

41. Richa Batra on leading large teams, advocating for equity, confronting bias, being transparent, and modeling trust

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Michelle Harris: 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. Hi, everyone. This is Michelle Harris bringing you another episode of Her HypeSquad with Bosstrack.

In this week's episode, I had the absolute privilege of talking with Richa Batra, VP and General Manager of the Student Success Organization at Anthology. We talked about leading large teams, advocating for equity, confronting bias, being transparent, and modeling trust. Before we get into our conversation, here's a little bit of background on Richa.

Richa Batra is the Vice President and General Manager of the Student Success [00:01:00] Organization at Anthology. Richa has held various roles within Student Success over the last 13 years and has 20 years experience in workplace development, contact center operations, client experience, and education technology.

Richa oversees a team of over 1,000 frontline contact center employees that double in size to support back to school with 8 million annual interactions supporting students. Richa is passionate about the intersection of higher education, workforce development, employability, and customer experience.

Richa learned the "Nordstrom Way" in her first job, focused on customer experience, and has been a focus throughout her career managing clients, teams, and contact center operations. Richa is a first generation college student and is focused on her work to drive increased access and student retention to students from underserved populations.

She holds a BA from the University of Maryland College Park in Communications and an MBA from the George Washington University

[00:02:00] in International Business. If you enjoyed my conversation with Richa, 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 any more delay, here's my conversation with Richa Batra. Well, hi, Richa. So nice to have you on her HypeSquad with Bosstrack today. I'm really looking forward to our conversation.

Richa Batra: Michelle, thank you for having me.

And it's great to reconnect with you.

Michelle Harris: Yeah, and I love your purple background. It's one of my favorite colors. So if I'm admiring that if I get distracted, that's what I'm looking at.

Richa Batra: Thank you. I love I love the color of your glasses as well. [00:03:00] At the beginning, of, you know, moving to work from home, I was sent this panel, um, for a session and I've kept it up ever since.

And it's been a nice, uh, addition to my home office.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. Yeah. And it's definitely made me consider getting a panel for my office as well. So I think, um, I, I love that. It's so like more professional versus trying to blur out the background. So that's under investigation now. But anyway, on to, the real reason why we're here.

I would love for you to tell the audience a little bit about yourself.

Richa Batra: Absolutely. You know, a couple of ways that I identify myself. I am. A working mother of seven-year-old twins. That's, uh, I think one of the most, most important things to me. I live in DC. I'm from New Jersey. Originally, my parents immigrated here, from India through Iraq.

And so I'm a, you know, first generation college student and, career path [00:04:00] wise, I, I worked in retail in, in high school and then from there, um, after college really got into business and wanting to work in business and have

primarily worked in workplace, development, professional development and education.

So I'd say my entire professional career has been in this market and in this space in various different roles. Um, everything from an individual salesperson to running client management teams, running contact centers, operations. And now I'm the vice president and general manager of the student success organization at Anthology formerly known as Blackboard.

So been very lucky in my career. I've had a lot of great opportunities and I've enjoyed the market in this space very much. And I think, for me, my identity is not only the space that I'm in, I get to, you know, manage very large teams. I think that's something that I've learned to enjoy over the [00:05:00] years.

And then also doing that as a working mother of growing, of growing twins.

Michelle Harris: So you said you have a large team like how just to can we give a feel for like the team that you're leading how big is your team. Yeah, maybe start from there.

Richa Batra: Absolutely. I have eight direct reports in the team of 1,200, um, throughout the year. And, you know, we are education. So we're higher education, K through 12. And we know back to school, especially, July, August, and September, we're getting institutions ready. We will add another 1,800 people seasonally for that time period.

So there is a large amount of But, um, you know, it was about, I'd say seven or eight years ago before, before I had the twins that I got the job where I, you know, I had 10 people reporting to me, I had 60 people reporting to me. And then I had, a thousand people reporting to me. And that, you know, I look back at that time, of such a critical one of not only [00:06:00] having this great career opportunity, but then also, shortly thereafter having, having the kids. And that was really defining for me in so many different ways.

Michelle Harris: And can you maybe give a little bit of idea when you have that many people, what are they doing? Because people might not know what Anthology is and I'm not sure I completely understand. So maybe it might give some context to later discussions, like what, thinking through how big your team actually is.

Richa Batra: Absolutely. So Anthology, is a fairly new, um, brand over the last three years, it's been a combination of multiple education technology

companies, including Blackboard. And Blackboard is known as a learning management system, especially over the last few years.

Anyone, you know, that has been in school or, um, has taken classes online virtually through, through an LMS, and blackboard. So we've been a large provider, and market leader in that space. I've been in the student success division. So this is the division [00:07:00] within now Anthology that we're really focused on increasing enrollment and retention for institutions.

