

## 53. Jacquelyn Nicholson on finding opportunity in adversity, controlling your day, working through conflict, avoiding the urge to overshare, and the power of a good lunch

**Michelle:** [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. Hey everyone, it's Michelle Harris. We're back for a new season of Her HypeSquad, and I have the perfect guest to kick us off.

Today we're talking with Jacquelyn Nicholson, a sales and leadership executive with some of the world's top brands. In our conversation, we talk about finding opportunity and adversity, controlling your day, working through conflict, avoiding the urge to overshare, and the power of a good lunch. But before we get into the conversation, I want to share a little bit about Jacquelyn to help set the stage.

I want to start with my favorite part of Jacquelyn's bio, which really struck me and [00:01:00] sums everything up about her so well, and that is this, Jacquelyn is passionate about being the woman her husband would marry again, the mom her kids are proud of, and the person her boss or customer would work with again.

Career wise, Jacquelyn has had a three decade career traveling the world to work with the best brands to grow businesses and new markets from scratch. With a career focused first in R& D, then consulting, and finally sales and leadership. Her successful track record managing relationships with J& J, Roche, Novartis, United Airlines, Transamerica, Cisco, Bayer, Sanofi, Discover, Verizon, McDonald's, Juniper, Zurich, and Takeda make her a versatile author, speaker, and saleswoman.

She is co author of Sales Success Stories Volume 1, a prolific speaker at Sales Success Summit and on various podcasts like Sales Success Stories, Surf and Sales. Sales evangelist and your legacy. [00:02:00] She has spoken at UC Berkeley's women in science group, and when it was on panels for bio network,

mastering, mastering the science of due diligence, Elsevier, Takeda's acquisition of Nika med capital round table on private equity and healthcare, legal and regulatory issues and due diligence.

And with GLG and Bloomberg on ROI of innovation. She has won numerous President's Clubs, from 1999 to present, and the J& J Achievement Award for Global Performance Above Level. She spends time serving at Watermark Church, Dallas, with her husband as leaders in the marriage ministry and their community group.

An avid runner, yoga fan, and prolific wine collector. Jacquelyn is a trained sommelier who loves to cook and bake. If you enjoy my conversation with Jacquelyn, be sure to subscribe to our channel and help other 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 [00:03:00] by along with valuable leadership advice to watch, listen to, or read.

It's just a little bit of joy for your inbox each Monday. You can subscribe at [www.thebosstrack.com/weeklyjoy](http://www.thebosstrack.com/weeklyjoy). Now let's get right to my conversation with Jacquelyn Nicholson. Hi, Jacquelyn. Thank you so much for joining us today on her HypeSquad with Bosstrack.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Um, it's a pleasure to be here, Michelle.

I was so excited when you reached out to me to invite me to be your guest and I'm really looking forward to our conversation today.

**Michelle:** Yeah, me too. And I know it's been a little bit since we've talked. So I'm really excited that we finally got together and, um, looking forward to you sharing a little bit about your leadership experience and digging into adversity.

And, uh, but I'd love for you to start by providing a little bit of information about who you are so the audience can hear directly from you.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Absolutely. So I am a person who defines success in a very unique way. [00:04:00] So right now, um, just so you know a little bit more about me, I'm a sales professional. I've been a sales professional carrying a quota for over 23 years, and I've had an interesting career that started in clinical research and development in the pharmaceutical industry, and then parlayed itself into sales through a path of consulting and managing client relationships

until I found myself where I'm at today, um, in sales and doing sales leadership over the past few years.

Um, I define success not as necessarily a person who's, uh, made lots of money or who's always met quota or made president's club or anything like that. Even though I think those things are important. Um, I define success as being the woman that my husband would marry all over again. As being the person or the mother that my children are proud to introduce to their friends for a while, that was stated as at least they're not overly embarrassed to introduce me to their friends and as the person that a boss would hire again, or that a company, you know, our customer would work with again.

And so, for me, that's been the guiding light in my [00:05:00] career as I've kind of traversed from being in the businesses I now sell to, um, into ultimately that that revenue generating role.

**Michelle:** Nice. I love that way of looking at success.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Me too. It's, it's a favorite. It kind of keeps me on track.

**Michelle:** And you're how, how many children?

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** So we have two children, both are married now. And, uh, just recently, a few months back, our oldest daughter, um, our oldest, who is a daughter, excuse me, um, made us grandparents for the first time, which I have to say is the best thing in the

**Michelle:** And I know you didn't mention this, but I wanted to mention it anyway. Um, you're a sommelier. Yes, I'm actually a trained

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** sommelier and that actually came about. Um, so one of my personal hobbies and probably passions or obsessions at times. It feels like, uh, is wine. I love wine. I love everything about the growing of the grapes, the making of [00:06:00] the wine, the stories behind all of it.

And over the years in. you know, just learning about collecting wine and drinking wine and enjoying it. My husband gave me a beautiful gift about just about 10 years ago, 11 years ago, where he gave me a membership at the American sommelier association in New York city. At the time we were living on the east coast.

Now we're here in Dallas and um, I went into New York city every week for three, four hours a week for two and a half years. And became a sommelier just for fun. I've never done it for work. Um, but it's really fun. I do it a lot of times for, uh, work colleagues and friends. Um, for my alma mater, I've done wine tastings on zoom with some, some old colleagues and students and things like that.

Uh, so it's, uh, part of my, just one of my favorite, great loves besides my family and my profession is wine.

**Michelle:** I love that. I had to ask because I am a big wine drinker as well, and I love wine, but it always amazes me, and I don't know if it's true. [00:07:00] I did read a book about it, so I can imagine some of it's true, but just for people to, and I guess you were able to do this, just like, just by tasting it, know what region it came from, what kind of wine it was.

