing are about.

It's like it's time to stop [00:12:00] pitting everybody against each other because there's more similarities than there are differences. And,

Francine Feder: you know, like anything, it makes for great click bait and conversation. So it's going to happen. It's just kind of how you manage it.

Michelle Harris: So in general, how would you say, like, what were the overarching themes that you were paying, you paid attention to in, managing that diversity?

Francine Feder: Yeah, I think one is understanding people's perspective. Of how they approach things, because just just in, gender, race, age, all the diversity aspects aside, I think everybody, everybody comes into a job into a workplace with. Years of history of, how they were raised, were they rich or poor or somewhere in between what motivates them and drives them?

Did they have a single [00:13:00] parent that worked so hard that they never want to work? They want to get to the top really quickly and provide for them. Like, everybody just kind of comes in with a different blueprint. So I think a lot of it is, it's this interesting balance where it's. Don't get too personal at work.

Don't ask people too many questions. You, you know, you don't want to know, but I think it helps to understand. What motivates everybody, because not everybody is going to respond to motivation, if you, Michelle, just want, you know, the, the straight, if you're a straight A student and you want the accolades and the great reviews and all of that, then I know like, okay, just achievement, things like that motivate you.

Somebody else might be a little bit different and they're a quieter person and they just want to, they just want to do a good job in the background and, and. Public praise isn't going to, make them happy. Some people, honestly, they're like, it's a job. I just want money, [00:14:00] like, leave me alone. So I think it's the whole kind of blueprint and complexity of people and diversity of thought and really just bringing everyone together.

It's like not everyone who's, African American and grew up in New York thinks the same. People come from different families and people come from different backgrounds and contexts, and I think it's trying, I think when you put people in

these like, um, uh, you know, just sort of buckets like that, it's that's what doesn't lead to success.

You know?

Michelle Harris: Yeah, yeah. I agree. When you shared, upfront, you started that with, I don't ask too many questions, don't get too personal. Mm-hmm. , is that the sense that you got, like, is that just the feeling you were getting from your team or was that more of a cultural thing?

Francine Feder: No, I think that was more, I think that's more what people say about work.

Like, you know, there are you shouldn't, um, and I [00:15:00] get, I get it for an interview, you know, you never wanna. show biases in a job interview and find out if someone has kids or if they're, you, you legally can't do that. I mean, and, but once somebody is, part of the team. I personally think it's important to at least, some people are very private, but just at least understand some context of what makes people tick.

I just think the norm has been, at least what, maybe that's a generational difference now. But at least when I was going into work, everyone's like, don't talk about anything unless, they ask you don't, and so I think there is a bit of that, hesitancy to open up or if you, you know, especially now with all the focus.

And I think that's another thing that that Gen Z has. Has positively brought into the workplace as well as the whole focus on mental health. And if something is not going well in your personal [00:16:00] life, like, how it is going to affect your work. I think it's a very important to know and to understand. So you really understand, like, okay.

How's the team going to function? Do we need, people? Because ultimately you want a strong teamers when people have each other's backs and you want people to cover for each other. And it really helps as opposed to like, Oh, Tommy's leaving at 3 o'clock every day. Like, what the heck? Like, why am I doing everything as opposed to, you know, Tommy's dad is dying and he's going to the hospital every day, that at least.

You're like, okay, you know what, there's, and that's, the qualities of empathy and, and all of the other things that I think are so important to have a very like healthy, productive team.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. Yeah. And I think there's, a lot to be said about, understanding and having those conversations with your team just to build that trust you're interested in [00:17:00] them.

Personally, you know, and like you said, there are going to be people that don't want to share personal things and that's okay. And understanding those boundaries, but, it's definitely something I think, and I see as, being critical to building a strong team. I like that. You said something that I was going to ask about, but maybe it'll come back to me.

You did talk a little bit about, having those conversations to understand what motivates people. With the intergenerational team where everybody does want something different or, people just with different backgrounds, how do you handle, that complexity when you're having to think about, for, I know it's not really 60 direct people that you are responsible for, but I mean, even your direct reports, like, how do you handle that in a way that is seen as like equal as well?

Does that make sense?

Francine Feder: [00:18:00] Yeah. No, I think it's, um, you know, look, there are obviously some people you have stronger reports with than others. It's just, that's, that's how people are. But I think for me, what was important, at least with my directs was weekly touch basis. And I never came in with an agenda. I mean, yeah, there were a couple of pressing things.

