

Welcome to The Power Lounge, your go-to place for engaging conversations in the digital world. In this episode, our host Amy Vaughn was joined by Krista Sande-Kerback, a leader in AI and digital transformation. Krista discusses the power of AI in history, ethical concerns, and the need for diverse voices. She emphasizes breaks in nature, solving small problems with love, and having fun. The talk covers gender gaps in leadership, the pandemic's impact on women in tech, job changes due to AI, and advice for women to future-proof their careers. Mentoring and real connections are vital for women's progress, as Krista shares inspiring stories. This conversation touches on responsible AI practices, gender equality in leadership, and celebrating women's success in tech. Dive into this energizing conversation filled with practical tips, stories, and a call to action. Let's get started!

Featured in the Episode

Krista Sande-Kerback

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Takeaways

- Impact and Responsibility of AI
- Women in Leadership and Mentorship
- Career Growth Strategies and Global Allyship
- AI's Role in Business Transformation

Quotes

"Generative AI's impact in HR, marketing, and customer service fuels a productivity revolution with advantages for women leaders."- Krista Sande-Kerback

"Essential leadership skills include emotional intelligence, empathy, listening, coaching, mentoring, innovation, and creativity."- Krista Sande-Kerback

Chapters

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Transcript:

Amy Vaughn:

Alright. Hello, everyone, and welcome to our weekly power lounge. This is your place to hear authentic conversations with those who have power to share. My name is Amy Vaughn, and I am the owner and chief empowerment officer of Together Digital, a diverse and collaborative community of women who work in digital and choose to share their knowledge, power, and connections. You can join the movement together on digital.com. This week, we are going to uncover the potential of women leading in AI's future with Christa Sadie Kerback. Christa is a strategic adviser and marketing leader with extensive experience in AI and digital transformation. With a background in building and scaling marketing platforms, Christa has provided invaluable guidance to executives.

Amy Vaughn:

Her work directing AI initiatives has helped to develop governance frameworks to oh, I'm so glad it's Friday. I write these things, and then I'm like, what did I say here?

Krista Sande-Kerback:

I'm fully in favor of just having fun and not worrying about perfection.

Amy Vaughn:

Oh my gosh. Right? Progress over perfection. I'm like, what word did I write here? To mitigate. It's a great word, and I love it, but I'm just gonna roll with it. I'm gonna start from the top of that paragraph. This is fun for our live listening audience too. Y'all get to see all of it. Alright.

Amy Vaughn:

Right. With a background in building and scaling marketing programs, Christa has provided invaluable guidance to executives. Her work directing AI initiatives has helped develop governance frameworks to mitigate risk. She has also reached emerging tech trends, trained teams in agile methodologies, and even scaled a start up. Christa is an alumnus of Dartmouth and Columbia College Business School, formerly served as a Fulbright Scholar in Germany. And today, she shares her experience on the boards of Fulbright Associate New York chapter and Women in America supporting women's leadership advancement. Christa's unique combination of AI acumen, marketing prowess, and a passion for innovation makes her a phenomenal guest that we are very, very excited about today. So please, everyone, join me in warmly welcoming Christa.

Amy Vaughn:

Christa, thank you so much for being with

Krista Sande-Kerback:

usa today. Pleasure. Thanks for having me.

Amy Vaughn:

Absolutely. Of course. Of course. As I just said a moment ago, you know, it'll be edited out for those who aren't listening live with us today. You know, bear with me, folks. If you can't hear it, I'm a little sinus-y today. So sinus medication is kicking in. The words aren't always there, but in a live listening audience, you are here with us today for the whole kit and caboodle, so you get to roll with the punches.

Amy Vaughn:

Let us know where you're listening from. Please be ready to ask Christa some questions. Pop them into the chat during our conversation or at the end, I promise you we will get to them today. But, you know, Christa, always loves to start with you and your journey. Before we get into some of the eye opening insights that you have for us, I'd love for you to share more about yourself and your journey for our listeners.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

I'd be happy to. I'm extremely curious, and I'm somebody who loves to tackle big problems. I'm really in my happy place when I'm building marketing programs, when I'm owning organizational change initiatives, and unearthing the most exciting and critical insights through my research in networks. And I'm the opposite of somebody who shies away at networking events. Networking really is my comfort zone, and I've always played the long game with relationships and just seeking out roles over my career that excite me. I've been really fortunate to work alongside a suite of executives across both large organizations and start-ups. And with the rise and the paradigm shift of generative AI, I had to be at that table. I'm somebody who's deeply committed to advancing AI and emerging technologies, and also has a passion for international business and diplomacy and for supporting women in the workplace.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

And I've been really fortunate to spend much of my career, especially now, working at that intersection. I've just completed a decade-long career at IBM where most recently I led marketing for AI governance and governance risk and compliance, and I had just a fantastic career there doing a lot of different things. And as I said, I've worked in startup environments as well. I did a Fulbright grant in Germany, which was just amazing. I had this fortunate opportunity to move overseas at 22 years old and immerse myself in other cultures. Still one of the best things I've ever done. And I studied geography, public policy, and German back at Dartmouth College. So I'm about to go to my reunion this upcoming weekend.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

So my path to technology was not an obvious one, but it's so interesting, and we'll get into some of this. It's like how I'm actually finding such interesting intersection points with what I'm doing now.

