

Zebra Your Edge Podcast

Hosts:

• Therese Van Ryne, Senior Director, External Communications AT Zebra, and global co-chair for Zebra's Women's Inclusion Network (WIN)

Guests:

- Colleen O'Sullivan, executive sponsor for WIN
- James Morley-Smith, global co-chair for WIN
- Shelley Eades, Senior Director of Inclusion and Diversity and HR Transformation at Zebra

Transcript

00:00:00:00 - 00:00:25:27

Therese

Welcome back to the Your Edge podcast. I'm Therese Van Ryne, Senior Director of External Communications at Zebra. And I'm joined by a few members of Zebra Nation who have championed inclusion both within our company and in the global community. Colleen O'Sullivan, who was recently featured on our Women Who Wow podcast, serves as the executive sponsor for our Women's Inclusion Network, also known as WIN.

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Therese

James Morley-Smith is one of our global co-chairs for WIN, and I've had the pleasure of serving with him as a co-chair of WIN for the last six months. And Shelly Eades is Zebra's Senior Director of Inclusion and Diversity and HR Transformation. Since one of the themes for International Women's Day is inspiring inclusion and the U.N. is advocating for us to invest more and women to accelerate progress, I felt these three colleagues could help us better understand how we can do both.

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Therese

They are each advocating for more investment in women in some very interesting ways, and they are naturally very inclusive of women and really all people every day. So I thought they can share how they are striving for greater investment and inclusivity to offer the rest of us some inspiration. Why don't we open the discussion with a simple question?

00:01:17:11 - 00:01:22:02

Therese

Colleen, I'd love to start with you. What does inclusion mean to you?

00:01:22:04 - 00:01:58:16

Colleen

Thanks, Therese. Glad to be here today to speak with everyone. I think for me, inclusion is more than just tolerance. It's an active activity that we have to do as people of various backgrounds, ethnicities, demographics, to make sure that other voices are heard. So it's an active verb, "inclusion." It's not a statement. It is actually showing that we want to bring people to the table, have their voice be heard as we think more about what decisions need to get made, how we move forward as an organization or as a people.

00:01:58:17 - 00:02:07:11

Colleen

So this is beyond just our daily lives at work, but everywhere else in the community as well.

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Therese

Shelley, what do you think?

00:02:08:22 - 00:02:44:14

Shelley

Yeah. So to me, I think there's an element of understanding different perspectives. There's an awareness that comes with being inclusive. So for me, inclusion is about having an open mind to the different perspectives, backgrounds and the different ways in which individuals can enrich your experiences and build on those ideas that you might have. So for me, inclusion is around building on the value of difference, appreciating that, understanding that and knowing how to work with that in ways that's collaborative and innovative.

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Therese

And James?

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James

Yeah, so similar answers really, you know, recognizing that everyone is different and, and respecting that. You know, I, I kind of look at it in layers and start with the fact that if you recognize - if you respect - everyone's opinion, you know, everyone's different, And with that recognize that everyone's experiences are different and how that can enrich what we do and how that maybe could be used for problem solving or just creating discourse in conversation.

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James

You know, just because you don't have the same opinion of someone else doesn't mean that they are wrong. And with that comes the response of how you respond to other people and using that as the active aspect that Colleen was talking about. Now, if I respond dismissing someone's opinion because maybe, you know, they are different, we're not including them, but responding in a way that means that I may not agree, but I see that their opinion is important.

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James

So it's that active element. I think Colleen really nailed it, there, that active element of inclusivity in saying, "I am actively allowing you to have your voice."

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Therese

I like that. It's that diversity of perspectives is what makes us stronger. There are lots of ways to ensure all people feel included, to create spaces at work at home and in society at large, where everyone is treated equally, given equal opportunities and valued for their unique perspectives. So I'm curious how each of you strive to ensure all people you meet feel comfortable being themselves, speaking up about their ideas and beliefs and participating in conversations or activities without fear of repercussion.