It's okay. Here, a couple of things like, let's get that. Okay. This is your time. What do you need from me? How can I help you? And then I encourage them to do it with their teams. And then, I would do skip level meetings with folks that reported to my directs, more once a month, um, and things of that nature.

And then obviously, when before remote work, it was easier to just sort of like, Pop over to someone's cube and see how they were doing. But, I think making those concerted efforts to have these zoom calls and, and, and check in are very important. But I think leaving the [00:19:00] most important thing, and again, this was not something I got right, right away managing, but leaving open, leaving open ended time and encouraging people that their time with you is their time.

And allowing them to really ask questions, flourish, talk about what's on their mind and, and you'd be surprised at what comes back. You hear a lot of really good information.

Michelle Harris: Yeah,

I'm curious because, uh, I, I've had a few guests on that have talked about having skip level meetings and also, I mean, I've, I've done those, but how, how would you say you manage those without feeling like you are stepping on the toes of the, of your direct report or the person that they're actually, uh,

Just as just for people that might not know what skip, skip level meetings are, if you could maybe just explain [00:20:00] what that looks like for you and then how you handle that.

Francine Feder: Of course, yes. So skip level meeting is, um, so you're my direct report and Jane reports to you. I would have a meeting with Jane to just check in and see how she was doing.

Honestly, I like with me, it's transparency. It was, it's just telling, hey, this is what I'm doing. I, it's, I do not, it's not that I don't trust what you're saying about Jane or how she's doing. It's important for me to hear from the team to get a whole gauge of, you know, of what's happening here and how I can better, serve everybody.

And of course, if Jane's saying like, oh my God, Michelle is a horrible boss and she's doing like all of this, then, then we will have a conversation, you know, again, but the whole point is to be completely open minded and transparent and just honestly, like, and I say the word [00:21:00] transparency a lot.

It's it is the key to everything. Yes. Are there certain like, things that are working at the highest levels of the company that you cannot share with your team? Absolutely. But I think as transparent as you possibly can be. with your team is, is what's going to lead to, less hurt feelings, less disgruntlement, across the way.

Michelle Harris: Yeah, we can, we could have a whole conversation about transparency. I completely agree. And you're right. It is difficult being in the middle sometimes where you just can't share certain information, but all you can do is be transparent that you can't.

Francine Feder: Yeah, exactly.

Michelle Harris: Have you ever had a situation where your direct report felt uncomfortable about you meeting with their reports?

Francine Feder: You know, I can't say I have. I think for the most part, they've been, I've had one that's like, Don't believe everything that comes out of their mouth, but they weren't like uncomfortable [00:22:00] about the meeting, if you will.

Michelle Harris: Did that feel like that put you in a position of feeling being uncomfortable with the situation?

Francine Feder: I didn't feel so much uncomfortable as like, okay, you know, I, this was this happened to be a direct report. I, I really liked and trusted. And so it gave me I mean, did it. Give me maybe some, like, a little bias going into the meeting. Probably,

Michelle Harris: Yeah. And so you did talk about working remotely and you talked about having teams and different locations.

How were there any. Maybe, things that you did working remotely or man leading remotely that you could share with the audience. It might be helpful for them to learn from.

Francine Feder: I mean, I think it's important to, part of like office culture, whether it's, made fun of on TV shows or not are, you know, there's.

Like, whatever, you have a [00:23:00] pizza, you have a gathering and you go for drinks after work, like things like that. So I think, what I've found that was missing during a lot of COVID was some of the camaraderie that really came with being a team, when everybody was remote, so, , one of the things that I did for the holidays, I did a virtual wine tasting with the whole team, so we had all of the people and, I got somebody, I've got buy-in from HR. They were great. And they were like, yeah, this is awesome. Let's do it. And, we had wine, like everybody got to pick like their flight and we had a sommolier from California, like on the phone, just explaining the different wines.

And it was, because there was so many people like you broke out into small zoom groups. So you were with like 6 people and I made sure they mix. Like people from creative or with people from events and people from different offices that don't normally [00:24:00] see each other even when we were in like once or twice a week.