Do you also know the year? It's so crazy.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** So it's, it's the, the greatest blind taster. So that's the, the really this, the pinnacle of becoming a master sommelier is the ability to do blind tasting well. And blind tasting is not about tricking people. It's about being able to identify a wine, the, you know, the variety of the grape, the region of the world it came from, and roughly the vintage.

Um, the really great people can, can really get close to the vintage. Um, I can pick it from a, few vintages for sure. Um, but you get these, some of these people are really good. Uh, it's fun, but it's about identifying a typical wine, a place, uh, you know, so, you know, a typical Bordeaux or a typical California Cabernet from Napa, or, you [00:08:00] know, uh, you know, something from South America.

So it's, it's not designed to trick people. It's like, can you identify a typical wine a place? Um, And can you get close to the vintage? Um, or can you say like, at least, you know, it was a warmer vintage or it was a cooler vintage or what have you. So it's really fun to do. Um, I'm, I'm not a bad blind taster.

I'm a novice blind taster and I love doing it. It's fun.

**Michelle:** I guess I should pull us off this conversation because I personally could have a long conversation just about wine. We could have a whole podcast

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** on wine. Maybe we'll do that another time. It'll be the boss track. Part two.

**Michelle:** Yes, that'd be that'd be wonderful.

Um, so just moving over to adversity. Um, before we kind of dig into some of the things I wanted to talk about, could you talk about what your thoughts are on adversity? What is what is adversity to you? Absolutely.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** This is something I'm really passionate about. And it's funny. Uh, a woman in my career who is very important to me years ago was an [00:09:00] executive at Johnson and Johnson.

One of the very first places I ever worked as a young professional when I was, uh, just after being in clinical research and development. When I moved over to the corporate side of Johnson and Johnson, I met this amazing woman by the name of key Hudson. And she was a leader on the it side, um, at J and J corporate.

And I, had seen an internal job posting for her team. And I was so excited about the job. I did something that in the early nineties was kind of unusual. I, I found out who the job reported to. It was her. I did my homework. I connected with her. I talked with her and I applied for the job. I ultimately didn't get it because it was an internal promotion, but she was so impressed with me and wanted to stay in touch.

And I asked her if she would be a mentor. And she was, and there was something that she taught me that has stuck with me since 1995, which was there is always opportunity in adversity. Those were her exact words. And I say it to people. I teach it to the people who have worked for me, the people I've mentored and the people I work with every day is that there's [00:10:00] always opportunity in adversity.

And her approach was very much like the Stoics, like, you know, you know, if you choose not to be harmed, you are not harmed like Marcus Aurelius said. So, um, whether you. Understand that philosophy or subscribe to it. It's something that's quite powerful because what it does is when there's opportunity in adversity, when you see it that way, um, you don't give away your power because you ultimately have the power of choice regardless of your situation.

So to me, adversity is simply another situation that someone finds themselves in. So when you find yourself in a situation that is adverse, adverse to you. It's,

it's not good. It's your choice how to see it. It's your choice how to respond to it. You can either react and get upset or angry or emotional or what have you, or you can choose to look at the situation as something that it's presented it to you and it can be an opportunity for growth.

So for me, adversity has meant quite a few things. Um, I'm a survivor of domestic violence many, many years ago. Um, uh, way back, you know, over 30 years [00:11:00] ago. Um, I've, dealt with adversity and being unemployed and nine months pregnant. I've dealt with adversity and nearly dying on a business trip from leukemia.

And so there've been a variety of situations and I always tell people, you know, I would not choose any of those situations, but, and I would never choose to have leukemia, but it's one of the best things that ever happened to me because of the way that I chose to respond to that. type of adversity in my life.

And it's just, it's applicable. And what you'll see a lot of times, um, some of the most inspiring figures that we have in the world are people who have dealt with great adversity and who have overcome and who are stronger because of it. Um, there's a gentleman by the name of Charlie Plum, who was a prisoner of war in a, in a Vietnamese, uh, North Vietnamese communist prison camp for more than six years of his life.

And he gives one of the most inspirational talks I've ever heard. It's called, you know, is your parachute packed? And he talks about how a lot of the people [00:12:00] who had that right mindset when they were prisoners of war came home stronger and better than they ever had been, and were better off. Then they would have been had they not been prisoners of war.

Now that's a mindset. I've never experienced anything that serious or that much adversity, but it just shows you the true power of it. And so for me, adversity can be a true blessing if you let it. And if

you let it, it can destroy you.

**Michelle:** That's so true. And it's the same, I think, a lot of stories coming out of the Holocaust, like there's some other survivors, uh, also kind of attribute that same way of thinking, to what they faced and how they were able to survive and, and, and in their mind be a better person out of it as well.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** You have Corrie ten Boom, you have Diet Eman, if you've ever heard her talks. She just passed away recently. Um, just absolutely

gives you goosebumps to think about it and what people have gone through.  
[00:13:00] And so, and I think the lesson is it really is, it's a choice. You, you choose how to see it and how you, you handle it.

And it can, you can mean happiness or sadness, or you can even give away the choice and just be a victim.

**Michelle:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, so true. Thank you. Thank you for sharing all of that. You're welcome. Now, I'd love if we could kind of move over to the business. I mean, people face a lot of adversity in their life, especially women in business.

And, uh, absolutely. So I know this is kind of hard to say, but it's just like Let's pick one example where you faced adversity and how you, dealt with it. Can you think of a time with during your career that you faced adversity? So people might be able to apply it to their own lives and how, how you overcame it or how you addressed it?

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Yeah, absolutely. You know, so I've grown a lot over the years and one of my favorite examples, and I won't, I won't name the company, [00:14:00] um, you know, just out of respect for, for the players, but there was a situation that I encountered at one point in a, an organization where I had been there for several years was very well regarded.