And we, you know, even before the pandemic enrollments were declining. And so this has been an area that institutions have been focused on of how do we increase enrollment. How do we make sure students stay in? Because not only is it driving tuition dollars for the institution? But you know myself being a first generation college student students like myself that are high financial aid or that were high financial aid need stop out at higher rates.

And so that type of mission driven work, um, absolutely i'm responsible for running the business and providing the financials to the company Supporting our employees and our clients, but I think that mission focus of who do we serve? Is what we, um, what drives us every day.

Michelle Harris: Well, thank you. Thank you for explaining that.

And, so our topic, what we're kind of generally going to focus on is diversity and leadership. [00:08:00] And you've already mentioned, coming in as a minority woman and, being a leader. What has been your journey, as a leader. Specifically focusing on maybe some of the challenges that you've faced as a minority woman.

Richa Batra: You know, and I'll go back to that time about seven or eight years ago, when I took on the senior director of operations role, at that point I had smaller teams. And at that, when I got the responsibility for a thousand people, and, and, you know, I think to your earlier question, what are those people doing?

About 700 of those people are considered frontline hourly employees. So they're the ones that are Either proactively reaching out to prospective students if someone says I'm interested in X university's online program I'd like to you know start an MBA Our teams are doing that work or if someone calls in and says I can't log in I need to submit my assignment within within a few hours.

How can you help me? Or [00:09:00] even questions of, I need to submit my financial aid documentation. I don't know where to start. So those are some of the questions that our team gets. So about 700 of the employees that report into me are doing that type of work. So they are absolutely frontline. And I think the reason why my journey changed at that point is I'm now responsible for a large amount of people who come from diverse populations and also economically, um, even hourly employee population.

And I think that was when my voice, when I became very clear in my voice, because it wasn't about me advocating as an Indian woman in a room. It was about advocating for the people that I am now responsible for. And it was just so clear and confident. And, I'm really grateful. Like that has taken me on the path.

And, you know, examples of that would be, how do we make sure we're advocating for equitable benefits? How are we making sure we're [00:10:00] advocating for short term disability for people to take maternity leave? Those things, um, became top priority and how I could leverage my voice because, you know, at the time I was going on maternity leave, how could I possibly take four months if everyone else did not have the same, the same as me and those, um, it just became very natural.

And I would say that was the start of my journey and it is continued on.

Michelle Harris: So I was going to ask you about advocating for equitable benefits what would some other examples be?

Richa Batra: Short term disability. Absolutely. And then also the cost of benefits being equitable within within organizations. And that was something our team worked on for four years to make sure regardless of where you are within the organization, how much you pay for the benefits is the same. And getting to that equity was such a, you know, a key area of focus for us as well.

[00:11:00] Flexible time more than ever, I think is really important. So just being flexible. And again, the type of work that we do, you need to make sure that you have people available to help students, you know, we're operating in a 24 by seven capacity. But can we be flexible in the sense that Child care issues come up, you know, they come up for all of us, regardless of what your role is.

And can we be, um, can we make sure that we're driving the business needs, but then also being flexible in situations, but having consistent policies that's, you know, to navigate and to make sure you're driving that, is top of mind for us.

Michelle Harris: Yeah, yeah, I can imagine the complexity with so many people on your team to be able to, to manage that With your own personal journey as a woman and as an Indian woman, were there any specific challenges you had to overcome or, you know, that we always hear about like bias and it's I think some, for some people it's [00:12:00] like unclear because they're not experiencing it themselves so I'd love to hear like maybe some bias you faced or had to overcome, what it might have looked like and how you managed through that.

Richa Batra: You know, when I thought as I thought about this, there's never there's not a memory that I have of direct. But there are a couple of examples. Absolutely. And still to this day, you are, in many situations, the only, um, and, um, you know, I'll use a COVID example, for being a woman. At the beginning stages of COVID, obviously being in education, our work, you know, we had to get thousands of institutions, millions of students supported in a matter of days.

So our work was critical to make sure we do that. So I think hours that I needed to make sure that work was done and just so many what ifs and how do you do it? None of us had been through this before. So the time I needed to spend at work obviously increased, [00:13:00] um, and then young children being homeschooled.

And it was that dynamic where that was one of the first times I felt that my peer group was not going through what I was going through as a woman. And, so I think at that point, I was really the only parent or mother of small children. And so my, you know, my focus and priorities were very, very different.

And, taking a meeting at X, Y, Z time. Didn't matter to most other people, but to me it was, well, how am I going to make sure I get them on the zoom, take this meeting, get whatever I need to get done. And so that, I think that moment in particular made me start thinking, I really do need a peer group that understands what I'm going through.