So I thought that was really, really fun and a really fun way to, uh, and everybody seemed to, everyone seemed to like it and who doesn't like free wine or I think people had the option. They could do a beer flight. There was a beer

group too. So we, it was diversity of alcohol preferences too, is also very important or, or non drinkers, get a, get a non alcoholic flight, but it was, uh, that was a lot of fun.

Michelle Harris: Well, it sounds like it and that's a great idea. And, so can you and I don't know if you can answer this, but did you have like a certain budget that you could use for team building events like that? And, second question to that is, you know, a lot of people listening to this, or it might be new leaders, just trying to feel out their own role and might be uncomfortable with doing something like that because they are worried about it?

Asking, can I do this? Is there any kind of advice you'd be able to give for them to go to HR or their [00:25:00] direct report to propose something that they're interested in doing with their team?

Francine Feder: Of course. Yeah. Um, so I think I think you're, you know, again, in a lot I'm talking this was a large organization.

I know there's orgs of all sizes. The company I'm working for now, I mean, it's like, you know, talk to the co founders every day. Yeah, whatever. It's super easy. But, from a large organization perspective, it. Would be your HR business partner is your best friend. They really are. Um, and and a good we had really good HR people at Foot.

And I think that, understanding the importance of team building and and what that meant, especially, you know, and I think it was a big eye opener for that for sure. So I think. Building that relationship and building that trust and saying, hey, listen, this isn't, this isn't because people just want to drink for free.

This is [00:26:00] really here's why we need to do this. Here's the situation. Hey, we've got, I'm a new leader. I'm getting to know this team. It's really important for me to make sure we're functioning at an optimal level. And I think there's a, an important trust factor that I want to build here. And again, and always have, budget options, like, don't don't come in with, like, the crazy expensive thing right away.

Just be like, hey, here's something we can do. That's pretty low cost. If we want to add X, it could be this much better and more exciting. And again, like. Large organizations do have engagement surveys and, these are, you know, you could always use that as like, hey, this, this really helps.

Like, we want people, we want to be a great place to work. We want that little sticker, on the bottom of an email. But so it's understanding that [00:27:00] and just don't be afraid. Look, the worst that can happen is somebody says no, and if they say no, they say now, and then when people start quitting or the engagement scores are low, you can be like, well, I, you know, I wanted to do this, but, you know, the worst, the worst thing that can always happen is somebody just says, no, and that's it.

And you can't take it personally.

Michelle Harris: Yeah, yeah, I think that is really one thing I wish everybody could learn. And I'm not sure, you know, there should be a rejection course everybody has to take in high school or something. It's so true. It's not never a part, I mean, sometimes it can be personal, but most of the time, majority of the time, it's never personal.

Francine Feder: I used to be crushed when people said no to me, but you just learn to dust it off, you know.

Michelle Harris: Yes, exactly. I'm going to make a note of that, a rejection course.

Francine Feder: I like it. [00:28:00]

Michelle Harris: Did you ever have, um, like thinking back to that wine tasting, beer tasting, non alcoholic tasting, how did, what was the feedback after and have you ever had to work with somebody that was opposed to doing team building events like that?

Francine Feder: Yeah, I mean, I think they're, you know, they're, they're introverts always in, in things and I, you know what, I always make it optional. Here's the thing. I highly encourage you to attend because everyone's going to be there. But if you don't want to, that's that's cool. Like, you can't force anyone.

You can't force anyone to do anything. And I think it's sort of the forced fun. That, I always, like, think of, like, the Michael Scott parties in the office, which is that's my pop culture reference here. Like, you don't like, this isn't forced fun. This isn't like, hey, you must sit in the conference room and have pizza.

But you know what? [00:29:00] It's a nice thing to do. And, and that's how you deal with people. It's, you just don't, you don't make them do it. I've gotten good

feedback from, uh, you know, from things like that, for sure. We used to make fun of like, at a, I think pre COVID where it was like, Oh, people are unhappy.

Let's just have a peak. Let's give them a free pizza, you know? And that, like, that sort of became a joke. Like, give them a pizza, but, some people just want a good job. Like. Don't I don't want food. I don't want wine. Just, you know what? There are other things you can do to, like, there might be the person who doesn't want to, go to the pizza party or the, the tasting, but send them a note like, hey, Michelle, you really did kick that job on that project.

Last week. Really appreciate it. Thanks.