And there was a massive change in leadership. And all of the people that had been part of us building this part of the business for many, many years had moved on, and new leadership had come in. And one of the things that was very tough for me was, you know, when new people come in, it's their job to, make their mark and make their mark.

Obviously make changes. And it was, uh, at first very discouraging to me because it felt like these people had sort of come in and were standing on the shoulders of giants, if you will, of things that we had built previously and then acting like they had done it all. And it was, it was so discouraging at first.

And my, my initial reaction was really to kind of turn inward and to get very frustrated and saying like, don't they understand all of the work that we've done, you know, globally over these last three and a half years, this is really, Really disheartening. [00:15:00] Um, and what I chose to do instead was to kind of take a step back.

It was, it was lucky it was at a time of a vacation where I could sort of take a step back and think about it. And what I realized is I was really presented with a great opportunity to get to know the new leadership, to come alongside them, to, you know, share stories of what we had built. And instead of, , Getting sort of territorial and frustrated about it to say things, well, have we thought about this?

What do you think about if we would do this? What are your thoughts on this? And when I started to present the ideas from, you know, a lot of what we had seen as successful in the past in a new light, with new framing, with, just rephrasing things, it was far better received. And so what we was able to, I was able to do and it wasn't just me, it was a team of folks that I worked with is we were able to really come alongside those new leaders and help them be successful without, you know, sort of feeling overprotective of what we had built, but instead, just coming alongside them.

So it was hard at [00:16:00] first, it was sort of like it was your baby that you had built. And now these new people are coming in and saying , Oh yeah, look what we're doing. Like, yeah, you're doing it because we helped you get there. So, um, but it was, uh, it, it changed things for me and it really, turned a situation, with new leadership that could have just, you know, kind of ended unfortunately and, with a lot of resentment on my side, but instead turned into something very powerful and really an exciting new organization emerged from it.

**Michelle:** Yeah. So I know a lot of times new people come in and they'll just assume that they know what's going on and they'll start like making changes right away. Were they trying to change the process or they were just basically taking, I guess ownership or, taking the credit for what, what you had built.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** What it started out more as was just kind of coming in, making changes and taking credit. But it did, ultimately it ended up in a better place. And, and, and honestly, I think that had I continued on my path of the frustration and kind of digging in my heels, I don't think it would have had the same outcome.

[00:17:00] Right. So my, my executive coach likes to say, here's the situation. So Jacquelyn was in this situation. It was. Good. It was bad. It was what it was. I can't control that, but I can control my response. And we like to think of it. I'm an engineer by education. It's like to think of it as a mathematical equation.

So you can, you're the variable is your, your response or your reaction. So if it's a reaction, it's like a chemical reaction. It can be really bad. And you add that



reaction to that situation and you get an outcome that you may not like, but. If you instead choose to take a breath, take, take a moment, reflect like I did taking some days off and choose to respond very differently, it had a vastly different outcome.

So I'd seen where the outcome was headed had I continued to react and dig in and insist on the credit and what we had done, all of that, instead having a response and getting a far better outcome because all you do like the, in the situations of adversity, you know, it's your, your variable is your response.

**Michelle:** Yeah. [00:18:00] Yeah.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** And you can vastly affect the outcome.

**Michelle:** Yeah. And when you went to approach your, your boss or your leadership to, not necessarily say, Hey, wait a second, we're working on, it sounds like you were just like offering your support and how can you help and just, and overlooking the fact that, they were moving forward with what you guys were already working on.

How did you approach the person?

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** It was actually over a lunch. I decided to take it out of the office. So it was over a sushi lunch. That was actually a really good sushi lunch, um, in, in New York and I had been really loathe to have sushi outside of Tokyo. I got very spoiled in my business trips to Japan eating sushi, but I was like, you know, I'm going to give this a try.

It was actually very good and just taking it out of the office and having that lunch took a lot of the pressure off. It was more about getting to know one another and just maybe softening some of the edges that had formed. And that was what made a real difference. And then it was just a matter of once that there was a little bit of a personal trust and a, at [00:19:00] least there was a, at least some familiarity.

It seemed to get a lot better after that. So you never know, never underestimate the power of a lunch.

**Michelle:** That's so true. And you alluded to this earlier. Is there, are there exercises that people can do to build up their ability to be resilient when adversity comes their way?

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** I believe so. And I think it really, it's, it's one of my rituals. It's one of the things that's most important to my sanity on a day to day basis is morning quiet time and, and a ritual of journaling. So for me, the way. That this can manifest itself in my life and others lives and it's a great tool is just helping to build your awareness of the things that are going around you on around you so when you take time on a daily or weekly basis to sort of, you know, plan out your week like think like what's coming down the pike this week.

What do I have to worry about this week? It's critical, right? Especially if you're a leader, especially if you're a busy professional, [00:20:00] you've got to understand what your week looks like. So otherwise you're. Your calendar's running you, you're not running your calendar. So knowing what's ahead for the week is a tremendously powerful exercise.

And then that daily reflection. So what I'll do in the morning is I'll just kind of, you know, I, me, I'm a person of faith. So I get up, I read my Bible. I spend time quietly reflecting on my day, my life, and my showing up as that woman, my husband would marry again, the kids are okay with, the boss would work with again.

And I, and at the end of my day, when I'm, brushing my teeth or just thinking, I'm like, okay. You know, how did I show up today? Man, I was a jackass today. I wasn't a very good person today. I really lost my temper. It's like, all right, I can do better tomorrow, right? So it's just honestly evaluating, like, how'd you do?

And so those kinds of things, the, the, the reason I think it helps you overcome those kinds of situations or, or prepare for that is you're more self aware. You're, you're, you're understanding of, you know, The triggers that you might have, like I get really triggered by bad traffic, or if I'm overly [00:21:00] tired, I know that that day might not go so well.