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Therese

What are some actions we can take that may not be so obvious? Perhaps there are more natural ways to be inclusive beyond the recommendations, we often hear from groups driving formalized outreach or inclusion efforts. Shelley, what do you think on that one?

00:04:48:11 - 00:05:11:00

Shelley

Yeah, I think it's pretty courageous, right, to put yourself out there. And to give you a perspective and so one of the things that I'm learning a lot is that I have to lead with that. So sharing how I feel, creating the space for other people to be courageous. And in fact, there was an example recently, I've had some changes in my role alongside other changes to team members.

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Shelley

And when we were communicating some of these changes, I was pretty open about the fact that I'm excited, but I'm scared. And I really thought about this for a while and I was kind of thinking about this example and the spirit of the conversation that we're having here. But the person said to me, "You gave me the space to also say that I'm scared."

00:05:29:18 - 00:05:51:15

Shelley

And so I think feeling included is about how we lead from the front, but also give that space for other people then to react. So some of the things that I think about is: How do I create that space through the very language and how I express how I'm feeling to allow other people to be courageous and know that that's okay?

00:05:51:18 - 00:05:57:21

Therese

I like that you show your vulnerable, right, so that they can be more comfortable. James, how about you?

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James

Yeah. Being yourself is important, isn't it? You know, if you put up a shield or a front, then that promotes everyone else doing the same. So I think that vulnerability is very important actually. One of the things that I try to do is, is not be the first to speak, and that's quite difficult for me.

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James

By the way. I'm definitely my mind gets a bit active and I just want to jump in. Shelley's nodding there. I know. But really, in a meeting, if it's an active meeting where everyone's participating and I'm not presenting, you know I will try and sit back and allow everyone else to respond first. So certainly if I'm the more senior person in the room, I think it's really important to. If I'm the most senior person in the room and I respond, then it's a tendency to just allow that to be the answer.

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James

And I really want everyone else to step in first. So I think for me, that allows being vulnerable to start with, you know, so therefore showing that I may not have the answers and then allowing other people to respond first is an active way of inclusivity.

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Colleen

I like that, James. I, too, have that tendency to jump in and want to solve things. But I think I would just add, just thinking about it from my perspective of having a global team and understanding the differences that people bring to the table and how they interact. And so I try to do things in different ways.

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Colleen

You know, having chats with smaller groups, people feeling a little more comfortable talking openly in the smaller group, you know, skip level one on ones, just for the perspective of seeing how people are doing and not necessarily around a tactical what's happening in the workplace, but more around what's happening with you. And then to your point, James, and setting the tone at meetings and you as well,

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Colleen

Shelley, right. Being open to that, your body posture, facial expressions, which is something I get a lot of feedback on that I should not go into the world of, of poker because my expressions speak for themselves. If I, you know, being, being open to those conversations and in watching the room and seeing the room and if you notice someone who maybe is thinking something but not necessarily at the point of sharing that thought, whether you call them out, maybe not in the meeting, but take that action afterwards to pull them aside and acknowledge and I noticed a reaction there, you know, do you have some feedback you'd want to give?

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Colleen

So I think thinking about, you know, how your teams and the community at large feels comfortable with communicating is important as well.

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Therese

I really like that. Colleen. Even in virtual settings, right? It's helpful to be on video so you can see those reactions, right? Those intangibles are important. Are there certain habits engrained in us as people that might make us more prone to accidental bias? Things we should be more aware of that might inadvertently be making women feel like they aren't seen, heard, respected or valued at a certain level because they are a woman.

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Therese

James, what do you think about that?

00:09:17:13 - 00:09:50:24

James

Yeah, I think the first thing you know, when I think about accidental or unconscious biases is that we all have them. There is no stopping. It is human nature and the reason why I say that is I think it's really important that we don't beat ourselves up about it and therefore recognize that we have it and therefore be active in in how we how we respond to to anything.

