In this episode of The Power Lounge titled "Building Digital Trust," Amy Vaughn hosts Karen Douglas, a digital product leader from companies like Microsoft and Anthem. Together, they explore the role of trust in digital ventures and effective leadership strategies.

Discover how communication impacts team dynamics, the "Skill, Hill, or Will" framework for evaluations, and the importance of psychological safety in fostering innovation. Karen shares insights on rebuilding stakeholder trust from her experiences in distrustful environments.

Join Karen and Amy for practical advice, anecdotes, and the influence of trust-building in digital teams, setting the stage for organizational growth.

Connect with Karen:

Karen Douglas

Digital Product Executive - Microsoft

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/karen-douglas-b68a444/

Episode Timestamps:

00:00 - Introduction

05:18 - Trust Building for Efficiency and Reduced Turnover

11:55 - Navigating Workplace Culture Challenges

15:38 - Effective Communication and Task Prioritization

20:49 - Communication and Education: Trust in Marketing

30:52 - Assessing Needs, Skills, Challenges, and Motivation

34:17 - Transparency and Strong Relationships: Trust Building

40:56 - Impactful Small Moment: Support and Friendship

43:13 - Promoting Small Wins for Team Boost

48:14 - Lack of Affirmations: Sudden Interest and Confusion

54:17 - Evaluating User Needs Before AI Adoption

01:03:36 - Outro

Quote of the Episode:

"AI implementation should focus on solving real user problems, not just hype" – Karen Douglas

"Stop moving the goalposts. Deadlines can't keep shifting, scopes can't keep expanding and it truly impacts trust."– Karen Douglas

Transcript:

Amy Vaughn:
Hello, everyone. Welcome to our weekly power lounge. This is your place to hear authentic conversations from 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. And today, we are going to deep dive into something that actually affects every digital initiative, but really gets the spotlight, and, it is much deserved, and that is trust. We are joined today by Karen Douglas who is an extraordinary digital product leader who has transformed teams at Microsoft Cardinal Health, Anthem. You mentioned some others.

Amy Vaughn:
What were some others you mentioned earlier to me, Karen? I wanna give you the credit.

Karen Douglas:
Yeah. Sure. Thank you. DSW, Beautycounter, and certainly, agencies, in the past as well.

Amy Vaughn:
I love it. So a wealth of knowledge and experience she's bringing to us today. So we're super grateful that she's here and willing to share with us how she has helped to build authentic trust that can either make or break, or transform from your digital transformation efforts. So get ready for some actionable insights that you all can implement immediately. Live listening audience as always, we love that you're here with us today. Please join the conversation, add comments to the chat, add questions to the chat if you have them, and we'll be sure to come back to them once we're through with the interview. But, Karen, thank you so much for joining us today.

Karen Douglas:
Yeah. Thanks so much, Amy. It's so, like, great to be here. I really appreciate this opportunity to talk about this topic. It's something that, you know, if you'd if you'd asked me 20 years ago, you know, earlier on in my career

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm.

Karen Douglas:
What I would be talking about at this point, I don't know that I would have said trust, but I do think it is something that while it seems simple, is harder to implement and it's harder to actually, create, in that team environment than you think. And it needs time to be spent on it, in order to kind of have a thriving digital team.

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah. And this is something you have had experience in doing, not just, you know, like you said, agencies, but bigger companies, like tech giants, essentially, and traditional companies which were digital transformation, product, you know, roles and responsibilities that are literally evolving as we speak. There's a lot of challenges to overcome there. What would you say, though, bringing it back to trust, what is the biggest misconception about trust in digital initiatives, or even digital products?

Karen Douglas:
It's a great question. I think, like we said, you know, it seems like such a simple topic, but I think the biggest misconception about trust is that it's assumed and a given with the team. Mhmm. You know, at the beginning of initiative or, you know, maybe even starting a new job, we assume that everybody is on the same page and automatically trust their leaders or trust their partners. And the truth is that's just not always the case. In some cases it is and that's wonderful if we've created those environments, but it's not given. It needs to be earned, and maintained. And I truly believe that's this responsibility of all the leaders, right, it's about top down, you know, creating an atmosphere of trust, and, you know, building those relationships with the team members.