Michelle Harris: I like that you're using me as your example. I mean, you're right in front of me. You're making me feel great. Thank you. Yeah, it's interesting, the times that I've had people that are [00:30:00] like, oh, that's So stupid. Like, and I don't have time. I don't wanna do that. I have work to do and mm-hmm.

and you do make it optional. And then they end up like, oh, I'm, you know, I'm gonna go. And then they end up having like the best time. So. Yeah.

Francine Feder: Exactly.

Michelle Harris: I always enjoyed when, when that happened. , , we were talking about, your team earlier and I was curious. With the different perspectives and people coming from different places, did you ever have, maybe you can even provide an example of a time where there was like a disagreement with, between people on your team and it was maybe driven by misunderstanding of like a background, cultural difference, generational difference?

Yeah. How you handle that?

Francine Feder: I think a lot of, I think it happens often. Um, cause we're a marketing organization, right? And that, you know, we're very deliberate about everything we do from casting of models and people who are going to be in photo [00:31:00] shoots to, what makes an authentic situation in certain things.

And I think. People definitely, I think, geography and, background definitely like makes a difference and things. And I remember for us, as an organization, it's, it's important that we reflect all cultures and whatever. And then, somebody had passed a comment once they're like, Okay.

Yeah. Let's make sure we get like our token of everybody in there. I know that's what we're doing. And then, so something like that, so that's like a teaching moment. You're like, wow, is that, is that how you think we're looking at this and that, and just having a conversation about understanding, Hey, this is.

This is about our customer. This is customer marketing. We want to make sure we're inviting, we recognize who our biggest customers are, and that's going to be where we skew, but we want to make sure we're not being, [00:32:00] exclusive to anybody or any one group. So I think there, there have definitely been moments like that, that were.

Perpetuated by, somebody who maybe, like, didn't see themselves reflected in the work or, or something like that.

Michelle Harris: So, yeah.

This is kind of off topic a little bit, but something popped into my head when you said about the marketing, how, what, How are you liking, um, or this is a really bad way to ask the question, but I guess I'll say, like, I really like the fact that, there are so many, more, so many more marketing, efforts focused on the women's teams and, having the women, empowerment and, I think, Nike does a really good job at that.

And, it was, I can't remember, I was just, watching, oh, it was Lego. Lego has a, something with, Oh, shoot. She just retired. Megan Rapinoe and a bunch of other sports, sports athletes, that, is really empowering. [00:33:00] Like, what, what are your thoughts on that?

Francine Feder: I mean, I love, I mean, I love it. Look, as, as a woman who works in an industry that has been like the marketing in and of itself is, I think, very balanced from a gender perspective.

There are a lot of female CMOs and people at the highest levels. They're athletic marketing sports and then, C suite. Getting better, still not, still not there. So, women are, we're half the population. Like, I was always like, women in marketing shouldn't be a thing. It, it's, it, it is, it's, it's everybody, it's part of society, but unfortunately, it's still a thing.

But I think the more that, I mean, look at Barbie, that is the most, the single most brilliant marketing example of 2023 and yes, powerhouse budget, all of the things, great movie, Greta [00:34:00] Gerwig's phenomenal, um. But just

look at what that's done for the conversation about talk about take. I mean, they're brilliant.

Talk about taking a 1950s anatomically incorrect stereotypical, here's a female, here's what a woman should look like and kind of turning it on its head for today. For a message. I mean, I think that that's absolutely brilliant and, and in my space too. And I mean some of the work I'm doing with, with Athlete Driven now is, is very exciting.

'cause we're talking about, okay, well how do we, you know, how do we sign more female athletes for our clients? What are we doing? We've got a te you know, ha, it, it's six person team, half the team is women. Um, Two co owner, two BIPOC co owners, it's a very nice small group. And so I'm seeing like the progress of, [00:35:00] of the importance of that.

And I think of being a woman, especially in the sports space, I'm seeing, I've dealt with some really great Female sports agents that represent their male clients and some really, really strong women and it's just been very encouraging.

Michelle Harris: Wow. Thank you. Thank you for sharing that. So did you see the Barbie movie?

Francine Feder: I have not yet. Admittedly. But I know what it's about and I've read enough. So I'm supposed to see it next week. Yeah,

Michelle Harris: I've, yeah, I've read so many articles. I have not.