And it wasn't intentional and I don't think people understood, but it's that kind of underlying bias. And, I think at that point I then sought out, women's groups to be able to [00:14:00] say are there other women leaders that are going through this? Are there other women leaders that I can learn from I can I can network with so that was you know One defining moment I think for me over the last few years And then you know, i've not had a direct example where I can think of but there there's certainly other ones where you know working in tech, it comes up and I think, other people that are listening to this may hear some examples of if you're not the most technical person in the room, can other

people leverage that to, take control over the conversation take control over the decision making And I think those especially when in in tech you typically it's more it's more male focused.

How do you still make sure that you have a voice have an equitable voice if your experience is different. I think that i've picked up on as well over the years and something that I've done to overcome that is if there's ever been a situation [00:15:00] where I feel like, okay, maybe, uh, this isn't a subject matter expert.

I feel like other people may have more years of experience. I've gone and taken a class just to get myself up to speed. And every time I've done that, I leave with I already knew this information. It just gives me a little bit more confidence to be able to say, I can ask those questions in the room.

So I would say those are the two ways I think as a woman that I have seen indirect bias as a couple of examples.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. What is the answer for, when you are a working mom, especially when you have twins did you address that? Like the difficulty in, in meeting certain expectations of timing?

Richa Batra: Yeah, that, that, that's a great question. I had them, um, When I had them, everyone around me, my boss, my boss included, so supportive. And at the time, I was fearful. I mean, this was something that I was not proactive sharing that I [00:16:00] want to have kids or, I waited a very long time to share the information.

And once I did, The reaction was so supportive to the point of here are the things that here's a list of things that you need to do and, there was never even a conversation or discussion to say, I need to work from home a few days. And this is, you know, obviously before work from home was as common as this today.

It wasn't even a conversation. I did what I needed to do. I didn't feel like I had to address it because I knew what my priorities were, how to drive the business and it just continued on. And I still, to this day, I don't think I have ever felt the need to say, this is my schedule or this is what I, you know, This is what I need to do.

I just do it because I know what I'm accountable and responsible for. And that has been just a great environment to be in. And I want that for my team as well,

for them to have that flexibility and autonomy to [00:17:00] say, I'm going to take care of myself and my family. And this is what it looks like for me.

And I'm very clear on what results I need to drive for our business.

Michelle Harris: Got it. So it's more you were able to just communicate and because you're in an environment where, they're accepting and understanding, like it just, it's really about communication and would you say it's about communicating your boundaries in particular?

Richa Batra: I've never had to be that explicit. It was almost, um, like assumptive on my part. For example, if, um, you know, if I have to leave at four 30 on a certain day because of schedules, I would just say, this is, this is my schedule. I'll be back on at eight o'clock. And people have gotten used to that pattern with me and know that I will still drive the results if I'm able to do both.

I think that has helped me with my longevity here. As well and it was it's never been a question and it's always been on my end Assumptive where I'm like able to do exactly what I need because I'm able to balance my schedule, [00:18:00]

Michelle Harris: Right. Okay, so more about communicating to everybody

Richa Batra: Yes.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. So, okay.

Richa Batra: On my team, especially, you know, I think in advance, I'll take a vacation at the end of the month.

So a month in advance, I'm at these days, I will be accessible on this particular day. Here's my backup plan. So I think that proactiveness, so everyone knows, when I'm not here, the business is still running. And I think that part of communication is really important.

Michelle Harris: I know this is not really, this is really off topic, but, so being a working mother and being a working mother of twins, how do you, what is your strategy to manage both, being successful in business and being mom?

Richa Batra: I feel like my career has gotten better. Once I've like, right, right when I was, you know, we wanted to have them. And so I look at it from that

way, look at the time that I've been here, the seven [00:19:00] years that, the last seven years have been the greatest part of my career.

And I think the sense of prioritization has been, I know exactly where I need to be. And I think for me. I do better and I thrive under that schedule. It's not for everyone, but I do really well when I'm planning, scheduled, executing on a plan. And I think having those kids has allowed me to do that.

I know when I'm with them, I know what my, you know, when I'm working and what I need to prioritize. And it's given me, that drive in a way of what is the most important and the high value areas of impact where I don't think I, I had that lesson before where I could. Certainly be on 12 hours of back to back calls at the end of the day, did I really drive the result that I was looking for?

I've learned that lesson over the last seven years where I'll just say this is what we need to drive. And this is where I need to spend my time. I think it's made me a much better performer.

Michelle Harris: Yeah, and I don't mean to put you on the [00:20:00] spot, but I'm wondering if that's a bad way to start something, right? I wonder if it's more the culture of the company, or maybe today's environment, because I was reading an article, about a woman CEO, she was talking about the only way she, well, the way she managed having a family and working.