Amy Vaughn:

I love how you've interwoven throughout the course of your life in your career, all these different passions and curiosities, and you just don't hold yourself back. It seems like from pursuing them and exploring them, you're not hesitating, and it's what led you to it sounds like a number of different sorts of dream opportunities and careers. I love that. I love that. Let's get into it. I don't want to hold back because I think these are more important data points that you've on earth than conversations that need to be had. But, what have you been seeing in terms of how AI has already started to really shake up the job roles and responsibilities, for folks, especially for women.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

I'll just start by setting the context, and there's a line from Alexander Wang, who's the founder and CEO of Scale, that I think sets the stage pretty well. The next 2 to 3 years of AI are going to define the coming 2 to 3 decades of the world. For those in technology, you live a lifetime for a moment like this, don't waste it. There are decades when it feels like nothing happens, and there's weeks when decades happen. And we're in that kind of a time right now. AI has been around for a long time. It was first indicated by Alan Turing in 1950 when he was doing tests

around whether machines can think, and AI was officially coined as a term in 1956. But today, according to the scale Zeitgeist report from Alexander Wang's company, now up to 96% of organizations are now working with or planning to work with foundation models and adopt generative AI.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

That's up from 80% last year. Wow. That's pretty extraordinary when we think about it. Huge. And employee productivity is expected to be the primary driver of economic value for this wave. The stats vary a bit depending on the source, but AI could increase productivity gains massively, and companies are banking on this. So it could be up to 80% according to a BCG study that I'm familiar with. And as part of that, IT processes and customer service are kinda top priorities for automation, but it's happening across supply chains, across HR and talent management, sales and marketing, operations, finance, and and across the board.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

When it comes to gender gap, you know, broadly speaking, separate from AI, there's a persistent gender gap. We know it to be true that fewer women are filling the leadership pipeline to be able to rise into the c suite. Then you pair that with the fact that a lot of early use cases for generative AI are in functions that have been predominantly women. The pandemic also impacted women's recent data about the latest wave of tech layoffs indicating that women are being laid off at higher rates than men. And, of course, there were fewer women to begin with at many of these companies. I hope my connection is still okay. I'm seeing a little bit of a yep. Okay.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Good. Yeah. Good.

Amy Vaughn:

Yeah. No. You're good. You're good. Like I said, while we're alive, it's always a little laggy, which makes you a little nervous. I totally get it.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Can do some

Amy Vaughn:

editing on this stuff. Helps explain a lot, Krista, because, you know, supporting an organization

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Right. So that's a little bit too much.

Amy Vaughn:

Is for women who work in the digital marketing and advertising space, also tech. It's such a head scratcher when we see more women than ever that are on the lookout for work, because they have experienced a recent layoff. And yet, I opened up my news app this morning, and it

says, the economy just added 273,000 jobs in May, surging past expectations. And it's saying unemployment is at an all time low, and then I'm looking around saying then why are our women within this specific organization, which has some of the most talented women in the space not finding work and being let go of jobs. I think this has a lot to do with that. I also love that quote , so I'm gonna hold on to that, that there are weeks when decades happen. That is absolutely true. And that really I mean, it really feels like that.

Amy Vaughn:

I think that is a great way to succinctly state sort of the time that we're in and what we're experiencing. Yeah. So much to think about and so much said in that every moment right there alone. Alright. Let's talk a little bit about some of your time at IBM and some of the work and the studies that you did. One of those was that, at IBM, a study found that AI could automate way more women's roles than men roles. Why do you feel that there is such a stark divide there? Maybe you answered that a little bit with, like, the last answer, but was there anything more that you felt was driving that split? Anything else that

Krista Sande-Kerback:

we didn't touch on? Deeper on that. And one of the killer stats that I've been using, it's not an IBM study, but it's that 8 out of 10 women's jobs will be significantly impacted by generative AI versus 6 out of 10 men's jobs. And this comes from the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, and their methodology was that they use the Goldman Sachs list of the top 15 job categories that were impacted by generative AI, and then they analyze the gender breakdown for these occupations based on the US Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Report. And these data come from the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, and then the gender breakdown was calculated to determine the impact of generative AI by gender. And I wanted to make the point of sharing the methodology here because this is not something in my opinion. And other studies tell us similar stories. So think about it. Administration, marketing and customer service, hospitals, education, these are fields that are dominated by women.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

And notice that, in this wave of, you know, impacts, we're talking about a lot of white collar kinds of work. And, obviously, it goes without saying lots of men are being impacted too. So this is not just a women's conversation, but there's a distinct difference. And, ultimately, it's not optional. We all need to upscale, and we need to be prepared. Mhmm.

Amy Vaughn:

Yeah. On that note, what are some things that women could do to possibly, like, I guess, AI proof

Krista Sande-Kerback:

their careers? I'll answer this in a couple of parts. So one, for years, pundits have assured us that the key to surviving this aid AI disruption was leading into our creativity and those skills that humans uniquely possess. And this is true, and we do need to emphasize these. So if you think about skills like adaptivity, agile mindset, change management skills, communications, creativity.

Mhmm. I've got a long list. Literacy, problem solving skills, technology skills, willingness to try new things. Those are gonna continue to be critically important.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

And we also know that from various reports such as the World Economic Forum's future of jobs report that the top skills needed to be successful as a leader are those of emotional intelligence, EQ EQ kinds of skills, empathy, listening, coaching and mentoring and innovation and creativity. You know, the good thing for women is that research has shown that women tend to be better at using these skills than men. And we tend to be known as stronger mentors, and we can manage our cortisol levels more effectively, for instance, which is important for decision making. So honing these soft skills is absolutely part of the answer. But then if I take and interrogate what I wrote above, I could actually argue in some ways that some of these things can also be done by AI or we're very close. So, you know, let's go with that for now, but it's sort of an interesting thing to think about. Like, hey. Can AI actually do some of those things? Now the second part of this is taking the time to understand a bit more of, like, how AI actually works and what's and actually going in and using the tools.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

And it's important to remember that AI is not actually generating new insights. AI is based on what's been done in the past, and it's a prediction engine that guesses the most likely next word. Predictive analytics go into the model and yield an output. So you start with a model that can't do much, but then as you add more inputs and make data, add more data and tweaks to the model, it gets better. First, this was done with structured data then unstructured data. And I talk about this because, some recent news. I was at my Columbia Business School reunion last weekend, and professor Daniel Guetta was talking about this and how it's essentially like the Pythagorean theorem, to show a representation of words. There's a set of concepts where you can assign a word, a score from negative one to 1 and embedding, like, will actually plot it out on a curve and the computer or sorry.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