Francine Feder: Yeah, I feel like I've seen it. I think they've, I read, you know, you know what it was yesterday I read the, um, uh, someone wrote out the, it was like the America Ferrera speech, which was.

It's like, so true in so many ways, I would say just seek that out. If anyone hasn't read it, just, just Google it and it, it's so [00:36:00] true. It's like, I'm supposed to be pretty, but not too pretty and smart, but not too smart and ask questions, but not too many questions. It's like everything we go through, like if you say too much, you're bitchy and assertive.

If you don't say enough, you're too quiet. It's. It's like you can never win. It's incredible. She nailed it. Yeah.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. And I'll definitely share that in the show notes just for anybody that might be looking for it. But yeah, you're right. I, I saw, I read, read an article the other day that was talking about those, how, It was particularly about Greta Gerwig and her nod to, I guess, feminism in a, in a certain way.

And they were pulling out certain things and they brought up that quote. And then I think it's been going around social media now where people are sharing her specific, uh, specific quote. So, yeah, that's great. Yeah, I love it. And, yeah, I'm looking forward to seeing the movie.

Francine Feder: yeah, me too. I'm excited.

I think we'll do the, the Barbie Oppenheimer [00:37:00] double feature.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. I just didn't realize that Oppenheimer is like a three hour movie. So yeah, basically half your day, which could be good on a rainy day. Yeah, exactly. What one of the things when we were talking before we actually sat down to record was, um, the differences between managing up versus managing down and how managing down can sometimes be more difficult than managing up. Um, I'd love to hear your thoughts on that.

Francine Feder: No, absolutely. Because I've, I've seen it done so wrong so many times. Um, I think it's always easier to manage up, right? Because somebody sets expectations. You need to deliver something on a deadline. You need to fix presentation, and this happens at all levels, right? You do it. You know where we're coming from.

You know who your boss [00:38:00] is, you kind of know what to do. And I think for women, I think managing down is a. Especially hard for women, not because every look, everybody's different, but generally speaking, we don't like being the bad guy. And I think there is this perception of if you're telling someone, you know, it's sort of like the way, like, Hey, I need this done tomorrow by noon.

It's like, Oh my God, I'm, I'm terrible. And I found this more, when I was a new manager, I'm like, Oh my God, I'm terrible. I'm like telling people what to do. Like, this is like, how am I going to do this? Like, what if they're going to hate me? There's always that, like, there is such anxiety with that.

So that's one aspect of the managing down. The other I think is, is the time thing. Like I have seen so many man, like peers of [00:39:00] mine and things like, just don't like, they're amazing at managing up and people and like senior

people love them. And you know, does it get them the extra nod or two? Yes. But never have touch bases with their team.

Are late to meetings with their team constantly and I always say, like, you treat a meeting with the person working for you the same way you do with the person you're working for. You show up on time. Like, if you're late, without a decent explanation that's like, Hey, give me 5 minutes or whatever, because we all get stuck in things.

But if you're, if you're egregiously late or don't show up to a meeting, that's just basically saying, I don't respect you and I don't have respect for your time. And that's when I think managing down becomes. It's such a, such a misdone thing, especially, you know, but like, honestly, if I have a [00:40:00] meeting, if I had a meeting with my team and I was on with my boss, I'll be like, Hey, I've got a meeting with my team at 11.

It's 1043. Do you think we're going to run long? I'd like to let them know, like, just. Being very like, you would be shocked at how many people just don't do that and don't have regard for people's time. And I think that's really so not only is it. So there's 2 aspects. There's the, not feeling comfortable, like telling people what to do or coaching them, but also just not respecting people's time that that happens with managing down because you'd never be late for meeting with your boss. Right? Like, why? Why is it okay to do that the other way? And I think those are really just sort of the 2, the 2. biggest missteps I see.

The first one, I think, is probably more female focused. The second one, I've [00:41:00] seen male and female managers do, um, in a really bad way.

Michelle Harris: Yeah, I think one of the things new leaders can do, well, all leaders should really have this perspective, is that your team is basically an extension of you. They are your, you have these goals that you have to meet with your team.

Thank you. And your team is helping you get there. So if you are not taking care of your team and building that trust and making sure that they have what they need to succeed, ultimately, whether your direct report sees through that or not, it's, it's going to reflect on you because you, you're not going to reach those goals that you need.