I mean, she was a CEO of a Fortune 5...50 company, I think, but, was outsourcing the parenting and I feel that there are nuances to that and that's just a headline. But, do you think that it's just today's, do you think it's a combination of those two things? Or like just today, if she, maybe she was in today's environment, it might be, it had been different.

Richa Batra: No, I think early pandemic where there was no child care obviously changed things, but I, I'm definitely living in a time where the flexibility that is given to me just didn't exist, didn't exist for my mother, didn't exist for, you know, the [00:21:00] generation before me.

And I feel very privileged that we have this option now. I think for, for me, it is a lot about choice. There are certain things that, yes, I'm going to get extra help on. if it allows me to work more and spend more present time with the kids. Those things I absolutely will. And they may be getting the groceries delivered, getting help with certain things.

It's worth it to me to do that. If I have more present time in the two things that I prioritize.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. Wow. Yeah. So I guess we could probably continue on and on. Um, I was, a single mom coming up as a leader myself. So I remember the times bringing them to the office and, setting them up in the lunchroom and having their soccer ball or their video games to kind of keep them busy while I was working on something.

But that was like a whole different, world where there was no work from home at all. It was your in the office when you're working and that was it. [00:22:00] So, yeah, those were that. I mean, it's interesting because they have such great memories of that. Like they don't they don't remember it being a bad thing.

They remember how fun it was and how other people in the office played with them. So, would you say that being a minority woman has, influenced your leadership style.

Richa Batra: I, I would, you know, I grew up with Eastern practices and that absolutely, is infused in everything I do. And, I'll use an example.

It's, um, the word transparency is used a lot, but I think I, I would word it in a way that I say what I mean, and I mean what I say. And I think that comes a lot from my upbringing, my Eastern. Beliefs and that is core to who I am. I want everyone to feel like they know where they stand. It's clear of what is expected.

I will be supportive. And I think it makes me different from that perspective. [00:23:00]

Michelle Harris: Now, when you say that, is there a way you position that? Like, is it like a hardcore, like, this is the way it is, you know, the way I am, or like, how do you present that?

Richa Batra: You know, it's evolved over the years. I mean, I remember being a first time manager myself years ago compared to it.

It's tough, just like anything else. It's you're doing it for the first time. There is no amount of training or coaching that can get you to handle these situations the right way. You just need the repetition. And I think by having so many people report to me, I've gotten the repetition and I, you know, I will forever be grateful for that because I've gotten so many opportunities to have these types of discussions.

I'm not so forthright to say this is my approach. I think people in meetings, they know what to expect. Um, In certain things, it's, you know, I'm going to ask everyone questions. I'm going to ask their opinion. I'm going to always tie it back to business results, but I want to be as respectful and authentic and for [00:24:00] everyone to be who they are in those situations.

And I think everyone knows, knows that whether it's clients, whether it's employees or colleagues. And I think that's how it shows up as opposed to saying, this is how I am tactics. Everyone knows that I. I expect an agenda before we have a meeting. And if we don't have one, those are things that, you know, those are expectations.

I expect that we hit our financial targets. I think everyone knows that about me and the time that we've worked together. But I think on a day to day basis, I don't necessarily communicate that this is my style or approach. It's a thing everyone has learned it over the years. And I have had so many people on my team that have been with me for over 10 years.

Michelle Harris: Oh, wow. That's great. That's great tenure. How do you manage communication with such a large team? Are you primarily working through your direct reports and then funneling out? Do you have team meetings where everybody is like on in one meeting?

Richa Batra: Absolutely. I think the [00:25:00] communication cadence and sticking to it is really important.

And when, you know, going from a Um, in person environment to fully remote. It did change how, you know, I was clear. I would go to this particular location. I would have these set of meetings that I would go to the next location and I had to rethink what does that look like fully remote. So I do have a cadence where I have weekly one on ones with my team members.

And then from there, I have a monthly leadership team meeting, and then I have a quarterly all hands with all the, um, the support and management. So, our frontline team members, we do recordings for them that we send out, and then also their supervisors will then take the information and then, relay it on and communicate.

We also have then someone who reports to me that runs our operations. She will then have those all hands. So I do have that cadence and then my team then has that cadence to make sure that it gets down, to everyone within the organization. There's definitely times with such a large [00:26:00] group. Is something being

lost, you know, lost in translation of this is the intention and this is how it comes out.

Absolutely. I think that's something that we continue to work on, but being regimented on this is the communication. This is when this is why we communicate and this is what we communicate is very, um, To me, it's effective and engaging the teams, but being clear, everyone should know where we stand and what their work that they're doing and how it ties in together.