So it's just kind of this process of reflecting and preparing for the day. And so like I, and, and one of the questions we'll talk about later is the, the, the thing that you procured in the year that helped you. Yeah. Yeah. So it helps me. So I'm a pen and paper girl. I like to journal on pen and paper. I know a lot of people are electronic fans.

I have no issue with using technology or using pen and paper, but like I know, like I have big blocks on my day that I really want to focus on, so I knew we were going to record today, so I made sure there were buffers around that. You

know, I knew that, I had an important customer call right after this, so I'm going to make sure I'm on time for that and all the things that it sounds basic, but when you have control and a sense of awareness around your day and your response to certain situations, You're going to be a far more powerful leader.

You're going to be a far more powerful employee, and you're going to be a better family member too. Like whether you have kids or don't have kids, you'll be a better parent or spouse or friend or daughter. or sister or what have you. So to [00:22:00] me, when you, it's like a muscle, anything that you're exercising.

So I love yoga and the more I do my poses and my practice, I get better and I get stronger. Um, and your awareness muscles, kind of the same thing. So if you just kind of go through your day being run by everything that's coming at you in email or phone, you're not going to be able to show up

**Michelle:** as you want.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** I believe.

**Michelle:** Yeah, no, I totally agree. When you're running from meeting to meeting and not giving your time yourself that space, you're just being reactive. And when you're being reactive, I mean, you can't be all that thoughtful. And yeah, your responses are not gonna always be what you want them to be. I know people I know not necessarily everybody can help that.

What do you recommend actually, uh, if somebody is running from meeting into meeting and they just don't have the luxury of creating that space? How can people be a little more kind of [00:23:00] aware or thoughtful in their response? Do you have any thoughts on that?

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Yeah, I think, I mean, I,

I,

I don't know, I take the school of thought that I don't, agree necessarily that somebody doesn't have the ability to.

It's just whether they choose to exercise it. So, you know, I understand that not everybody can just say like, Hey, this is what I want. So especially let's say you're, you're, you know, you're working in retail or you're showing up to a building from eight to five and you have things you have to do or places you have to be.

My husband has worked in the steel industry for many years. Being on the shop floor is a requirement of the job. So. Right. But when it, when it comes to an office setting or a remote worker or someone who's a sales professional or, working in the kind of roles that you and I have worked in, it's important to have blocks of time on your calendar for, for that kind of deep work.

So I'll see people and I think Google's got a great solution for this. Like you can have focus time in certain blocks of the day. It's turning off notifications. Like it drives me crazy. My husband has [00:24:00] notifications on his phone for every email he gets. I'm like, shut those off. So I don't get those notifications.

I shut those off. I don't have things popping up and making noises on my screen. I get rid of those. And then I have blocks in my phone. day when I answer emails or I, I review things in Slack. So kind of three times a day, I'm doing things in Slack because it's really important in my work environment. Um, email is, two to three times a day.

Otherwise, if I'm on a podcast or if I'm speaking with a customer, I'm doing a pitch, I'm having a working session. Those notifications can't just distract me. So reducing distractions, I think, is important. I think, whatever kind of self care routines are important to you, whether it's exercise or nutrition or, shutting off screens an hour before you go to bed, there are a lot of schools of thought around that.

And I think they're all very beneficial. So for me, it's minimizing distractions. For me, it's having a very small inbox. For me, it's, sacred parts of the day that are just reserved for coffee and reflection or [00:25:00] sitting down and chatting with my husband or what have you. So when, so to whatever extent somebody can block.

some time in their day to have that ability to say, okay, I'm going to just take a pause. That's important. Going out for a walk. There's some great, uh, stuff on neurophysiological responses. You know, you know, if you're feeling this, go for a walk. If you're feeling that, you know, take a deep breath. If you're feeling this, close your eyes.

So I'll, I'll have to send it to you. It's, it's a really great way, like just for neuromodulation too. You're feeling certain emotions, your body saying, Hey, Michelle, Jacquelyn, take a break.

**Michelle:** Yeah. Oh, yeah, I'd love it if you could share that. Yeah. And it is true. So it's easy if you have your calendar wide open that it can be filled with meetings.

But if you have those 15 minute, 30 minute time blocked in there before the week starts or, weeks out, [00:26:00] then it's likely that that won't be like, you won't have scheduled time. I mean, I know there are things that come up where somebody is like, Hey, I see you have this block. Is it possible to, attend a meeting?

I can't figure out how else to schedule it. But I think that does actually help a lot with preserving that time and space that you need for that reflection. And And thoughtfulness.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** I agree. And even company policies were like, look, end the meeting at 11 55 instead of 12 so that everybody can just have a little bit of a break.

So I have, in Google, uh, in the Google suite and calendar, and I'm sure it's this way and outlook as well is you can have your default meeting times be 25 minutes instead of 30 minutes or 50 minutes instead of an hour. So those kind of little trips, you know, tips and tricks, excuse me, are helpful.

And then I always I would tell my kids when they were little, I don't have any friends. I'm like, if you want a friend, be a friend. And so if you want to kind of build that practice in an organization, just start doing it yourself. And then others sometimes like, Oh, I like that practice. Let me emulate that.

**Michelle:** Yeah, [00:27:00] I like that. And what do you think about Slack? So I hear I keep hearing, a little more, recently that people are, Not necessarily moving away from slack, but are not liking slack because it can be a quick like dopamine hit. Like you're getting those notifications and it feels it almost feels like there's somebody standing at your shoulder all day and you can't really be productive as ...

Is that true? I honestly, I use Slack, but I don't use it in the way that that would be disruptive for me.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Yeah. So I, you know what, I think it's all choice, right? Like kind of our theme here is like life is a choice. So you can let Slack run your day or not. And so for me, I, I have it for work and a, and for a

professional society that I'm a part of, and it can be a lot, but if you, if you ditch the notifications and the sounds.