Karen Douglas:
It's not fully if it's not fully ingrained in the culture

Amy Vaughn:
Yes.

Karen Douglas:
The team or the company is going to have some struggles

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm.

Karen Douglas:
For sure. And the thing is, like I mentioned, it also has to be maintained.

Amy Vaughn:
Yes.

Karen Douglas:
You know, it can be lost so quickly without transparency and openness, and I think that's something that, unfortunately, in my experience, in all types of companies or initiatives Mhmm. You know, I just don't think that the effort is spent there. It's more about the work and not about the trust of the team.

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm. And I would imagine that it would be interesting if you could put, like, numbers to that. Right? Maybe that would help open some people's eyes to the loss of, like, cost and productivity when you don't have trust. I mean, think about this. It doesn't even matter if you've been involved in a digital transformation pro project or launching a product. You still know and I think everybody that's listening right now is probably feeling exactly what you're saying, Karen, which is that, like, it's it's not a it's not it has to be an ongoing effort. It's not something you can never assume. It's not a one and done.

Amy Vaughn:
You have to maintain it. But, really, how many of us have sat on the other side of initiatives, period? Right? The coming down from the top without, like you said, that transparency, that understanding, that alignment of goals and objectives from the greater community that's meant to actually do the work. And then what are you gonna do? You're gonna go back to your desk, and you're gonna have a big old pitch session, right, about what in the heck was that? Like, why are we doing this? What actually needs to be done? So I just wonder if you could. It'd be hard to quantify, but I'm sure that there is hours and money, right, lost when you don't establish and maintain trust from the start.

Karen Douglas:
Yeah. It would be fascinating if we could run some sort of study that would measure that. But it's like, how many hours are there the bitch sessions back at the, you know, back at the desk or the angry I'm chats? You know, when, when, you know, how many hours do we spend doing that, sending the mind blowing gifts and the and the dumpster fires. Like, we've all done it. Right? Like, we've all sent dumpster fire, you know, like, emojis and GIFs and things like that when we are not we don't trust what's being told to us or or the direction that the company is going. You know, it's more than we probably think. You know, it's a great point. It would probably be, mind blowing how much time is spent, which, you know, that's the point, right? If we focus at least even a percentage of that time on building that trust and relationships with our leaders and our team members, our cross functional partners, our direct reports, you know, anyone really, it would just you know that the work would be more valuable and that the work would move forward more rapidly and with happier, more content employees, right, which also then reduces turnover.

Karen Douglas:
It's the cycle.

Amy Vaughn:
Right. Because then the training and getting them onboarded and back up to speed. Yeah. That all that time, all that money getting lost. What might be you've definitely mentioned, like, transparency. Do you have any other, like, strategies, tactics, or good takeaways for our listeners to kind of when you're launching an initiative, what are some ways in which you can begin to kind of open up the door and allow for opportunity to build and gain trust?

Karen Douglas:
Yeah. I think, you know, transparency, I think, is probably the key. I think, you know, from a leadership perspective Mhmm. Being open and honest even when mistakes happen is pretty critical. I love that. Coming with humility, coming with honesty, providing updates. Don't leave your team in the dark. Mhmm.

Karen Douglas:
They're just sitting there wondering what the next step is, especially in the past few years where technology has been and the market has been volatile. Yeah. Everyone's sitting there wondering whether or not they're gonna have a job tomorrow.

Amy Vaughn:
Exactly.

Karen Douglas:
Be open with them. Tell them what's going on. Tell them about the initiative and why we need to move forward with it. Give them a reason to believe in what's happening. Open the conversation up. Ask the tough questions and expect to answer them.

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm.

Karen Douglas:
You know, and I think that's and that's sort of on everyone really is we need to be open enough

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm.

Karen Douglas:
Do not be afraid and avoid the difficult questions that may come from our team or our cross functional partners or our direct reports or even our leaders. Right?

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah.

Karen Douglas:
Don't avoid it.

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah.

Karen Douglas:
Your team knows when you're doing it.