Michelle Harris: You, you talked a little bit about this at the beginning, but you have a very diverse team. And is that when you are thinking about hiring and team building, is that something you're intentionally thinking about when, when you're going through that?

Richa Batra: Yes. I mean, and also every role, you know, every role that we post, we want to make sure that we're opening it up.

To various different populations. I want the diversity of thought and experience. And I think that's something you know, I look at of [00:27:00] if we were if you think about who the product users are, who the service users are. It's, more than let's just say 50% women. Or, diverse populations. I want to make sure that our team represents that too.

And if I'm just truly looking at it from that marketing stand or demographic standpoint, that's important. So I think when we're posting roles, we want to make sure we're posting it in all the places to get the most diverse population of prospective candidates. I think diversity of experience and thought is important.

I would not want to put everyone on our team that has the same experience as me. Um, that's not going to move us forward. And, you know, just recently we hired a few new people over the last year because we do have so much tenure. It was about getting expertise that I don't have, or the rest of the team doesn't have because they can give us the diversity of thought that we need to run our business.

I think that, um, I never want a competitive work environment, but an environment where thoughts are [00:28:00] differing. To improve our employee, student and customer experience. I mean, that's what the ideal of what we would want.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. And is it hard to think about how to, I guess motivate or communicate with people and make sure you're understanding perspectives when you have such a diverse team?

Richa Batra: Everyone needs something different. We we all are motivated by something different. Understanding that is important. And, building these relationships remotely or keeping them, um, continue to foster them remotely is important. And, you know, I don't think meeting one that I would ask what's your what's your motivation, but you start kind of picking that up of what's important to them.

How can I support you? What can you prioritize? But everyone on my team is doing. Is motivated by different things and they need different things. And so I need to adapt to that as well. And that's, [00:29:00] that's important. Like certain people, um, they really love that this is a flexible environment and it gives them exactly what they need to be able to do on their personal life.

Some people. This is a career pathway. And for me, I'm going to work with them a little bit differently. So I mean, those are the things I need to know. And I pick up on, you know, as time goes on, and I need to adapt my approach as well to make sure I'm equitable. And we're fostering environments where diversity can thrive.

Michelle Harris: And are you, would you say you're primarily picking up that information over time through your one on one meetings?

Richa Batra: Oh, absolutely. And, and again, like there's, we're focused on the work, but there are things that I can ask, whether it's in performance reviews, one on one meetings, and also the questions that people ask too are good indicators of what's important.

Michelle Harris: What are your thoughts on team building events? Do you do team building events?

Richa Batra: You know, everyone has a different differing opinion. I'm [00:30:00] not. I think in those situations. I'm not the best to say every month we're going to do this fun team building event. And I think the way that I look at team building is it's mutual respect.

Respect and that time. And I feel like that the relationships I have with my team. I absolutely respect them immensely. And it's happened over the years of situations and how we've all handled those situations. And I don't think I'm

either that person that was great at um, I'm thinking of all the events like axe throwing and all those things that you know, people people do but that may be personal preference.

I have done like virtual games over the last few years But that's typically around the holiday time before we break like maybe once a year. We'll do something like that but I think it's more of those connections and When something happens to someone in their personal life, positive or negative, it's showing up and to me, that's the, that's the team building, or when we're going through something really hard as a [00:31:00] group, it's me being there and being, clear to say, you know, I'm

I'm disappointed that this has happened. I'm accountable. I want to be very clear. This is an opportunity for you to ask me questions. I do believe that's how I've approached it to build the team as opposed to some of the fun. But again, I'm always open to feedback on that one. I think I'm always seeing people, rave about some of those team building events.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. It's so interesting. I have, you know, the people that I have asked that question, it's, it's 50 50, I think. Okay. Some people are really into having specific team building things like, like you said, like axe throwing but some people are just like, it's, it's about respect. And, All my team is just focused on getting things done.

And if I know that that is something they don't need or don't want, like I'm not going to force them. So yeah, I have heard the different perspectives for people listening. And a lot of people listening are newer leaders.[00:32:00] what are some strategies or what are some things that you do to, promote, trust within your team of like the peer to peer, trust?

Richa Batra: I mean, I try to model it as well. So you're, you are absolutely going to get those situations where two peers don't work well together. I try to model it and in those situations support and maybe ask questions to say, you know, I'm sensing something in this conversation. Let's talk about it a little bit further.

I try to, to break from anything that turns into negative, um, immediately. In those situations, I'll even say, it seems like we probably need to take a pause on this conversation. Let's come. Let's come back. So I do try to model it. I don't want that type of, back channel with any peers. I mean, they're going to be people that you need to work with.