It's pretty manageable. And a lot of times in a professional setting, it's up to the organization as to what it means. So we have people and are where I work that don't use slack [00:28:00] a lot. And that's okay. You just have to know what people like. What's the best way to reach me? Is it text? Is it phone call?

Is it email? What is it? But it can become a little bit of Of a tyrant, frankly. So if, you know, if you're, if you've got the little, the little swooshy clicky sound that Slack makes, the default sound, which I actually love that sound. But if you have that on all day long, that becomes annoying. So I'm just, I'm a big fan of ditching the sounds and notifications and haptics and all that stuff.

But it is a really effective way. Especially, for us where we have a group of clients and so we have a little channel for each client and it's a really effective and easy way to bring people up to speed and it to be a little bit of a repository, but it can become a monster if you if you don't manage it well.

**Michelle:** Yeah.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** So don't let it take over.

**Michelle:** Got it. Yeah. I'm always a proponent of notifications just being off and it frustrates some people, but I just, you know, I need that quiet, those quiet moments.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** It changed my life doing that. Yeah. Really. [00:29:00]

**Michelle:** Yeah, well, I recommend for everybody to try to do that as much as they can.

So when you think about adversity, conflict can come to mind. And so shifting a little bit into conflict. I'd love I've talked to a lot of people about this, but I'd love to hear your thoughts on How to handle conflict with balancing being assertive, as a woman in the workplace, but also being understanding, and do you, have you, do you have any times where that stands out as something you've had to intentionally practice or do you have any thoughts on how people can balance that?

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Absolutely. And it is. Look, let's face it. Like, um, women and men are very different. They process things different. And this is a

generalization. Of course, everybody's unique and different. I believe that in the intrinsic and beautiful, unique value that each individual person brings to the table. But if you look at it in general, there [00:30:00] are some similarities across, what, how women process and handle versus men.

And it's harder. You know, there are not a lot of great examples of women leaders in some companies, you know, other companies have done a great job of this, right? But when it comes right down to it, we're all just humans, right? And we're all just trying to take care of each other or we should be. And so what I found, especially in terms of conflict, um, It's actually something my husband and I are super passionate about.

So we are, we love mentoring marriages, like young couples who are getting ready to get married or just recently married. We love that. We love like just helping them find their, find their way. And the most important building block is communication and handling conflict. And that's true in the workplace too, right?

So we're not going to always agree. My husband always says, as an executive, he's like, the people are the biggest problem because we're the biggest problem. And when you think about communication and conflict, we always have this concept of drawing the circle around yourself, like control what Michelle can control, control what Jacquelyn can control.

I can't control somebody else's behavior. And the [00:31:00] source of conflict is often mismatched expectations, as well as not being able to communicate through the conflict. And so one of the most important tools I've found, especially professionally, is kind of drawing that circle around myself. Like, what am I responsible for?

Can I own my own crap, right? I'm contributing to this conflict. I'm not just, you know, it's not just you. It's some, it's me too. So what am I doing that could be wrong? Stephen Covey and his seven habits of highly effective people, which I just love is seek first to understand. before you seek to be understood.

So I've found in very bad situations, if you go to that other person or if you're in the situation, if you like, help me understand where you're coming from. And then, you know, this kind of the, this other thing that we teach couples is the speaker listener technique. So when the speaker is speaking, the speaker has the floor and the listener is listening and you can ask for the, the, the floor just to clarify, but then you give the floor back to you.

The speaker and you let them get out what they need to get out and then it's like, and you're not always preparing to speak or to respond. You're listening.

[00:32:00] You're actually processing what this person in you're in conflict with is saying. And then it's like, all right, help me. This is what I'm hearing from you.

Is this right? Yes. Okay. Would you like to hear what I think? Yes, I would. And then share your thoughts. So that's important. When you're in a conflict, it's really important to not attack the other person. It's not like, you know, Michelle, you really pissed me off because you did all these things. It's like, you know, you know, Michelle, I felt really upset the other day.

You know, I didn't feel like you had a lot of respect for me and I'm sure that's not the case. Help me understand what you meant. See how different those feel. Yeah. The other thing that my executive coach, Jim Riviello, taught me is this concept of the capital U. And I'm not ever sure if I'm drawing it the right way, but you start positive, Michelle, you and I have worked together over the years.

I've always prided myself on being such a great partner with you. My concern is I'm going to get to the heart of the matter by pivoting with my concern instead of, but because everybody misses everything you said. When you say, but everybody's like, okay, I'm ready for the, I'm ready for the guns to come out here.

Right. So like my concern is [00:33:00] I felt like the other day when we were speaking, I just didn't really understand where you were coming from. And I got really frustrated and I just, I didn't like that. Can you help me understand how we can fix that? And then you get to the heart of the matter, you have the discussion, and then you end it positively.

Like, you know what? Iron sharpens iron. A lot of sparks fly when iron sharpening iron. I feel like our relationship is better because of this conflict. And ultimately, if you get through conflict well at work, with a customer, with a boss, with a colleague, with somebody who works for you, you have a better relationship at the end if you handle it the right way.

It doesn't have to be the end of the world. And for many years. for Jacquelyn Nicholson, it was the end of the world. I was, as my coach liked to call me, a lit match, a lit fuse looking for a match. So I was already ready to go. You know, I'm not the person, you know, I know I'm changed a lot, changed so much, but it's, my husband, is the person you would send in as the ambassador to calm down the room, I would go in and [00:34:00] start a war.



So I've, I've changed a lot. It's been a hard fought victory for me. So

yeah, a

lot less crazy.

**Michelle:** When you talk about the you, uh, similar to, I guess the feedback sandwich, have you heard that?

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** I love the feedback sandwich, especially if it's a tasty sandwich.