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James

And am I, in the way I'm responding, potentially applying my unconscious or my accidental biases?

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Colleen

It's interesting as I was preparing for this, there was a Russell Reynolds memo or article that just came out. So I picked some factoids out from the article around the attention given to advancing women and all underrepresented individuals in the workplace and all of the attention that we've seen on DEI and I&D initiatives and the stats, the statistics, showed even with all of that attention last year, only 15% of the new chief executive officer positions that were available, only 15% were filled by women.

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Colleen

So we still have a long way to go. And if you think about what women bring to the table, so more facts, right? When a new

opportunity presents itself, 70% of the time, men say, yes, I can fill that role, but only 50% of the time do women feel the same. And so there is this I'll call it baggage that women bring of not feeling confident in their capabilities.

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Colleen

And so they may not be as active in pursuing that next opportunity. And there, too, an unconscious bias. It's just human nature. It's how we are. And so being, to James's point, aware of those and not feel bad about that, it's just who we are and how we how we present ourselves. But just being aware of those things that exist.

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Colleen

And also the other thing that I thought was interesting out of this article is that as women think about their advancement in their career, they bring along not just themselves. There's a tendency and statistic to show that women think about the organization at large, the culture, the ecosystem, and how will things be. Whereas, you know, looking just at them, at men, it's more about, you know, how am I going to perform?

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Colleen

So that being aware of those things I think is important as we think about advancing women's career and those in underrepresented groups of just those differences that they bring to the table so we can pull those out. As leaders be aware of those as we're working with those individuals of how they just approach things differently.

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Colleen

So I agree with James wholeheartedly. It's not something to be afraid of or disappointed in. It's just being aware of that at the end of the day.

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James

Right. I think there's a defensiveness that we can put up when we recognize that perhaps we're being unconscious and have biases. We put up a defensiveness and that the danger there is that you then respond in the wrong way by recognizing that it's okay because we all do it, But recognizing it and responding in a in a sensitive way, I think is the key

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Shelley

there and encouraging people when that happens because accidental bias is going to take place. And I think going back to what you were saying earlier, we're in a global organization and this, you know, if you layer on I'm female, I'm English, I'm you know, I've got a certain background. There's lots of opportunities for accidental bias to take place in all of that.

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Shelley

And also to when you're experiencing different cultures as a woman, Right. There's lots of different things that you're also navigating as well because, you know, societies operate in different ways. We're not all in the same places as it relates to, you know, how women are advanced or treated in the world. So and I think there's also there's an element of being a bit more forgiving of each other at times, but also encouraging that learning process.

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Shelley

And I think I come back to the word courageous, and there's often times that I've had experienced individuals coming to me to say, I've experienced this, but it's okay, I just want you to know about it. And then you know what? I think we also have to really encourage through communication vehicles like this is to say, Hey, it's okay to speak up because otherwise we won't learn, right?

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Shelley

And we stay in the same place of accidental bias and defensiveness and some of the patterns that we've talked about. So I think it's also really encouraging. Hey, if you experienced that and it doesn't feel good and we need to encourage that learning to take place. And to James' point, it is when I've had feedback, it didn't feel good.

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Shelley

But the positive about that is that I got learning from it and I was much more aware of that. And then you know, that ability to make those accidental mistakes was mitigated because I got the feedback. So I just want to encourage that to.

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Colleen

Yeah.

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Shallav

It's important to share that feedback as hard as it can be. Right.

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Therese

That's right. That's right. Colleen, I like your data that you used. About 70% of men will go for a role versus 50% if they don't feel like they need all the criteria. I heard someone say recently that you'll have more setbacks in life based on doubt versus failure, meaning don't doubt yourself. At least go for it. You may fail, but at least you tried, right?

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Therese

Right. So I really think that's important.

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Shelley

Yeah.

00:14:59:00 - 00:15:22:07

Therese

Are there certain things women can be doing to ensure they aren't being accidentally excluded by others? For example, there may be times when a woman assumes she's not being given opportunities because she's a woman, when in reality her skills and knowledge just weren't well known by others, that it wasn't necessarily discrimination so much as that woman just not advocating for herself to be considered.