I'd give a score on a plane, and a computer would sort of do that automatically. So you can calculate distances between words, and you can train a model by jiggling some words around. And I know I'm going off on a tangent, but I find this super interesting because at a micro level, this system is helpful. What you ultimately end up with is something where if you put a word, say thank, then the system will often suggest you as the next step because thank is indeed often followed by you, and you can potentially save lots of time with a system that puts these associated words together. The challenge with this is that at a macro level, you start to see a convergence towards much more homogeneous content and is even what you actually wanted to say. So I believe that, especially, if you take a superficial approach to using AI, and a casual approach to it can be helpful, but maybe only marginally so. If instead, you know, you take the time to really invest in learning how to prompt these systems, that can really be what pays you dividends. And there's free courses on prompt engineering, and it doesn't require an engineering degree.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

And that can truly transform the way you work. So it's valuable to have that copilot where you could be asking questions. That could definitely save you time and, you know, even things around the house. But it can truly transform, when you kind of think about that breadth of capabilities. And remember the fact that everything is multimodal now. You can generate new text, but you can also do text to image or video, video to image to text, text to music, text to software, and vice versa. You can put an entire marketing framework into a prompt. And if that framework doesn't work, you can switch to another one.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

I've seen entire pretty good marketing campaigns created in 8 to 10 prompts. So Yeah. Do some of the courses to learn how to do that and also look at examples from others. I've seen some very sophisticated prompts that with some practice have turned out to have yielded some very sophisticated results. And then, of course, you also have to interrogate all of that. So I just think that this is super interesting when you're thinking about training these systems. And then I'll throw out one more thing that I, again, learned over the last week, which I've been ruminating on, which is the idea of Polanyi's paradox. And this was first articulated in 1966 by Michael Polanyi who asserted that we know more than we can tell.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

And it describes this cognitive phenomenon that there are many tasks out there that we humans understand intuitively how to perform, yet we struggle to codify their rules or procedures. And AI, unlike humans, is great with data and explicit knowledge, but then it struggles with that human experience. So what we have to do to bridge that gap is ask for what we want in a way that's crystal clear, and it has to utilize our best judgment, intuition, and clear sense of our brand identity. So we're asking it to, you know, ourselves to step up here in the way that we use these systems and and think about training them. We're not, you know, we're in the driver's seat here, not the AI.

Amy Vaughn:

Yes. Exactly. That's really interesting. I love both of those examples. I think they both show that people need to understand that, ultimately, we are still in the driver's seat. It's sort of like when we came up with those, what do they say? Those horseless carriages. Right? And people had to understand. They felt like they were so out of control.

Amy Vaughn:

All of a sudden, the cars were going to be driving us places now. Again, here we are. How many years have the car's been in existence? We still don't have driverless cars necessarily, but, you know, start starting to understand the opportunity and how far we were able to go, you know, writing out that analogy of carriages and horse drawn carriages to now automobiles where you could go literally maybe 50 miles in a day to, you know, 100 of miles in a day. It's such a difference, you know, in sort of how and where you can go. It's sort of similar in my mind as to how AI and what it can do and where it can take us. However, if you don't have that appetite for new knowledge or curiosity and the desire to teach yourself new skills and how to do these

things, you will get left behind. You know? You really will get left behind. And I think in order to maintain that sense of confidence and relevance in the space, especially for, again, women because we have, like you said, all those stats and numbers that you cited in order for us to sort of stay in the marketplace and stay strong.

Amy Vaughn:

You know? It just it behooves us to, really lean in, like you said, lean into

Krista Sande-Kerback:

this thing. This up and kinda throw out one more stat. I've heard that 99% of Internet content will be AI generated somewhere between 2025 to 2030. And I don't know about you, but this sounds like my dystopian horror story, a la Black Mirror. Have you ever watched that show? So Yeah. Seriously, invest the time and get your hands dirty. And you don't need to invest a lot of money since there's so many free training programs and communities like this, but, do the work. Mhmm.

Amy Vaughn:

Yeah. Yeah. Oh, I agree. Makes my suit head spin for sure. Even more so than usual because it's just it is it's it's it's all moving so fast, and I feel like it'll hit, like, a certain critical point. Right? Because it's like there's still just so much that there's so much it can do, there's so much that it still can't do, and it still requires so much human interaction and so much human checking. And then there will come a point at which the humans will realize, oh, wait. The machines will do the machine things and the humans can go do and be more human and spend more time being humans, I hope, and less time being machines.

Amy Vaughn:

I hope so. Alright. Next question. Let's see. When you're leading AI initiatives specifically, how do you try to bake in ethics and prevent bias from creeping into the systems because, again, this is something that, you know, becomes a pretty prevalent topic when we are dealing with building, whether it's largely going large language models, processes, new coding, for building out AI systems.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

While I was at IBM, my team was actually selling AI governance as a product to customers, so the values were there as a foundation. And I'll just mention that the challenge from a marketing perspective was, frankly, how do we share this with the world? How do we specifically get past the higher level messaging that feels like every vendor is using, and how do we say something differentiated? IBM has been an early pioneer and has very strong governance, excuse me, offerings in AI governance and security. Watson x governance was one of these products. And as a product, it was built to direct, manage, and monitor the AI activities of an organization. And some of the specific ways it does that is by evaluating and monitoring for model health, accuracy, bias, and generative AI quality. And the best analogy to this is that it serves as an attrition label for your AI. From a product perspective, the tool also collects model metadata, alerts you if there's something like drift. It can flag any new regulations, and then that will go to,

like, a regulatory compliance manager, for instance, to be able to assess that further and its impact and offers a lot of risk scorecards to result.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