**Michelle:** Yeah, it's a, it's interesting. It, it does, it's, it's, it's, It seems so simple, but it works. It, it just, a lot of being a leader is understanding how humans think and the psychology of everything. And, that's definitely, one, one thing that people could take away from this and use it. And it's, it's so effective.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Absolutely. And it's, it's about really caring about people. Like none of this is going to help you if you really don't care about people, if you really just don't care. I don't know that Michelle and I are going to help you very much, but if you care, we can help. [00:35:00]

**Michelle:** And what would you say, was it kind of those experiences that you mentioned earlier that led you to switch to where you are today with the positive outlook versus like coming in?

I don't know if I want to say positive outlook, but positive approach to things versus coming in aggressively and.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Yeah, I think, for me, the pivot point was around the 2013 2014 era. I mean, I had a lot of success up until that point, but I was very much kind of like, go, go, go, the notifications, the working hard, demanding a lot.

The, short fuse, angry emails, all of that. And the situation I described with the new leadership, at that company at the time, it just really, it made a big shift for me, because what I realized through, you know, early 2014. And at that point, my family and I relocated from the East coast to the West coast.

And it was just like, I just wanted something different. I knew that I had had success, but I [00:36:00] felt like I had limited myself by my own behaviors. And, you know, ineffective conflict management, ineffective handling of

adversity, even though I had handled adversity before and handled it well, I just wanted more.

And for me, the turning point was working with my executive coach, as I mentioned. And, um, He just helped me see a whole new side of things. And what he helped me to do was to understand that my own lack of preparation each day and for the week and the lack of journaling, the lack of understanding what I truly wanted.

It was just, It was a very frenetic sort of existence for me, uh, professionally speaking, my family was fine. My marriage was fine, but you know, honestly, professionally speaking, I hadn't seen this sort of success that I'd wanted to. And it really was down to how was I showing up? Was I the woman that my husband would marry again?

You know, am I, am I being that person? And I, I didn't have that view of success for me. Success was crushing quota. It was making lots of money. It was getting promotions. And [00:37:00] today, I mean, those things are great. I love those things. But ultimately, that's not really what success is about. And the real big moment was in 2017, where I was diagnosed with acute promyelocytic leukemia.

And I was on a business trip to see the CMO at Verizon. And I was about 90 minutes from tapping out because they told me had I gone to the ambulance in the ambulance to the hospital I wanted to go to, which was GW, I was down in the DC area. Versus the local community hospital they took me to I would have died in the ambulance.

If I'd gone back to sleep in my hotel room, I'd have died in my sleep. Now I can tell you when you are in the hospital dying, the last thing you're thinking about is your quota. You're not thinking about how much your paycheck's going to be. You're wondering Okay, what do we do now? Right now? And so it's, , I did a podcast episode with Scott Ingram on sales success stories called radical perspective.

It was like at that moment, nothing mattered other than was I going to live through the day? [00:38:00] And was my family going to be okay if I died? And what did I need to do? And now that is kind of adversity that if you let it can be such a game changing thing and it was for me. So even more than just in the 13 early 2014 era was what happened to me in mid 2017 that really changed everything even more so.

**Michelle:** Yeah. Yeah. I can understand, with, with your team. So looking at, at those leaders that have teams that are working for them, how, what is the best way, or how maybe have you helped your teams, handle adversity?

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** I mean, first leading by example, right? So when they see that you're the kind of person that handles an adverse adverse situation or adversity in a way that inspires them, that's, that's the biggest thing, right? And then I, I love the old saying that, people won't remember what, what you said to them or what you did, but they'll remember how you made them feel.[00:39:00]

So, you know, do, do people feel like you care about what they're dealing with at work or at home, right? So sometimes the, the home life will just. radically interfere with what's going on in the business world. And so do you care? So being leading by example, and then I think it's just, knowing what matters to each person, right?

It's like in personal relationships, we'll talk about somebody's love language, but how does somebody really get inspired in the workplace. There are some people who are motivated by titles. There are people who are motivated by money. There are people who are motivated by praise, for example, right? I think it's important to know what those people respond to.

Do they want to hear, you know, Michelle, that was a really great talk that you gave. Like, I really appreciate that. You worked so hard on that. That was amazing. Or does Michelle want to be like given an award? Does she want a Starbucks gift card? Does she want a promotion? Does she want, you know, like the heck with the promotion, I want 10, 000 more a year.

Whatever it is, you have to know what your employees are motivated by. Are they motivated by money recognition or what have you? Um, so I [00:40:00] think that's really critical. Because look. Adversity is, is around us, right? We've been through a tough few years. So how do you show up for those people on your team?

And if you're not a leader, how do you show up for your colleagues? Just sharing, like saying something like, you know, I really appreciate you so much. You're working so hard. Thank you. It's just little stuff like that. And when you're, when you're mindful of how people receive. recognition the best.

Because some people don't like public recognition. They get very embarrassed, right? It makes them feel horrible. Like, that wouldn't bother me, but I know it

makes some people feel very uncomfortable. So you have to know what, what speaks to them. And then it's, um, and you, there's no substitute for authenticity.

So if you don't care, none of this is going to help you. But if you actually care about what motivates people, what makes them tick, And, and the, and think about it, Michelle, the best leaders that you and I have ever worked for, think about the qualities that they exhibit. That's the other thing, right? I tell people all the time, this is a great tool.

It's like, [00:41:00] would, would you invest in you? Would you want to be led by you? , would you want to be on your team? would you expect an investor to make an investment in you? Tough question. Sometimes it's like, not today. Maybe not. We didn't want to work for Jacquelyn from November 30th, but maybe tomorrow.

**Michelle:** Those are great questions. And that's very simple, very easy way to think about that. And I, and I agree with you about. Understanding what motivates your team and what they're what they're interested in, what what drives them. And I mean, it's, it is so similar to personal relationships and understanding love languages, you have to know, because it can become frustrating for you as a leader, when you are, you don't know, and you're providing .