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Therese

So what are your recommendations to women who don't want to be dismissed or overlooked? Colleen, what are your thoughts?

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Colleen

I think a couple of things. You know, going back to some of the factoids I shared earlier. To me, for both women and I think underrepresented individuals, sponsorship becomes critical. Finding someone who is going to be your advocate, right. So they understand who you are. You need to think a little bit more as that sponsor to invite that individual to think right, to take that leap and be courageous to use Shelley's words.

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Colleen

I also think, though, to the extent from a skill set, if there is a skillset gap, I always revert back to some training a while ago about being kind. Not nice. Right. Nice doesn't give that pointed feedback. Being kind does. Saying, "Here's where you're needing some additional development opportunity. Not saying you can't get there, but I want to be clear with you that there is a gap."

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Colleen

And so we sometimes don't feel comfortable giving that friend feedback. But being kind about it. Right. And being able to maybe the word courageous and sharing that back. And the other thing is succession planning early, right? Acknowledging, as I mentioned earlier, some of the differences in how women think about advancing, really talking and being open, perhaps with your team members saying, "I have you on my succession plan, but here are some things that you need to do if you really want to be there."

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Colleen

So making it okay to steer that conversation around, I'm thinking about you as your leader that you have potential here, but here are some things I need you to do. So being open and again active in those conversations I think is really important.

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Shelley

I was going to talk sponsorship, Colleen, so and I've got a factoid which I'm excited about - you've inspired me. Seramount, which is an organization that we've partnered with in DEI space, and they said that women are 20% less likely than men to have a network and a sponsor. And that - and I think having the sponsor - is just as valuable as that network, right?

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Shelley

A network of individuals that are advocating for you, but giving you that feedback like you were asking to reach to, to kind of push you along. There were times when I needed people to say to me, Hey, that doubt that you've got, go for it, right? You need that network as well as those people that are really advocating for you, as well as the sponsor that's involved in that decision making.

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Shelley

So I think thinking about both of those things is really important. And also, I just want to echo the comment that Colleen said around that really rugged honest feedback. And there's a book called The Culture Code, which is an amazing read, and there's lots of content in there about belonging and what I'd never really thought about and is covered in this book and other writers talk about this is that if you're really honest with individuals and give that really caring kind feedback, it really means that it gives them a sense of belonging.

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Shelley

Because if you care enough about them to give them that feedback, I want you to know this because I want you to be successful. It means you care about them. So that kind of connection between caring, honest feedback and belonging and inclusion wasn't something that really occurred to me before. So I think seeking that out from the people that you know, will offer that to you, I think is important as part of that network.

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Shelley

And I just thought about.

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James

Yeah, the sponsorship is amazing, isn't it? I've been lucky to have someone who's acted as a sponsor for me and that person is actually a woman who is one of the most inspiring people I know. And what I think is amazing about sponsorship, we're really glad you brought this up today, is that there is that trust, isn't there?

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James

And therefore you can when you get the feedback, you respect it and listen to it. But I've certainly had that given to me. And because it's a sponsor who I trust, I've been able to just take it on board and react to that. I think when I was preparing for this question, the thing that came up was individual development plans and having that plan and using that to kind of look at yourself and and say, what gaps have I got and how can I then build upon those gaps to make myself ready.

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James

But I'm very cautious at this point to recognize that I'm aware that women especially suffer from imposter syndrome more so than men. And that's quite well recorded. And I say that because I wouldn't want the idea of reflecting on yourself and looking where am I gaps to kind of allow that imposter syndrome to creep in and take over. We all have that in different levels, but it is recognized that women have that more.

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James

So maybe kind of reflect on yourself, but have that imposter syndrome knowledge back there and recognize that and saying, I'm going to keep you at bay because you're not useful for me right now, but everyone needs to develop themselves, whatever their background, whatever their gender, whatever their wherever they come from, everyone needs to develop themselves and be prepared.