So that's kinda looking at it from, like, product perspective, marketing perspective. And from an organizational perspective, I spent some time putting together a framework with best practices that are sourced from my personal experience and some other top AI companies. So I'll just, you know, suggest, some of those here. For instance, you know, number 1, building the right internal governance structures, starting out with having cross functional working groups that will be able to provide the expertise, focus, accountability, and craft policies for how AI is used in the organization, emphasis on cross functional, diverse communities, and then be able to actually have, the ability to manage, monitor, and direct AI activities. Another piece of this that's critical is developing a code of ethics. And at a very minimum, you wanna commit to a philosophy of do no harm and better yet to establish very clear standards of behavior and usage. And some organizations may even wanna consider publishing ethics reports and considering a center of excellence or ethics by design approach that specifically codifies, you know, what AI is meant to do as part of your organization for the world. Additionally, you want to, through this process, be engaging stakeholders and developing formal policies around this.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Communicate with transparency and educate everybody, your customers, your staff, your users, through best practices, through technical references, tech ethics materials, and more. And throughout this process, you'll wanna evaluate the AI's human impact and employ risk management strategies accordingly to make sure that those models are used responsibly to mitigate against risks like poor quality data, lack of diversity in your development team, and in your data sampling methodologies. And it's not a one and done with any of this. You also need to manage your AI models because models can change and degrade over time. So you must be constantly conducting yourself and or working with vendors who are doing the monitoring, who are refreshing models, and doing continuous testing to guard against drift. And then finally, addressing the data governance and security aspects. So creating specific AI data governance and security policies to prevent sensitive data from being compromised or misused. Mhmm.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Or consider something called red teaming where you can actually go in and, like, you know, look at, you know, examples and, and, you know, play out scenarios where, yeah, you're finding kinda gaps in your processes and systems and security vulnerabilities. So those are just some examples of kind of, you know, from a marketing perspective, product perspective, and Yeah. And frameworks that I think about.

Amy Vaughn:

That is fantastic. Very comprehensive. Thank you so much. So not to be all doom and gloom because it does feel like AI is obviously disrupting everything. So let's flip the script a little bit on AI and not paint, like, such a negative picture, but possibly a positive one. Do we feel like it could actually open up some new doors for women to finally get more equality? How could AI

possibly get some equal representation for women maybe in the leadership and or c suite roles?
Well, you're

Krista Sande-Kerback:

you're right that it's not looking great by certain metrics because we're currently projected to achieve gender parity in 21/54 according to the World Economic Forum, and women are doing 98% of unpaid labor globally. Now if we could only change that, the potential boost to global GDP if women could achieve equal labor force representation is 9.2% versus some stats I've heard about. AI's potential to boost GDP is only 7%. So the need is here.

Amy Vaughn:

Make it a business choice. AI. You gotta make up for what we're doing here.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

So we're obviously not here to just talk about dismal stats, although we can have a lot of fun with that. Yeah. But truly, AI shouldn't be the great equalizer. I believe that in my heart, and in the examples that I'm seeing. And one example that I use for that is that the biggest users of telemedicine, as I understand, are Native Americans. It has the potential for these applications to make our lives better and also serve underrepresented communities. And the geography nerd in me is very passionate about the social good aspect. So I can open some doors.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Now technology is not the silver bullet. What I think is that it's it's all about people, and we have to be cognizant of the pitfalls and the advantages of this technology. And we have to Mhmm. We have to condone and work with responsible AI. So I think in order to solve some of these these problems, get more equal representation in leadership and c suite roles, we have to question how these male dominated things that we might do in our everyday lives or, you know, say, oh, we let the, you know, insert marginalized group here try, but they didn't get it done. Women, you know, and the glass cliff phenomenon. We just have to be questioning this. We have to test both our behavior and we have to test the technology.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

AI, again, is the great equalizer. It could help us access larger talent pools. I will say that I've been pleased, for instance, to look at job applications recently and see some of them really encouraging people for underrepresented groups to apply even if they don't have every single skill. Because saying that white men will apply to roles that they don't have all the skills for, women Yeah. Don't. Let's address this head on. Mhmm. So we have to look at ourselves and keep doing all of the personal diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging work, and, also, leaders need to maintain and implement policies that ensure equitable AI development and deployment.

Amy Vaughn:

Yeah. I agree. Yeah. I agree. Sorry. It froze up for just a second. I had a couple of different so many good notes. You have, like, all you have all the stats.

Amy Vaughn:

I have to, like, go back and look at the transcripts for all

Krista Sande-Kerback:

I love researching this stuff. This never gets old.

Amy Vaughn:

Oh, we love you're in good company, friend. You're in good company. Oh, I remember what it was that I was thinking about was the fact that, like, the whole, like, 98% of unpaid labor is still done by women. And I I don't know why my brain went to this place, but I started thinking about the Jetsons and Rosie. I was like, oh, because we don't have robots yet to, like, actually do all of the unpaid labor that women are still doing. Maybe then we'll have our gender parodies once we have all those robots.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Everybody is talking about that line because somebody posted something that just resonated so much. Like, I don't want the AI writing my you know, doing my creative work, my writing with me. I want AI to do my laundry dishes. Yeah. And right now, it's the other way around. I got that backwards, but you know what I mean. It's like

Amy Vaughn:

yes. There's so many of them. It's so true. I hadn't even seen that, but I really just feel that. I want Rosie the maid. I don't I don't want Claude. I don't want Bard. I don't want I don't want John to easily. I mean, I don't mind it.

Amy Vaughn:

Don't get me wrong. But also, oh my goodness. It's so, so, so fascinating. Alright. I'll go to the next question because, yeah, I could go down the rabbit hole there, and I don't wanna take all day on it. Alright. Oh, so another thing outside of the data, the stats that we have in common is, obviously, you're big on amplifying the stories and accomplishments of other women, especially in tech and AI. Why is this such a critical piece of the puzzle for you?