The wrong reward or the wrong feedback or, or thinking that you're doing like this person a favor by praising them in public and you don't get the response that you want. I mean, it's just again, [00:42:00] going back to human, understanding human psychology and understanding everybody individually. It's, it's so important.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** My husband says sometimes he feels like a therapist at work. He's like, I'm helping all these people with all of their issues and I feel like a therapist. I'm like, yeah, you kind of are.

**Michelle:** I mean, that is true. That is really true for leaders, you know, that are that are really taking that leadership role. I, I believe it's true.

Do you, in your experience, Thinking back on your career, do you think it's different, facing adversity in the workplace for women versus men? Or do you, have you seen it?

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** I do a little bit. I mean, I think it's gotten a lot different. I mean, I started my career in the early 90s, the very beginning of the 90s, I was, um, uh, working for the first time.

It's changed a whole lot. You know, I was a single mom for a few years, uh, which is probably the, the most difficult situation I've had to face professionally was, living somewhere where I didn't have family, where I had a small child and it was just me. That was the [00:43:00] worst, but the best thing for me at that time was the company I worked for, which was Johnson and Johnson.

Like, they were amazing. You know, there was daycare at work. It was, you, you paid less based on what your salary was. So it was just this amazing situation of being able to have childcare that was affordable for me at that time, very, very early in my career. And I had wonderful leaders at J and J who understood my situation that I had to leave at certain times to get her to daycare to pick her up.

And then there was no one that could help me. There are places where unfortunately that's not the case where, you know, you'll, you'll see, at least I had in years past and I. I don't see this too much anymore, which I'm really thankful for. But you know, the situations where here's a man at work who has three small children, but he's not taking them to daycare or getting their lunches ready or taking them to camp or what have you.

He had a wife that would do that. And I've worked for sales leaders who are absolutely horrible at this, who did not care, did not understand and just were like, yes, suck it up tough for you. It's like, [00:44:00] Gee, thanks. I appreciate that. You know, not leaders I work for anymore. Never would again, it's just that sort of like complete lack of awareness of what their employees were going through.

Um, and so like, if you've got a single mom on your team or you've got somebody who's going through a very serious illness, I think companies today are far more aware of these things and care about them, right? You have situations that are just, Um, difficult. And if you want to get the best out of the people that work for you, you've got to really understand where they're coming from.

And so for me, I've seen it become a lot better than it used to be. Um, and, and one of the tips and tricks, I, this was a question that you had shared in, in the list. I just loved this list and it was kind of talking about any advice. And I

don't, this is very similar to this, I hope you don't mind me sharing this now is, I always say, think of the most polished, serious woman that you can think of.

And for me, it's Dame Judi Dench who plays M in the later James Bond movies. Like I just look at her and she's like, she's just a badass, [00:45:00] you know, she's like, yeah. And I was like, would you ever, if you were Judi Dench, would you say that? So if I had a friend who wanted to tell an employer why she was turning down a job offer for a promotion because she wanted to get fertility treatments and she wanted to freeze her eggs and this and that, and I go, stop right now, she's what I go, why would you ever tell someone that?

So she's like, well, cause it's the truth. I'm like, nobody needs to know everything. That is not a detail that your boss or your potential boss needs to know. That is something you talk to me about or a friend about or a coach about. Or, you know, your husband, you do not talk to people, they don't need to know like, oh my God, I have to take the baby to the doctor.

No, I just, I'm sorry, I can't talk right now. I'll call you later. So it's like, just too many women are too free to give details that don't matter and that don't make them look good and that ultimately don't affect the outcome of what they're doing, but will make them seem less than in the eyes of someone who's not really [00:46:00] great at being leader because there are people who just can't handle those details.

And so if you were Judi Dench, would you would M say this? No, she would not. Don't say it. Yeah, that's my advice.

**Michelle:** Yeah. And I, and I understand like the, if depending on the history of their, where they've worked and who they've reported to, they might feel like they have to give that explanation and then they, and then they end up oversharing.

But You're exactly right. It doesn't, I mean, it doesn't end up, it depends on, obviously it depends on what it is, but it can make you not look great.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** And I'm not suggesting people be false or fake. I'm a big believer in integrity and being honest, but it's just, you know, sometimes, and my coach taught me this, he's like, you have nothing to defend.

**Michelle:** Yeah, yeah, exactly. That, yes,

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** it's good to remember.

**Michelle:** Yes, that is absolutely a good one to remember. We'll definitely pull that one out as a [00:47:00] highlight for sure. So I wanted to move over to some questions we, we ask all of our guests. I know we're getting late in our time and I just want to be respectful.

Is there, so I know you talked about your, executive coach, but is there a mentor that you can look back to and maybe attribute your career success to or life success to,

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** you know, I've, I've talked about my coach Riv. I've talked about Key Hudson, the lovely lady I met all those years ago at J and J, but there was a boss I had at J and J, uh, later on who was named Phil Armenio.

I adore. to this day. Um, he just, he took a chance on me when I was very young in my career. I was a single mom and he was just awesome. Very supportive, very helpful. And he taught me, you know, it's better to get forgiveness than permission. He's like, just act like Jack and just get it done. I'll, we'll figure it out later.

And so I had the great privilege of working for him, for several [00:48:00] years at J& J. And one of the things he taught me, was just this fearlessness and this ability to speak to and sell to executives. So at the time I was at J& J, I got this project and it, it was basically in 1996. So, think back. Those of you who've been around that long, the internet was really nothing and so my project as J& J was to how to J& J going to use the internet to do business.

And it was me and here I am like, I think I'm like, how old was I? I was very young. We'll just not, we'll just not say so. I was young and my job was to do this and. He had been pulled into a special project. So I ended up reporting directly to his boss, which is a VP, which is very unusual at the time. And my VP just said, look, just get it done.