And you could even be more high impact and more high performing if you, take, take that approach. So, um, I'd, I'd love to know, do you have any specific words of advice for women? Cause you say about women and, and

communicating and, maybe feeling uncomfortable [00:42:00] telling somebody they need to do something, especially when it's a difficult deadline or an unexpected deadline.

Like, what is it? What is it? Do you have words of advice for how to approach a conversation?

Francine Feder: I think giving people context really helps always. So as opposed to saying like, Hey, I need you to do this by five o'clock tomorrow. It's listen, you know, we've got an unexpected meeting that, we've realized that we don't have, not everything is completely prepared for.

Here's why it's important to the company. This could bring in a new revenue stream, but like, let them know why they're doing it. I think I've always found that helps immensely because then people like, it's just not as random. People feel respected. They feel part of the goal. And you know what? And sometimes it is random.

Sometimes there could be a boss that's like, Hey, you know what? This was purple and I want it red. And it's really stupid and purple. And like, sometimes there is [00:43:00] no reason. And I think it's okay if you tell them that, because then it feels like you're like, like, Hey, listen, this there's, I don't have the rhyme or reason for this, but I really need you to help me out right now.

And that's okay too. But I think always giving context when you can. Is is the best advice I can give.

Michelle Harris: Yeah, yeah, totally agree with that. And, I think I'd love to move to well, actually have 1 more question before we switch to some of the, like, standard questions. I ask everybody, but, we talked a little bit about this when you talked about generational differences in Gen Z and boundaries, but how do you promote a good work life balance with your team?

Have you found any like magic, to that?

Francine Feder: Yeah. Um, I wish I had all the answers. I ran away from corporate. I'm just kidding. I've got a good work life balance now. I honestly, I just say [00:44:00] do look I care unless there's a meeting or, things that we all need to be at together. My biggest thing is I don't care when you do your work, which is, is sort of, I don't know how popular of an opinion that is in corporate America, especially now with the return to office and all of that.

But I really believe it. If you're not a morning person and you need a workout and you need like 10 cups of coffee and you really can't get started till 10 o'clock, you know what, that's okay. If you're, doing what you need to do at eight o'clock, but just show up for the times where we need to collaborate as a team and no excuses, then I think that's really the biggest thing.

Do you. Figure out your life, encourage people to do that, um, only where, Hey, this is, you know what we meet Tuesdays at nine, just be there for that. And like that, that sort of thing. I think that's really, [00:45:00] really the best way, the best way to do it. And there are always going to be deadlines and there are always going to be circumstances like out of your control.

But do the best you can to, uh, encourage people to, take the time that they need for them. And you know what, and if there's a not week with. A thousand deadlines and, you know, nonstop, then, take a mental health day next week. Just let people know they can do that, I think is the most important thing.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. Definitely great words. Words of wisdom there. And, So one of the things, and I've talked to a lot of people that are leaders and they have different perspectives on, uh, letting people work from home and then also feeling that the three day back is the magic, like three days and then two days at home, and I know early on, a lot of people were worried about as leaders, like, how do you know if people are doing what they're supposed [00:46:00] to be doing?

And there's been a lot of conversation, whether true or not, like why they want people to be back in the office. Do you think it's more that they're, they just don't feel like they have control and want to see people, or do you think there is something to having people together and having it be a more bonding team experience?

Francine Feder: I do think there's something, I think it honestly, it depends on your organization, the size of your organization, what you do, what your output is. Marketing is a, is a creative thing I think there is a benefit to people getting together brainstorming, doing things. Do I think it needs to be 3 days a week?

No, but I think there is. I think it is at the pace of your business. It is always good to have certain in person meetings. I always say, like, when we would have, you know, if if an agency would come in to present a new creative campaign, or even now working at an agency, I'm [00:47:00] like, oh, we should do this in person.

I think. Those things I think key meetings make sense. Does it need to be every day? Does it need to be 3 days a week? Probably not. I think some of that and everyone's different. Some of that is a control thing. Also really depends on what you do. If you're a computer coder. You really don't need to see people.

No, I hate to say it. It honestly depends on your field. It depends on your line of work. It depends on how much, brain, you know, collective brain power, you, you need, um, do I think there's something to be said of, this younger generation that has only been working since covid, like, not seeing people, I've been able to, I have to, now that I'm consulting and in this different way of life, I've really had to tap into my network more, if I want to take another job down the line or anything like that. I've been having, you know, [00:48:00] and I find it's easier, like when I'm in New York, like, Hey, let's meet for a coffee, let's do that. There's something to be said. But these were all connections I built over, 25 years of being in person with people and I wouldn't be that close.