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Last year, when there was all of that chaotic coverage of Sam Altman returning to OpenAI, the mentions of Altman and articles that referenced AI were twice the combined total of 42 women in the recent top 100 list of AI influencers in Time Magazine. And of the 702 out of 750 employees who signed the letter that were asking for Altman to be reinstated, more than 75% of these are men. This is not a comment in any way on Altman's leadership, but we've just written women out of this amazing story of generative AI. And then when you remember the fact that generative AI relies on processing these vast datasets of text image videos and more, which have already overwhelmingly featured more women in the past. Now you're just perpetuating that bias issue. So in my opinion, let's just get moving. I get tired really fast of that small group of men dominating the headlines, and I think this is gonna feel even more acute with the

presidential elections, even though I was thrilled to hear about the new, women presidents of Iceland and That was, like, wonderful. But I wanna see exciting volumes.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Of women and their accomplishments getting out into the airwaves. It's not women in STEM. It's not even women in AI, although the builders are very important. The founders are very important, but it's women, it's a women and AI conversation, and it's those intersectionalities. It's women writers. It's liberal arts majors. It's women running big international organizations. We're doing the critical work to support their local nonprofits.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

It's women of all different backgrounds and levels. I don't wanna just talk about CEOs either. It's Sure. Women making

Amy Vaughn:

Oh, absolutely.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Using technology and AI to make their workplaces, their families, and societies better because that's what women do. I don't wanna tell a couple of stories. I mean, I would like to see this happen in order for women to be able to do business with each other, and that's, like, a way to make that case to companies as well. But let's tell these stories about breakthroughs with AI. Let's find each other on LinkedIn and other platforms, communities like yours. Let's like and comment for reach. Let's open the door for each other, and let's fund women founders while we're at it. Plus, isn't this way more interesting than another set of plain Manila articles and posts on LinkedIn that were created by generative AI? Let's do this.

Amy Vaughn:

Yeah. No. I 100% agree, Krista. If you can't see it, you don't feel like you can be it. I think that was something that was really important that I heard spoken on the stage, but first by Cindy Gallop at a 3% conference, which was dubbed 3%, because at the time, I was a creative director working, for agencies, not knowing until I went to this conference this conference that only 3% of creative directors were women. I had no idea. And so, like, it's again, like, I love that you bring the numbers because it really helps you open your eyes to realize just, you know, where you sit in the waters that you swim within to realize that you more are more of an anomaly than you realize, but then you're also an example for, you know, other women that are, you know, hoping to get to where you're hoping to get to, and they need to see that it's possible and feasible and completely likely. And that even if they are 60%, you know, qualified, that they need to apply.

Amy Vaughn:

And you're right. More of those stories need to be shared because as we have seen even throughout history, right, it all gets rewritten. And who does it get written by? And so then what gets taught in schools and what gets shared and told to these younger folks? You know? I agree

with you so much wholeheartedly. Love it. Alright. So let's see. My next question is, what are some of the roles and job functions for women that seem most resilient against AI automation, and what was it about those roles that made them stickier? Which

Krista Sande-Kerback:

I'll refer back to an IBM study that was published around International Women's Day this year, which actually does take an optimistic tone, and it's about women forging the future of AI. And according to one of the women featured in that, Salima Lin, who's the vice president and senior partner strategy, transformation, and thought leadership. She writes, as generative AI shakes up the business landscape, this transformative technology is fueling a productivity revolution in HR, marketing, and customer service, functions where women leaders have the home field advantage. This means women will determine how the technology is used. And that's flipping kind of this conversation on its head, which I really like. Because by distinguishing ourselves as change agents and embracing the skill sets that are essential to lead in this era of AI, women can ascend to power and redefine perspective, in order to bring AI into the strategy. Remember, AI itself is not the strategy. We've got all those years of experience that build out that strategy.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

So let's be thoughtful and confident about this, and again, open the doors for women. And then, practically, women should also go after assignments that offer strategic value, in their careers like running a p and I, like leading development or managing client relationships, building those networks. It's this mission critical work. So those are the ways that we're gonna be resilient against AI automation. And we also have to just recognize that we're in a funky job market right now. So it's very true that those who don't have the skills in AI will, you know, see their jobs taken by those who do, but that's not a complete part of the picture either. There's plenty of extremely talented senior people on the job market right now. We're just in that kind of a cycle, and, you know, we need to, like, work to build our resilience and and help each other and, you know, understand that that's part of the picture too.

Amy Vaughn:

Right. Right. Yeah. No. That's great advice. So in particular for companies, how can they build teams with the right amount of diversity and perspectives baked in from the start for better AI development?

Krista Sande-Kerback:

I'm glad that we're getting back to this because, diversity inclusion efforts cannot be addressed in silos with a few events a year or the BRGs off doing their thing. Things. It has to be embedded in those organizational problem solving processes. And some specific tangible ways I think that organizations can do this is we do need to have those learnings that are specifically devoted to that inclusive leadership and allyship. And, then also opportunities to do community driven social impact and use the data driven analytics. We need to look at the numbers, and these are all effective ways to advocate for DE and I. I think part of it too is that companies would be smart to partner with communities like yours. Like, Elevate Network is one that I love and have been a member of for many years, industry associations, in order to be able to share

ideas outside of just our personal circles or inside our organizations because we can share knowledge and perspective with each other across our industry and function when we do that.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

So and so often, that's when those light bulb moments occur because you're out of your day to day where there might quite frankly be some group think. I think we can go deeper with the external organizations because for another reason too, and I'm speaking as somebody who's been involved and thought about these for many years. You're not worried about organizational politics and who might be evaluating you for your next opportunity in quite the same way as you might be at your company. I may not always wanna bring myself to work, but if you build rapport with other members over time, and I personally have developed close true friends and also done business and still speaking opportunities through external groups. You can really go that level deeper on all these topics and get to the root of certain issues, I feel. So I believe that custom companies should be investing in their employees to be involved in these kinds of groups. And then in terms of teams, we have to have this growth mindset, and I think always approach the space with humility. Generative AI Mhmm.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

At the heart of it is really about I mean, it's about the data, but it's also about collaboration. And we have to get out of our default or comfort zones to be able to use it well as we talked about earlier. It's not about sort of casually using it and having it go off and create magic for you. It's, you know, we need to, work with diverse teams to interrogate it to make it better, and we do that with teams and with that right diversity of perspectives. Otherwise, it's just gonna fall short. Mhmm. So I'd say one last idea that I'd say on that. I heard an idea yesterday that I really liked at a conference, which is to make sure everybody in the organization thinks that they're an innovator because AI is not a strategy.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

It's a way to help think about our strategy and achieve our goals better, and then this can inspire our direction. And there's also a huge opportunity right now for somebody to step up. It could be a junior person in the organization, somebody who's not appointed as a leader. And this is especially true, I think, at smaller nonhierarchical organizations, but the field is still wide open because so much of the AI usage right now is coming from individuals who are figuring it out. And, frankly, given what's going on with the planet, with society, we need all the help we can get from diverse sources.