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James

And I think your question, Therese, said it's possible that you may not have the skills. That's okay. You know, then therefore use that to empower you to drive forward, to get those skills to do the things that you want to do.

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Therese

Absolutely. Given that the U.N. is advocating for greater investment in women, I feel it's important we talk a bit about what that means. When I hear the word investment, my brain naturally migrates to money. That money needs to be dedicated to programs that give women access to education or career growth resources. However, I suspect there are many non-monetary ways to invest in women to uplift them.

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Therese

And these are the types of investments every person on this planet can make. So would you talk a bit about the ways you're investing in women and how you've seen others invest in women? Colleen and Shelley, perhaps you have examples how others have invested in you.

00:21:46:17 - 00:22:19:06

Colleen

Sure, I'm happy to start. I think, you know, for example, WIN is a great example, I think, of investing. Not that we don't spend some money on bringing in some speakers, but the focus is more on the network and sharing ideas and sharing experiences and to James's earlier point, we all can develop, myself included. Right? And so being able to listen to see and I find in many of the situations an moment where you go, I experience that and I'm not alone.

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Colleen

Right. And it's okay to react in the way you did. So I think things like networks that bring like people together for whatever reason are various inclusion networks. For me also, it's flexibility, right? I'm a mother of four, works full time my whole career. And if it wasn't for that flexibility from my managers, from the companies I worked with, from my spouse, you know that was really important in being able to still be engaged in their lives and still feel fulfilled from a from a career perspective.

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Colleen

I once had a peer of mine say, and I think I've shared this in other venues, you know, your children are young once and don't get work. Let work get in the way of being also actively engaged there. And so that really hit me hard, right? Because you have these conflicts of I need to get something done. But it's obvious just before hot dog days, something that's important in the elementary school here in the U.S. as a parent, you can come in so how do you balance those things?

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Colleen

So for me personally, it's been working very closely with my managers and having very wonderful managers who have been open to that flexibility to allow me to have both. Right? And I think that's really important, which is not, again, a monetary thing as a finance lady, an investment does sound like money to me as well. But there's many other things.

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Colleen

The last thing I'll say is the sponsorship piece, right? We spend a lot of time talking about that, but that's just human interaction, right? Seeking someone out who you trust and value and being comfortable in asking perhaps that person to be your sponsor. Right. So being active in your own in your own career, finding that person or people that you feel comfortable doing that with.

00:24:09:06 - 00:24:18:05

Colleen

So those are just a couple of things that have worked for me. And as I now lead, others encourage the same for them.

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Shelley

Echoing the sponsorship. And I've had very I've had people that are very different to me, sponsoring me and still do to this day. Thank you and, and that investment is not, you know, that's investment of their time, that's an investment of their reputation on me. And that doesn't go unnoticed either. And so there's that and I think about how I can give that back to other people.

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Shelley

And so I think as an organization and some of the things that we're thinking about is, you know, of the foundation and the great work that you did to raise from a philanthropic societal impact and so much more that we can do out there because the investment internally with great leaders that we have, with all the differences that we have, is amazing.

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Shelley

And I think we should be really proud of that. There's clearly more work that we can do. The fact of the matter is, is that we're not going to see any of those differences unless we try to, you know, impact society in many other organizations of thinking about how they bring that philanthropic connection to, you know, getting more girls interested in STEM.

00:25:23:14 - 00:25:48:22

Shelley

I have a 11 year old daughter and she tells me already she hates science. I'm like, no. So, you know, these patterns continue. And I don't think I've influenced that. But these patterns still continue and it fascinates me. So I think the investments that we need to think about and by the way, we've done loads from a leadership development program perspective in Zebra, which have a good representation that we should be really proud of.