With these people, if I didn't have that, so I do think there is something to be said for this generation, really not benefiting from that. If they're not coming in and and seeing mentors and people that can help develop them.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. Yeah. Well, thank you for sharing that. I know it's a sensitive topic.

Francine Feder: Yeah.

I'm sorry. Like, I don't mean to sound so both sides of the fence, but I really am because it's complex.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. Yeah. Of course. You've actually provided some good things for people to think about on both sides. So, you mentioned something that is a good segue into our next section and that is mentorship and, [00:49:00] of course with Bosstrack and in our point of having this podcast.

Uh, is really about mentorship and providing experience and advice. Do you have a, is there a mentor that you can look back to your, in your career that made a difference?

Francine Feder: I've had a few, you know, I think there, there's, there's straight impact, which I think the biggest difference in my career was and I, I don't, you know, it was a woman I, I interviewed with at, my, for my 1st job at an ad agency.

And I had, I had previously interned at, LVMH when I was in college and, and right after, and I, I wanted to go work for this ad agency. And she said, you don't want, she's like, no, you don't want to do this. You have client side experience. I'm sending you Foot Locker's my client. I'm sending you over there.

And that was how I got the job. And that was how I started this career. So I don't know where you are anymore about the Kathy Lynch. [00:50:00] Thank you. It was, it was a very. I'd say that for the person that made the most impact in my career, I've had many mentors and people that have helped me out.

I've had like my, I'll, I'll shout out my, my longtime female boss, uh, Stacy Cunningham, who's, uh, living a fun life on the golf course right now, but she was, she was the boss that, that promoted me to the, you know, to the director role who gave me my opportunity. She's a very, very smart woman, always had like great sayings and, and ways to be.

And, just always very encouraging and just a good example of female leadership. And then, my, then the, the boss I had after that, um, Jed Berger, who's, my very good friend, really, and I think people mentor you in different ways in different aspects of your career.

Like we had met, more as, you know, we were co workers and [00:51:00] we became partners and then he became my boss and, but we, it was always a, like, he taught me how to be like the teammate. Mentor, it was always like, Hey, we're a team, we're a pair, we're doing, we're in this together and we're doing this together.

And we did, all of our best work at Foot Locker that way. So, we kind of, he's kind of like my work husband, but, um, you know, uh, so, you know, there, I think there are always, there are always different people at different stages of your career that have, different impacts on you for sure and and that are important.

And I think I think a mentor to a 25 year old looks very different than a mentor to a 40 year old, because you're just at different stages.

Michelle Harris: Yeah, definitely. And I always tell people that you don't have to feel taught. I mean, not that you don't want to continue to work with a certain mentor, but your mentor today might not be [00:52:00] the mentor that you need in you know, three, four, five years, it's going to change. Potentially, potentially not, depending on what that looks like.

Francine Feder: Yeah. And then also your mentor, you seek, I've had a ton of other people like outside of my company that I really looked up to that I've worked with and that you're like, Oh wait, I like her style.

Let me, let me emulate. You know, love how she's always calm in meetings, like things like that. So there have been so many people like sprinkled in throughout, like too many to count.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. Yeah. Well, thank you. Thanks for sharing that. Do you have a routine, either morning, afternoon, evening, and maybe if you could think back, because I know your life might be a little bit different now with being in consulting,

if you look back to when you were in corporate, is there something that you did that really helped you can get through or like hope helped you with your well being?

Francine Feder: Well, I think it hasn't actually changed from corporate to consulting and that thing that I work out every morning. I have to, I [00:53:00] think that's what kind of keeps me sane.

I mean, yeah, and when I was in corporate, I'd like run and either run to my building gym or run, take a soul cycle class. Now I've got the Peloton. And so I always, I, I, I start my day with. a workout and coffee all the time. And then, now I have some extra breaks during my day to walk my dog, keep some sanity.