Amy Vaughn:

Yeah. Again, so much good. And that answer, Krista, I agree. There's just a lot, I think, happening too right now within diversity, equity, and inclusion. It's oddly getting a bad rap all of a sudden. Obviously, there were some knee jerk reactions from organizations back in 2020, after the murder of George Floyd where people wanted to try to do their best, but then was it really thoughtful intentional action? Was it performative? Was it sustainable? Was it systematic change? No. It was kind of the latter. And then, you know, kind of seeing how it resulted thereafter where I think I heard the stat that, like, about 34% of those jobs that were created that

were diversity, equity, and inclusion jobs were lost or let go within, like, a year or 2 after they were put into place.

Amy Vaughn:

So I do think that, you know, there's a lot if we're creating efficiencies and leveraging AI, you know, and looking at it, how can we use it and leverage it for the betterment of the world? Like, yeah, there's opportunity there if we actually start to, like, look for it. And I love what you said about looking for and leveraging external groups and organizations to reduce and minimize the echo chamber effect that a lot of organizations are living within right now, and I realize, folks that sit within large orgs, that's a scary, scary aspect. I completely understand, but, you know, it's been said a number of times. I think everybody kind of goes back to oh, I don't know. What's his name? The founder of Virgin, said that, you know, if you treat your people well, they'll stay. You know? Treat them so well that they and train them so well that they could absolutely leave and find a better job, but they don't want to. And people just forget that, and, you know, I think they're always afraid that if they, you know, give people these safe spaces outside of the company to go and to talk about these difficult things, that somehow that they'll leave. But I think by providing a space in which they can do that, if you're becoming you're becoming that, you know, even if you're not that source, you're giving that sense of trust, or you're building trust.

Amy Vaughn:

You're building respect with that person by providing that resource, by providing that opportunity, and they will be grateful for that because I also do see that, and have felt that double edged sword of being a person within the underserved community, but then being also asked to be the fixer to say, hey, woman. You don't feel seen, heard, and valued. You're not getting paid as much. You're being asked to do the same amount of work or more for less. So could you also please volunteer multiple hours per week to comp with programming and solutions in ways in which we can fix this, you know, and create that safe space for your fellow coworkers. But, also, don't disappoint your clients. Don't let your teams down, and don't let your work slide. K? Good for you.

Amy Vaughn:

Thanks. Oh, and here's, like, a little gift card for Amazon for your hard work and a pat on the back. You know?

Krista Sande-Kerback:

I do. And people who have multiple intersections get proportionally more of my stress jumped on them. Absolutely. Yeah.

Amy Vaughn:

Exactly. Plus, like, 10 times the microaggressions. It's just it's awful. So I'm with you. I'm definitely a much more of a proponent of providing them with additional external resources. I've got nothing against the intentionality of creating internal resource groups, but the external resources are much more abundant and are going to just serve your people much better.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Important, and it really is. It's a continuous evolution. Like, you know, the pendulum tends to swing with these things and, yeah, instead of just throwing out the I'm using multiple metaphors here. Like, instead of throwing out the baby with the bath water here, let's just, like, approach this to a space of humility, and we're all learning and we're, you

Amy Vaughn:

know Yes. And then you're not putting it back on your people that need the support. You're giving them support from a place that you know, where other people that are coming in with the energy and the resources and the understanding of where they're coming from, and you're not taking that from them. You're not asking that of them. I love that. We should, that's like a whole another podcast episode. That's a new course. I did.

Amy Vaughn:

Alright. Let's talk a little bit about your time on the board with Women in America. What strategies or programs have you seen have the most impact on helping to advance women's careers?

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Absolutely. To tell you a little bit more about Women in America, it's a mentoring organization that has the goal of empowering women to achieve positions of influence in business. And it's designed around mentee cohorts, which are a group of 30 to 4 women in each class or every 2 years who are, women who have a decade or so of professional work experience and a track record, and they really want to rise into senior leadership. So it's a very focused kind of a group and experience, to help us do that. And I was invited to join by the former America's CMO at IBM and applied and was selected, and the group hosts in person, virtual, and, hosts in person and virtual events, retreats, and a whole curriculum for current mentees as well as an alumni community. And anyone can contact anyone in the network for extremely high quality mentoring conversations because there's also a group of mentors who have been extremely successful women in business. Everybody's vetted and interviewed, to make sure that they're a good fit for the organization. And very diverse women were included here.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

So the way that we think in terms of best practices, we really work based on insights. Programming based on research. It's not me searching. It's not what I feel like planning. It's not what members are asking for in focus groups, in surveys, town halls, and more. And having those really critical conversations, hey. Are we still relevant as an organization? Are we serving you as our members? And women in America have been at an exciting inflection point since we've been around since 2010 and have built up a critical mass of mentees and now this alumni communicate. The alumni community, which is really doing some extraordinary things.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

So I see, like we talked about before, it's a continuous process, and we have shifted a little bit where our focus was initially on women trying to reach the c suite, and that was something that

was specifically vetted as part of the application process. But now a lot of members still have that goal, And more and more are also seeking alternative paths like entrepreneurship, and we wanna acknowledge that. Mhmm. And Yes. Another thing that's really important to me is driving those vulnerable conversations. And it's helped by the fact that we know each other. It's not a networking event that you go to and everybody you're meeting is somebody new. There's actually some continuity over time.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