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Shelley

Having sponsorship off the back of those investments is really important. We might spend, we might mention sponsorship three more times before we close this, but I did want to reference the societal impact as well because that is investment, too. It's investment of our time, our mentoring, developing the skills and the interest across different communities, not just women to get interest in in areas like STEM and creating those prospects and opportunities to be the next generation after us.

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Shelley

So I wanted to give that a mention too, Therese.

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Therese

James, are there unique ways you're investing in women?

00:26:22:08 - 00:26:48:04

James

Yeah, I don't know if they're that unique, but I, I think the things I'll raise are, first of all, the succession planning, I think, which we talked about already with succession planning. And I try and look at my team and make sure that I am building up a diverse slate of succession. It's not that you have, but I don't know if people realize this, but you don't have one successor.

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James

You have a number of people that you're lining up as a successor because you are trying to mitigate risk, right? And give yourself

opportunities. So, building up a diversity of succession is really important. And I personally make sure that I've got women on that list because it's very easy, especially in a we don't have a balance of male and female associates across the company.

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James

So therefore we have to be active in ensuring that there are opportunities. And so I do that personally. I think that's something that we should all do across the company. It's not a policy, but I would I try and talk about how everyone should do that, but I think that's an investment directly in our teams. I think the word investment, you talked about the financial aspect of it, but investment is lots of things just in your own time, in your own thought.

00:27:47:05 - 00:28:17:28

James

How much time do you spend thinking about diversity and how we can promote opportunities for women. But also, I think our inclusion networks, our ERGs, are incredible. The difference I've seen, I've been at the company for a very long time. The difference I've seen since the ERGs have really taken root and making a difference is huge.

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James

And it's in the way that people respond, in the way that people recognize each other as and respect them for who they are and where they come from. That is an investment. It's an investment in thought leadership and an investment in respect. So the word invest is not financial. It can be so many different things.

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James

And, you know, I celebrate our ERGs internally and externally. I talk about it to my friends. I talk about how it's made me feel different and think differently. And my time on WIN has from the first month I remember when I joined when as a co-lead a couple of years ago now, after the first month, I was like, Wow.

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James

I had no idea really. And I had to kind of break myself down a little bit and appreciate what it means to be a woman in technology or in within the workplace. Full stop you know and an idea. I have such an appreciation for the amazing women of our company and what they bring and I'm inspired by you all

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Shelley

Can I use that as a bit of a plug Therese? So there's going to be a number of leadership opportunities that will come up this year through our various ERGs. And if you're not a member today, you know, come talk to us about those opportunities because listening to James, you know, it's inspiring to hear some of the learning that's taking place.

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Shelley

But you know that's an investment in your development. Those roles, whether it's a leadership role or other roles across those ERGs, the impact that those teams are making, the awareness that they're creating for us is remarkable. And I think being a part of that is developmental...further investment for you and should really be something that you should be advocating yourself is if there's an interest in WIN or across all of our ERGs, please do let us know and we'll certainly advocate for you.

00:30:17:09 - 00:30:40:01

Therese

That's a great plug, Shelley, for those Zebras who are listening, step up, right, Explore. There are so many leadership roles. James and I have enjoyed being co-leads. Colleen is our executive sponsor of WIN. So many opportunities. Please step up. Don't doubt yourself. You can do it. Yeah. Those outside of Zebra look for leadership roles in your company as well if you have ERGs.

00:30:40:01 - 00:31:00:06

Therese

If you don't, how can you create one if you have to start somewhere? Right? And I think you've all made it perfectly clear that investing in women is more than just the treasure, more than the monetary aspect. It's the time, it's the talent that you bring forward, and you're all obviously doing that in your everyday lives.

00:31:00:06 - 00:31:05:12

Therese

And we appreciate that. We appreciate you being with us today as well. Thank you.

00:31:05:14 - 00:31:06:20

James

Thank you, Therese.

00:31:06:23 - 00:31:16:01

Therese

Absolutely. And thank you all for listening. I'm Therese Van Ryne. Until next time.



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