Just keep me in the loop. Let's keep purchase orders under a certain amount so I can sign for them. And let's just understand the project plan and let's get this in front of the CIO and do this. Do this job. And so I just did it. I just, I, I had no idea that this was something I should be afraid [00:49:00] of. So I wasn't, I had no idea that I shouldn't be doing this at my young age, but I wasn't afraid.

And I just did it. And my job was just to really sort of build this trust around all of the different J and J operating companies with all the executives. So I learned very early on how to deal with very senior executives. Yeah. And, I, as a result, I've carried that fearlessness into what I do today. And so I've had the great

privilege of dealing with very senior executives across the life sciences industry, the CEO of J& J, the CEO of Novartis, the CEO of Roche.

I mean, just all of the wonderful people, former CFOs from those same companies being customers of mine, working with heads of Novartis, working with The head of corporate communications at United Airlines and McDonald's and all these great companies that I've been privileged to work with as customers and CMOs at all these wonderful companies I work with today.

Um, that was because of Phil and Phil taking the chance on [00:50:00] me and teaching me how to sit down with executives and his boss at the time, Bob Sheput. Um, who I was the VP I reported to. I love Bob to this day. I just will never be able to thank Phil and Bob enough because Bob was the one that sat me down and taught me how to do a presentation.

He's like and Jacquelyn, you've got to know when to close the laptop and just have a conversation. Don't get caught up in your slides. You're telling a story. Tell the story. Don't tell don't read your slides. And I was like, oh, so I learned that in my early 20s, mid 20s, which was great for me. So Phil and Bob, if you ever listened to this, just know that I thank you immensely and love you to pieces.

**Michelle:** Oh, I love it. And it is so valuable that you got that experience. And especially for that time for somebody to trust. Somebody younger in their career. And it's definitely something that for people that are further along in their career and listening to this, like they can give that opportunity to others.

Like it's so invaluable.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Yes, find your young Jacquelyn that you can give that opportunity to because I, you know, Michelle, a hundred times [00:51:00] over, a hundred times out of a hundred, I will take somebody hungry who's a little bit less experienced than somebody who's got too much experience and might be bored.

Yeah. Take a chance on the, the, the inexperienced person who's a curious person and a learner.

**Michelle:** Yes. That's what I think. Definitely. And is there a song that you will go to when you need a little energy boost or confidence boost?

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Titanium.



**Michelle:** Titanium. Okay.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Bulletproof.

**Michelle:** That's a good one. Yeah.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** If I see it, right?

So titanium. I love that. It's one of my favorite songs on my running playlists. And I like, um, there's a great song called, My Silver Lining by a group called First Aid Kit. It's a cute song.

Oh, I don't think I've ever heard that. I'll have to check it out. It's a good one. My Silver Lining. Okay. And you kind of alluded to this earlier, but I don't think you mentioned it.

The one thing that you bought under a hundred dollars. Yes, I have a visual! Okay. So it's this

little pad of paper. It won't be easy to [00:52:00] see, but I found it at this little shop in Bozeman, Montana, where my daughter and my little granddaughter and her daddy live. It's, so I'm a paper girl. So it's a sheet of paper you tear it off and it's got days of the weeks and you can write in a date and it's got morning, afternoon, evening, and notes.

And so it's just a good catch all to like, Hey, this morning I got to focus on this. Like this afternoon I got my recording with Michelle, this evening I want to do this for my son or whatever. And so I love it. And it, I mean, it was \$18

**Michelle:** yeah.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** A steal.

**Michelle:** You know what's funny? I just love that. Is that's exactly what.

I have. You can't see it. It's blurred out. But yeah, exactly the same thing. I've got my pad that I use that I make my notes and plan my day. And

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** I love it. Yeah. Birds of a feather. This has been so enjoyable, Michelle. Thank you so much. Yeah.

**Michelle:** Yeah, no, of course. I would love to, kind of close out. And I know you've shared quite a few great, words of wisdom and advice, but what's like the one piece of wisdom or advice you'd leave for everybody before we end the conversation?[00:53:00]

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Oh, I, one piece of advice is just never give up. Never give up.

**Michelle:** Never give up. Never give up. I love it. I love it. And I know there's so much more I want to talk to you about. I mean, you just, even the things that you've mentioned that we haven't really gone down that, that path, but, that I really appreciate.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Well, we'll have to stay in touch. We can always talk again, for sure. Anytime.

**Michelle:** Definitely, I'd love to. Yeah, and I appreciate your time that you've given us. If, if people want to reach out to you or find you, what's the best way for them to do that? Sure.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Yeah. So I'm on LinkedIn. Um, Happily, reach out to me, direct message me.

If you ever want to connect, I'm always happy to talk to people. Let me know that you found me on Michelle's podcast recording. Um, I'd love to talk and it's just, you know, you can find me if you search Jacquelyn Nicholson, my spell Jacquelyn, a little bit unique. So it's J A C Q U E L Y N. So you probably see it here on the screen, but if you, uh, reach out to me on [00:54:00] LinkedIn, there's a a picture of a, uh, a vineyard and a very snarky black and white picture of me on there and you'll find me that way.

Yeah.

**Michelle:** And you're, and we didn't even talk about this, but you're a big hockey fan that's out there. Yes. Yeah.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Yeah. There's some funny, funny podcasts that Mike Simmons and I have done together on hockey and sales. Not really worth your time. Trust me. It's just more that we do it for fun.

**Michelle:** Well, I will provide all of that information in the show notes.

So Jacquelyn, thank you so much for coming on. Appreciate your time. Appreciate you sharing everything that you've shared, with the audience. And I do hope that we talk again soon.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Absolutely. Thank you so much, Michelle.

**Michelle:** All right. Bye bye.

**Jacquelyn Nicholson:** Bye [00:55:00] everybody.