They're not gonna be your favorite. And we all need to learn that lesson that that is always going to be the case, but what can I learn from that person? That maybe I don't have the skill set [00:33:00] and They I can learn something from them that I wouldn't in other situations or for that particular person I know before my call with them.

I need to take 10 minutes before And just prepare myself, breathe, give myself the space and I will be better or I will be more calm in that discussion or I can ask more thoughtful questions, trying to find out also what's their priority and understanding because most times it's like they're frustrated because they feel like.

If you don't do something, they're going to fail. And there are these dynamics at play and it's hard to really get that out because we're, we're all complex humans. But I think those are some of the things that I've worked through. It never goes away. I've absolutely surrounded myself with people that I've respect.

I can learn from. Are there some people that you work better with naturally? Of course, but I think the idea of, of always having colleagues that you work with so well, it's just not a realistic expectation. But [00:34:00] these are some of the things that I've used to be able to manage through that.

Michelle Harris: One of the things that we've been talking about recently, is having those difficult conversations and how uncomfortable it can be and I think you'd approach that a little bit with, thinking things through being calm, but, Do you have any advice for people that are like, okay, I thought that was an issue, but they seem to be okay now I can just ignore it and move on because we all have things to do, like how, how they might handle situations like that.

Richa Batra: I would say always check in. I will do check ins with colleagues with team members, people that don't report to me, just for that communication. I don't want anything to fester. And that's important. Like, I'd rather address it head on. And those are difficult conversations.

Again, we would, you know, years ago, I'd handle it differently. Now, Do I, you know, I viscerally, you know, you feel uncomfortable, you don't want to have them. And then you think about it, you're like, okay, how do I tackle this [00:35:00] challenge? Like, what is my point? What are we collectively trying to do? And if I can find some commonality of saying we both want this, then I am going to be that direct and saying, I know both of us want this end result.

We're going about it in a different way. But we really need to be able to do this. Tell me how we can work through this together. I mean, those are some of the things I'll do, but I need to be in the space where I can have that conversation. And it's not that, um, and I need to be prepared. A lot of times I will, have notes, send an outline in advance.

To someone to say, here are the key topics. I wanted to talk about today. What else did you want to add that allows me and the other person to prepare? I mean, getting caught off guard in those situations sometimes drives a reaction that's not helpful. And so I think that that's a tactic that has helped me.

Michelle Harris: Thank you. Thank you for sharing that. Of course. Before we kind of move off of the conversation, I have one more question about, [00:36:00] with your team members working together. And we talked about, you know, if they, don't necessarily have a relationship or they have a disagreement. Have you ever had an instance where people on your team maybe disagree or have a conflict because of a cultural difference or gender difference?

Richa Batra: You know, we, um, we run a location outside of the United States as well. So we just have started onboarding a location in South America. And I think we all need to learn to make sure that we're inclusive. And we understand cultural differences in a way and that's something that's an ongoing learning it may not even be innate to me, but it's something we need to be highly aware of. So that's something that has been coming up more often over the last year I think you know The the male female dynamic as well.

I think everyone communicates and manages differently. I think I look at that as As opposed to [00:37:00] male and female that someone has a very different style than someone else and it's managing through that But it's an always a learning. I mean just even the last couple weeks something came up and I thought to myself, okay, we should have been more situationally aware.

We should have prepared ourselves culturally We should have done these steps so it is. It's not a set it and forget it. It continues to come up. And so I think just making sure that we're open to those situations and address it because we are going to miss things.

Michelle Harris: Yeah, yeah, it's so interesting. I mean, this is a little bit different, but I can't remember where it was, but I saw a video of something that looked like it was a square on the video, and then they moved around it, and it turned out it was curved, and they kept moving, and it turned out it had, like, all

these little things behind it, and then they went full circle, and it actually was a circle.

I was like, you know, it's kind of a good example of, we always think [00:38:00] from our own the way we think in our perspective, like we know what everybody else we think like they're thinking like we are thinking all we know, but it's really just to be aware that other people's experiences are different and they can see something that you say so completely different that you do.

And it's not, it's not right or wrong. It's just different. And it's having that, that taking the time to understand and communicate through.

Richa Batra: I think that's such a great example. I mean, what you just said, taking the time is a lesson I think I have learned over the last few years. I didn't know before I thought work more hours, fly more miles.

And I think now that I give myself the time and space to say, this is a meeting that is going to challenge me. I'm going to give myself the time and space so I can be my best self in that meeting, and it's okay that I didn't pile, you know, back, book myself in back to back meetings that whole morning.