Amy Vaughn:
Right? I mean, yeah. We sometimes think we're getting away with something, but for real not. If you could see the DMs, you would know otherwise. I love this because I do think and I agree. It's in this kind of market, especially within our industry, creating and establishing psychological safety for the sake of being able to let people be creative and as innovative and as productive as you want them to be is really hard. So I think right now, leaders should be leaning in even harder at this time to kind of establish and make that. One thing I learned from somebody, and I think it might have been one of our past podcast episodes where somebody had offered up the advice of don't give everything to your team as a done deal. Don't say here's the project.

Amy Vaughn:
Here are the goals. Here's the objectives. Here are the timelines, and then just say this is what it is. Like, actually give them stuff because sometimes I feel like by doing that, I'm setting themselves up for success. I'm helping them. All the details have been thought of. But depending on the type of person that you're working with and the majority of people, especially, they're gonna look at it and say, I had no contribution to this. I had no skin in the game here.

Amy Vaughn:
I wasn't consulted on any of this. And so they were like, bring things that are actually unfinished and give them opportunities to engage, to contribute because then then buy in's real because it's like they've contributed. They've put something towards it, so they're more likely to follow through than if everything's just a done deal every time it comes to them.

Karen Douglas:
Absolutely. You know, I think as a leader in the digital product space, yes, I've led teams, I've led large initiatives, I've done a lot of things. However, I know and I have always told the people that are working with me, for me, you know, cross functionally, I know I'm not the smartest person in the room all the time. Yeah. The best ideas come from the collective voice of the team. So to what you're saying, Amy, don't come in with a fully baked plan.

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm.

Karen Douglas:
Leverage the experts that you have around you, and and that way you've got the buy in, the collective buy in

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah.

Karen Douglas:
From the group, and everyone understands that we're all in this together and this was our idea. This was our initiative. This was our plan. Right? And then the flip side to that is then give credit where credit's due.

Amy Vaughn:
Yes. 100%. If it's

Karen Douglas:
your idea, Amy, I'm gonna make sure everybody knows that it's Amy's idea, And I think that is so incredibly important, and that is a huge thing that I think sometimes is missing

Amy Vaughn:
Oh, 100%.

Karen Douglas:
To help develop the trust of the team.

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm. Oh, absolutely. Because when somebody is up there and they're speaking to the work that you did and they don't give credit, it just feels like they are taking credit because they are the ones presenting, which I've heard, seen, and felt that an awful lot. And that it just occurred to me too as you were talking. It's just like it's so easy, right, to let our own concern for our self image and perfectionism get in the way of our ability to be good leaders. And if you can kinda start to let those things go, you're modeling something really good for your team whether you believe it or not. And then I think a lot of it does help lead to trust. And then it's I think it takes a pressure off you as a leader to show up perfect and, you know, invaluable every time because you're just not that.

Amy Vaughn:
That's a lot of work and effort on top of your job. So let it go. You know? I'm not saying, like, don't try, but it's like, stop trying to be perfect every time. It's not the right image you wanna put out there to the people that you want to gain and maintain their trust.

Karen Douglas:
No. You're 100% right. I completely agree with that.

Amy Vaughn:
Well, let's get into some storytelling, which we always love here in the power lounge. I was hoping you could maybe share a story or a time when the lack of trust kind of derailed a project and if and how you were able to turn that around.

Karen Douglas:
Yeah. Unfortunately, there's probably multiple examples I could come up with as I'm sure anyone who's listening probably is thinking of the examples right now. One thing that I think I'll talk about is an example of when I first started at a company. A culture of well, and actually I think, you know, how you don't always know what you're walking into whether it be with a new team or a new initiative or a new company. You can ask the culture questions all you want in an interview or something like that, but until you're there, you don't really know what culture you're stepping into and that can be really difficult. Mhmm. So, you know, my advice is don't come in guns blazing and think you've got a you've got the you've got the answer for everything. However, the example I wanted to talk about is, you know, I walked into an environment, where a culture of distrust was really already emplaced with the digital product team, which I then was leading, the tech team and engineering team, you know, with this particular stakeholder group.