So we become friends as well versus if it were a bigger group and you're meeting new people, it's a little harder to get past the superficial conversations. So, specifically, when thinking about events and, for instance, best utilizing the time of somebody very senior who's got that perspective from being a president or CEO of a company or doing something really extraordinary in their career. It's not helpful to attend an event like that if all that they're gonna do is talk about, you know, one unbroken boulevard of green lights after the next. It's you know, talk about their big goal or how hard they worked and how great their husbands and nannies were in helping them achieve success. I've been to events like that, not with women in America because their events have been fantastic, but, you know, panel discussions at, at the office where you come out of it being like, well, good for them. But, like, I've got an elderly parent or a sick child or something like that. I'm like, I'm just never gonna have what they have. It's actually really nice when we have the real dialogue about what a woman what a powerful successful woman has done where she's faced a setback or she's made a business decision that didn't work out because sometimes you have to make decisions, pretty much always have to make decisions without a 100% of the information available or have to deal with impossibly difficult office politics or reorganization.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

And what are the resilience of skills it took to get to the other side? We have a situation where women are falling off the glass cliff. Women CEOs are not getting the 10 years that men are. Women CMOs are you know, it's and we need to have the conversations. If we wanna not only get women into leadership positions, but keep them there and allow them to actually, like, be successful for the sake of the organizations, we gotta have these kinds of support networks. So, Women in America is one of the places where we can do that, and your community is too. And I know I'll always find the time to have a mentoring conversation. I love co-teaching. I love when younger people mentor me, and we can just share this kind of dialogue and talk about the real, you know, the, you know, the real things.

Amy Vaughn:

Yeah. I love that, Krista. I love that so much. Yeah. A lot of parallels and a lot of similarities in what you're talking about, those, like, genuine authentic connections and conversations. What you're referring to, I refer to a lot as success without strife. I have always found it very difficult, especially when there's just, like, a lack of ability for women of all sorts of ranks, I guess, or levels to have access to women of all other ranks and levels. It's like, no.

Amy Vaughn:

We can't just have this be just executives only always. Right. There's a time and a place for that. Like, I think peer groups are an immense opportunity for mentorship that we don't often consider. It is such a great opportunity that, you know, we practice peer groups and are asking for exchanges and things like that that are really, really essential. But, ultimately, having the ability to speak with someone, you know, 10 years your senior or more, such an important, important thing to do and not to sort of perpetuate the barriers that women face in general in the workplace. That was such a cool example. 1 woman gave it to me recently. She was working for Progressive, and they had had their first female CEO ever in the history of the company.

Amy Vaughn:

And she talked about how amazing it was because she finally realized she walked into the bathroom after the first kind of all staff meeting introducing the new CEO. And in the stall next to her was the new CEO. Standing at the sink, washing her hands in the bathroom was the new CEO. So guess who got to have a nice quick one on one chat in the bathroom with the new CEO? And it just occurred to her that could have never happened before. And, like, it's such small little instances like that because of the lack of diversity and women at the top that you just kind of don't even really think about how often you don't have these little micro moments and opportunities to Yeah.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

One other thing I wanted to throw out there is it can be so incredibly valuable to also as we're thinking about these communities, like, build those relationships with women that are in your cohort or one level up, because and that's part of why with women in America, we really wanted to make sure that we retained and engaged the alumni community because

Amy Vaughn:

Mhmm.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

We're a little closer to the ground, say, than, a mentor who's maybe, you know, multiple levels up and hasn't been in that seat in a little while. And just that's incredibly valuable mentoring. I mean, those are the women who I have on speed dial, like, you know, the group text, and they're the ones who are often, you know, immediately responding when I post on LinkedIn or helping me with the situation and are so quick to get on the phone. Yeah. And we can just be incredible resources to each other for, like, hey. What's going on? What you know, real talk of, like, what are we hearing this in a very safe space? It's not to say that women multiple levels up are not, but just in terms of that access level and just the perspective, you're just Oh, yeah. You know, that's so important too.

Amy Vaughn:

It's tremendous, isn't it? I mean, how many people can say that? I think I was . I had some research too that I was pulling for a book that I'm writing, and it was, like, 30%, although I think it's higher. Women don't have the same support system that men do. Professional women don't. And it's like you need that. You need your bat phone, you know, where you can just pick it up

and be like, hey. Listen. I'm trying to figure this out. Who do I talk to? I think we're so socially conditioned to think that we have to go it alone, do it alone, do it all, be it all, and it's like, no.

Amy Vaughn:

You don't. You absolutely don't. Having a strong community of women who are experts but also generous behind your, like, right, like, behind your back at all times is, like, the biggest life and career upgrade that you could ever possibly have, and and that's definitely something that, you know, every member of I know our organization and I'm sure women in America have probably felt or seen or said at some point. And it's just something I can't emphasize enough that I think, women, we just deprive ourselves of it, and I can't quite understand or get my head around why. And I think it's maybe because I've had the privilege of being a part of a community that is this generous and smart for 5, 6 years now that I've I've become to see, like, and reap the benefits of it for so long that I'm like, why would you ever deny yourself such a such an honor and a privilege and, and the ability to kind of work through, like, you were saying all those different things because, yeah, we've got aging parents, we're raising kids and families, or we're making different life choices that maybe society doesn't always, you know, honor or respect, and we need places to talk about those things. And like you said even earlier, you know, it's so hard to find spaces and places to bring your whole self, and that might even be not just at work, but at home. And I do think communities like these are where we can show up and be whole. So I think that's fantastic.