If I'm more effective in that [00:39:00] one meeting for that one hour, that is going to be the most productive, effective thing I can do for our business. And that's been a mindset change, too. I cannot be effective, flying four days a week, 12 hour day meetings doesn't give us the results that we need.

Michelle Harris: Yeah, that's so true.

And I'm glad you brought that up because it is, it's really easy to fall into. I mean, it's just so much you have. You can't you have to get done. There's so much to do. But one of the things that I and I don't know how you feel about something like this is like, for we in our leadership training, we're like, you know, block out an hour every day, and give yourself that time to reflect and think and be strategic.

Otherwise, like if you don't block that and be diligent about keeping that you are not doing anybody any favor because you're just in react you're never going to be in proactive mode

Richa Batra: Oh, absolutely. I do that as a habit. [00:40:00] I absolutely one hour a day and I respect my time It is rare that I would use that time for something else.

And again, I try to plan my time weeks in advance, so there shouldn't be. And I've noticed there's a lot of last, there's much less last minute reactive requests because of, because of that.

Michelle Harris: That's great. That's good. Now I know we're gonna, we're getting close to the end of our time. So I'd like to kind of move to, some of the questions we ask all of our guests.

And the first being mentorship, is there someone that in your career that are a mentor that has made a difference, in your career?

Richa Batra: I've had so many, I mean, I have so many great bosses and, um, you know, I couldn't, I couldn't highlight just one, but I've had great. Um, and a lot of, you know, I will say white male bosses over the years, majority of mine have been, and they've been advocates for me and they've been mentors for me.

They still are. I keep in touch with. Almost all of them. And they [00:41:00] you could tell they really wanted to give me the opportunity and supported me. I also do work with an executive coach, and that's something I've done for the last three years. And, I think investing in myself has just been best, the best investment.

So having different points of views and then making sure that I'm getting more clarity of who I am and who I want to be and surrounding myself with those various people. So I think I've been privileged. I have found many mentors and leaders over the years that have supported my journey.

Michelle Harris: Oh, that's interesting.

What was your decision making process to decide you wanted to work with an executive coach? Can you remember how that evolved?

Richa Batra: You know, I was in a fairly new role. It was actually a gift for my husband. It was a Christmas gift for my husband. He went and searched, LinkedIn for the, like the right fit of coach for me, like who would be good.

And he found this woman and, I think she was taken aback by this message [00:42:00] of a Christmas gift for coach, but this is the best. Gift i've ever gotten and we met in person and this is about three years ago So it's fairly new in my role that i'm in right now And I met with her and then we've decided to continue to work together each month over the last three years and It was more so how do I learn the skills that I need to in this role because I'm not going to now get it

from directly from my boss because I think as you continue to evolve and grow in your career, you're not going to get direction from your boss.

You're going to be expected to know it. And I think that was one of the reasons I felt like, let me, let me try this. And it has been invaluable. And it's someone that I connect with, that has a value system that I do. And is, is going to be supportive. Yet is going to drive me in a very, authentic way.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. And that's, that's so true, but also I think more and more, even, uh, newer leaders, they're, moving into their first leadership [00:43:00] role. They're really not getting the support from their bosses, even at that point. And so looking for those opportunities for mentorship, or like you said, you have a group of women that you, have connected with and meet up with to ask and learn, looking for those leadership development opportunities.

It seems like it's something it's a little more on everybody everybody's shoulders to get that development for themselves.

Richa Batra: I think so. More so now as well. Just taking that initiative, but you know, reaching out on LinkedIn. If there's someone that you're really interested in, say, can I get 15 minutes of your time?

I'm really interested in getting into ed tech. Those are the conversations I enjoy to just learning a little bit more about what someone wants to do.

Michelle Harris: Mm hmm. Oh, great. Is there a. Oh, this might this is an interesting question with you being a mom of twins. Is there a routine, whether it be morning, evening, afternoon that you rely on every day [00:44:00] to kind of keep your balance your mental wellness.

Richa Batra: Absolutely. And I, I notice when I don't, I can feel it in my, in my work. And also, my, my, I think my patience, as well, but every morning it's prayer and meditation for 10 minutes. And then I do work out for an hour. Um, So this is all before the kids are up. I do that. And when I do it, I, I'm my best self.

I have the energy to last the whole day and get everything I need to do. But I think not just do it and check it off, but do it in a way where I feel like I was my most authentic self. And so that, that is really important at the end of the day for me to be able to say I was able to do it. But I, when I don't do those, I feel it.

So I think making the time is really important.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. How early do you have to get up if I could ask,

Richa Batra: Sure I went five o'clock most days.

Michelle Harris: Yeah. Yeah. So did you always do that? Or is [00:45:00] there a transition you made? And if so, how did you get yourself to be motivated in the morning to do that?