But even when, when I was working from home, at corporate, I, I did the same, I think just kind of getting out, taking a break. But, you know, even when I was going to the office five days a week, it starting your day out with it, with a workout. Big cup of coffee just kind of clears the mind and, you know,

like I'm always been more of a cardio person. I know some people like, yoga, meditation, like whatever works for you. Just take, if it's a walk, like whatever, whatever your fitness level, it doesn't matter. Just take, take a few minutes to like, just do something for your own body.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. And do you feel that that doing that in the morning [00:54:00] is more beneficial for you than moving that into like the evening or like after work?

Francine Feder: Everybody's different. I liked it. I like it in the morning because I think it just kind of set my energy level up and set my time. But hey,

like, if you've got to start at 7 am I get it. If you have a long commute, it's, it's not realistic for some people and you either need to do it in the evening or just take a walk or, or whatever. I get it. But there's always even like those 10 minute apps that you can do at home. It's just like something to clear your mind.

Michelle Harris: Thank you. With that, is there a song, do you have a go to song when you need to hype yourself up, give yourself a little energy boost or confidence boost?

Francine Feder: I've always loved Don't Stop Believing by Journey. I mean, I am an 80s girl, so it's completely dating myself, but I think it's, I think that's a fun one. Yeah. Mm hmm.

Michelle Harris: Love it. Love it.

Um, is there [00:55:00] something around \$100 or under \$100 that you've invested in for yourself that has made a difference for you and in a positive way?

Francine Feder: Okay, this is crazy, but I just discovered that like the 3 in 1 charger.

And it was like, I think I'm a little late, but it's, it's a life changer because I've literally had this like whole wire contraption near, my side of the bed of like the, the watch and the phone and the headphones and like this three in one thing. So nice. And there's, I don't know, I literally bought it off an Instagram ad for 49.99. It was awesome.

Michelle Harris: Awesome. Um, is there a book or a podcast that you've listened to or read, that you might recommend to the audience?

That'd be helpful. It could be fiction or nonfiction.

Francine Feder: Yeah. So fiction, uh, so fiction, I just read, um, I just read The Guest by [00:56:00] Emma Cline. It's just a good, it's a really fun beach read. I'm actually out in the Hamptons now, so it was, some good context there. It's just about, it's an interesting statement on class.

And, it's just a lot of fun. It was a very good, like, a little bit of a psychological, good B treat there. The podcast I've enjoyed recently is called Search Engine. And every week, he's the gentleman, I forgot his name. PJ Vogt, I think, or I'm

not sure how to pronounce the last name. He, every week he does like, it was sort of a random topic, like this week was like, what's it like to go blind?

And like, he has so many like, different, it's like different little things. What I like about it is so random. It's like stuff that you would never think about. read about, listen to, and, and it's just like a different like [00:57:00] nugget of information. It's like, it's sort of like the idea of it is based on random questions that you Google.

Yeah. And then he talks about it. So it's, it's a good one. I highly recommend that.

Michelle Harris: Well, that's really interesting. I hadn't heard of that. And I originally, when you said search engine, I was like, Oh, SEO marketing, but

Francine Feder: yeah, literally the podcast is called search engine. Yeah.

Michelle Harris: Okay. All right. Thank you. So I know, I'm sorry.

I know we're going a little over in time. I appreciate you hanging in there. But, last questions. One is you are officially part of our audience's hype squad. Is there one piece of advice or one words of inspiration you would leave with everybody before we end our talk today?

Francine Feder: Be transparent with others and be true to yourself.

Michelle Harris: Love it. Simple and great words to end this conversation. So can our audience reach out to you if [00:58:00] they have any questions or just want to say hello? And if they can, what would be the best way for them to reach out to you?

Francine Feder: Of course, and LinkedIn. I'm on that all the time. So it's Francine Feder, LinkedIn.

Michelle Harris: Perfect. Well, thank you. Thank you so much, Francine, for coming on. This has been a great conversation. I appreciate you, offering your, or, giving your time really providing some insightful things to think about f or the audience and, and myself. It's been a very good conversation.

Francine Feder: Thank you so much, Michelle. I really enjoyed it.

Michelle Harris: Good. Well, I hope you enjoy your day and, we'll be talking soon.

Francine Feder: Thank you.

Michelle Harris: Bye bye.

Francine Feder: Bye bye.

Michelle Harris: Hi, everyone. This is Michelle again. If you enjoyed this conversation, hit subscribe so you don't miss out on our weekly episodes. And if you're really feeling it, please leave a review.

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