Amy Vaughn:

Thank you for sharing your experience. Yeah.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

There's one of the

Amy Vaughn:

things that I And holler for women in America.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Thing that I wanted to to share that I just makes me think back to a really nice story from when I was much younger and still figuring out what this whole mentoring thing was, which is that when I was a student at Dartmouth College, I invited the then wife of the president of Dartmouth College, Susan Wright, to lunch, and I had met her through a leadership program. And because of that lunch and that time together, I applied for the Fulbright grant because she planted that idea in my head. And Yes. So don't be afraid to reach out and ask. Always be polite. Always be, you know, thoughtful about how you're reaching out and specific and offering reciprocity. There's definitely some best practice around how to do that, but Yeah. Sometimes even to even Yeah.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

5 minutes of time. You never know. That could be life changing. Yes. Sometimes. Because you've been able to have a quick conversation with somebody. It doesn't always have to be so

structured and be open. Yes. And be aware of these kinds of opportunities. One last thought on that is that it's okay to take a few minutes to regroup.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

And I say that as somebody who has gotten 2 job opportunities in my career because I was at a networking event, maybe got a little overwhelmed, went and regrouped in the ladies room and came back out and then met somebody who gave me a job. You can always start fresh. People are paying attention to themselves, and they're not paying attention to you unless you do something really egregious, which you're not. Like, it's just you could always kinda, like, start out, go back out there, and, you know, see it as an opportunity.

Amy Vaughn:

Reset. Reset. And, yeah, again, so much in common here, Krista. I am a huge proponent and advocate for women networking. It is a superpower and an ability and an advantage in the career world that men have been going out and making each other rich and getting jobs and opportunities through networking like crazy, and us ladies need to get out there. And as awkward as it sometimes feels, do it. Like, we are great connectors. We are great relationship builders, and that's really all it is when you just take the word networking away from it.

Amy Vaughn:

At the end of the day, it's just building strong relationships and trust and respect with one another and rapport and leveraging that role of reciprocity. So, yeah, don't be so shy about it, ladies. Get out there and do it. Alright. We're coming up on time almost, folks. We've got, I've got one more question here for you, Krista, but I just wanna remind our live listening audience. If you all have any questions, feel free to drop them in the chat. Also, Kaylee has been so kind to drop links so that all of you can follow Cresta, find her on Instagram and LinkedIn as well.

Amy Vaughn:

So you can check out more about what she's up to, and we'll include those in the show notes as well. And if there's no questions from the audience after this, we'll wrap. Alright. Krista, my last question that I have for you today is if you had a magic I wand, oh, what what would be one change that you would make to help close the gender and inequality gaps, as this technology keeps evolving?

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Ask. A magic wand would be pretty nice. I would love to see true global allyship. If I could really wave a magic wand as a society, we would see men and women as equally suited to leadership. We would get to 50% representation with equal pay and to gender based violence, and the planet would be spared major storms and rising temperatures. So that would be my dream. But that's it. There are countries and organizations and individuals who have really good ideas on this, and there are some models that are working.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

So we need to listen to them, amplify them, and contribute our own experience. And that could be a whole other podcast, and I've done some presentations on that. It's something I'm passionate about. So since we don't have this perfect world, number 1, say, find strategic allies who will recognize what you bring to the table and will partner with you or get you a seat at that table, especially the AI table, and especially be that ally whenever you can. Number 2

Amy Vaughn:

Mhmm.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Please vote. 65% of democracies are up for election this year. Exercise your right. This is really important.

Amy Vaughn:

Please.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

3rd, let's continue to create a culture of continuous learning and adaptation as we talked about earlier. The news and tech updates are relentless. That's just gonna continue. I know it's exhausting. However, we think AI is defined today, that's probably not gonna be the definition in 5 years. And in fact, we might have a job in 5 years that doesn't exist today. We're all trying to keep up. Like, if it makes you feel any better, nobody can do an AI training course and check the box and move on.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Nobody can possibly know anything, but you do actually have to use it. And you don't have to take it every single day. It's also important to take breaks and be in nature. You need to unplug. But when you look back after these 5 years, you'll wanna have this feeling that you've contributed to something. A couple more thoughts on this. I heard a great line this week that we were talking about before. Human beings are no longer the sole writers of human history.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

We're a function of autocomplete. And that sounds a little bit grim, but it's true that AI is rewriting our history, and it's quite something when you think about that. I do know this. Monoculture does not lead to good things for crops, and I do not think it leads to good things for societies. We need to be careful of this. We need to guard against responsible AI so we're not just all churning out the same content. Then you lose a pulse, your personal brand, then you lose so many of those critical voices, and that lived experience of human beings that goes into making this AI better. And I would say a last thought on this is that I wanna save the world.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

I wanna solve all these big challenges, but I'd, at most, impact a small, severe influence, but all of us can do small things with great love. And Mhmm. I know I'm working in a space that makes me feel ready to jump out of bed in the morning because I'm so excited by it. But for you, like,

we don't need to start by boiling the ocean. That's not what any of us are called to do nor can we. But what are the 1 or 2 problems that you wanna solve, whether it's at home, at work, or in your community? These are things you can start working on diligently with AI, and most of all, I hope you can have fun with it too.

Amy Vaughn:

Krista, oh my gosh. You're so brilliant. Thank you so much. You have literally filled the last 59 minutes with just so many great thoughts, ideas, you know, things for us to take away and and really, really consider, and I hope act on, most importantly, action, right, at the end of the day. It's not just all these great stats and figures and great quotables, by the way, as well, but things that we can hopefully turn around and take some action on. Alright? Live listeners, thank you so much for joining us today. We appreciate your time and for listening. And, like I said, ultimately, Cresta, thank you so much for joining us.

Amy Vaughn:

I'm so excited to keep following you and seeing all the amazing things that you are gonna do in the world. Thank you so much for being with

Krista Sande-Kerback:

usa today. Much, Amy and team, for having me and giving me the chance to share these ideas. And thanks to all of the, you know, speakers that I've heard from and the researchers and everybody who's, shared all of this knowledge with me that I can then pass on to this community. So I'd be delighted to connect with Absolutely. With anybody afterwards as well. I hope everybody has a wonderful weekend ahead.

Amy Vaughn:

Yeah. Fantastic. Alright. Everyone, wonderful. Have a great rest of your Friday. We hope to see you all next week. Until then, everyone, keep asking, keep giving, and keep growing. Till then.

Krista Sande-Kerback:

Take care.

Amy Vaughn:

See you soon. Bye. Bye.