Richa Batra: The prayer meditation started years ago, I'd say, maybe eight, eight, nine years ago, the working out this early in the morning started a year ago and it was more so That i've got to change my pattern of behavior and I just you know I started with one class a week then it's gone to two and , I have accountability partners. I will do a class with a friend.

So I that has helped immensely because you don't want to, not show up. So that has helped. And I've wanted on my own to then add in more classes. And then I've been very active of what other things I can do fitness wise. And I, I've not been that person that was like the workout person or the athletic person.

It's been more so how do I extend my energy levels and this has been a great way to do it.

Michelle Harris: Yeah, that's such great advice. Is there a [00:46:00] song that you'll go to when you need a little energy or confidence boost?

Richa Batra: Yes, also Mother of Twins, uh, Beyonce, Run the, Run the World, Girls, is such a great, such a great song, no matter what situation, but I think it's a good, um, pump you up song too.

Michelle Harris: Definitely. Yeah. I mean, Beyonce, have you seen some of the videos from her concert? They're amazing.

Richa Batra: Yes. I have never seen her in concert, but just the, I mean, just the performance is just incredible.

Michelle Harris: Yeah, it is. And under a hundred, something under a hundred dollars, have you purchased anything in the last year that, might be helpful for people listening that made a difference in some way for you?

Richa Batra: I, I didn't even, I'm gonna show you here, this is under a hundred dollars that I started about a year ago. It's called Oprah's Life that you Want Journal. I'm a huge, um, huge fan, lifelong fan of her and her work, but I think

just being, um, [00:47:00] journaling has not been a practice of mine, and I'm starting to get into it as well.

It drives a reflection, but I, the goal setting side of it too, of what do I want? And what am I proud of? What have I done? And when you go back to it, you're like, I've actually done a lot. And I don't think we realize that. So I would say under 50 great investment.

Michelle Harris: Yeah, that one's perfect. Yeah, I, I definitely, think everybody should keep a list of their accomplishments.

I think it's come up in a podcast before about like Gretchen Rubin has a to do list that she recommends everybody keep.

Richa Batra: That's a great recommendation.

Michelle Harris: Is there a book, that you have read, that you would recommend the audience read?

Richa Batra: You know, there's one I'm reading now that I would recommend for everyone.

It's called Outlive. It is, also a, an Oprah recommendation. And I think this ties into me over the last year wanting to get more physically active. It is about, not the amount of years that [00:48:00] you live, but how, um, the quality of those years. And it's just something I've been thinking about more recently.

It's what can I do now? Cause I, I'm in control of it now. What can I do now that when I'm 90, I can still walk around the block on my own? And those are things that are so important to me. So, it's very medical, but I think very actionable, steps of what you can do today.

Michelle Harris: Oh, I love this, like, focus recently on, there's a Dr.

Peter Attia, I don't know if you ever heard of him, but he has the Centennial Olympics that he is preparing for, but he is like, what can I do now to be able to, like, pick up my grandkids and play with them when I'm not ready.

Richa Batra: That's exactly, that's it.

Michelle Harris: Oh, it is. Okay. How interesting. Okay, well, I will share that in the in the show notes, everybody can see that.

And then, okay, so you're officially in our audience's hype squad. Is there one last piece of advice or words of inspiration you would leave everybody with?

[00:49:00]

Richa Batra: Keep going. Even when you hit a roadblock, even when you get a no, sit with it, and I do too. And you can be disappointed. But don't wallow in it for too long, move on, because keep focusing on your aspirations.

And I think those setbacks are really happening for you. And I truly believe that I go, you know, it's hard to understand that in the moment. But when you look back at all of those setbacks, or all those notes, every time I'm like, Oh, thank God that happened. Because look where I got and just just keep going and don't let a no or setback stop you from your aspirations.

Michelle Harris: Oh, I love that. And those are perfect words to end on. If our listeners want to reach out to you, say hi, ask for advice on something, can they, and what would be the best way for them to find

you?

Richa Batra: Absolutely. LinkedIn, is the best way to find me and, um, would, would welcome that.

Michelle Harris: Great. [00:50:00] And is it just, your name or is there, are there numbers attached, do you know?

Richa Batra: It's Richa

Batra.

Michelle Harris: Okay. Perfect. All right. Well, thank you, Richa. I really appreciate your time today and, I hope you enjoy the rest of your day and look forward to talking with you again.

Richa Batra: Absolutely. Thank you for making the time and space for these conversations. I really enjoyed it.

Michelle Harris: Thank you.

Richa Batra: Thank you.

Michelle Harris: Talk to you soon.

Bye bye.

Richa Batra: Thank you. Bye.

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