Karen Douglas:
I had to kind of dive into that and what I really found out was they just felt like whatever they wanted to get done, technically, launch, just was not a priority and that no one cared and it was never going to happen, and so, you know, I needed to dig into that because, of course, I'm on the engineering team, extended engineering team, so I I can't, you know, like really bash the team that I just joined.

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah.

Karen Douglas:
But so what I chose to do was spend more time with them and really dig into their business, their expectations, their customer base, their user base, and what their leadership expectations were for them. Because the truth is all of these different stakeholder groups have accountability and responsibilities to their leaders.

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm.

Karen Douglas:
And they might be completely in conflict with what I think they should be or my team thinks they should be. And so that's kind of what I found out. So what I did and my team did is we started to really focus and spend time with them. We did a couple of things. We we first started with beefing up our communication, right, Recurring meetings, trying to get to know them, understanding them, asking them questions, asking them for information, and then also, making sure that when we're communicating, we were giving them the full view of the work that was happening in engineering. Right?

Amy Vaughn:
Right.

Karen Douglas:
So that they could get the fact that there wasn't that there was nothing happening. Right? No one's sitting on their hands doing nothing.

Amy Vaughn:
Uh-huh.

Karen Douglas:
We needed to educate them about what was happening so that they could start to see what was really happening. As far as education, not only are we educating them on what was really happening, but I also recognized that we needed to educate them on really the process of digital development. Yes. And, it's interesting, we were talking before we jumped on this podcast, in the digital product space, it's no matter where I've worked, and I've worked at some giants and ones that you wouldn't expect to be this way, but they still don't totally understand what a digital product is. Yeah. After being one of the first ones to have that title years ago to now, it's the same. Whether you go into a small company or a large company or a consulting opportunity Mhmm. There's still an education that needs to happen about the role of digital products and what the development process really is like.

Karen Douglas:
Mhmm. So we spent a lot of time explaining that, helping them understand what we were there to do and that we were there to help them, and really, you know, simple things. How long does something take to build? What does our infrastructure look like? Are we able to even do the thing you're asking for right now or do 10, 10 things have to happen before it? Right? And that helped them understand that it wasn't that they were being ignored, it's just it couldn't happen right now for whatever reason. Right? And then the third thing we did, so it was like we communicated and we educated and then we helped with prioritization, which is the job of digital product, right? It's to help prioritize and help those stakeholders prioritize, what is the most important and why, right? What is the data that we have? What is our user base telling us we need to do right now? What is going to move the needle? Are there some small quick wins that we can get out the door? And how does all that play with everything else that's on the plate of the engineering team? Right. Right? And so I would have to ask them point blank, what's your number 1?

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm.

Karen Douglas:
And, well, we want to do this now. Well, which things push down? And we'd have to have those really hard conversations. You cannot have 10 number ones, right?

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah.

Karen Douglas:
And so over time and and to be honest, you know, this isn't rocket science. This is just stuff that has to be done, to develop the relationship, develop the trust, and to help people understand where you're coming from. And, you know, with that process, which, by the way, was not overnight, it was months. Right. Yeah. This isn't something that is in an hour conversation you can take care of. It is months of consistency, and when they can count on you and they know how to reach you and they can ask you questions, we were able to start to be hyper focused on what the biggest bang for our buck was when it came to helping them move their needle, and I then was able to advocate on their behalf with the rest of the engineering team to say, hey, hold on, this is gonna be this is gonna drive x amount of dollars, this is gonna drive x amount of impressions, this is gonna drive x amount of revenue, And by helping build those relationships, we were able to get some things out the door and they were thrilled. It had been a year since one of their initiatives had actually hit the market Right.

Karen Douglas:
And we were able to do it. It took about 4 months, I would say, but that was huge for them. And then it's success, and then I built their trust.

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm.

Karen Douglas:
And then they started seeing how we were gonna chip away at their goals.

Amy Vaughn:
I love it. Yeah. I can see how prioritization could definitely be the thing that helps move the business and the needle forward. Because if you've got people scurrying in all directions and everything's that priority, nothing becomes the priority. Right?

Karen Douglas:
And then

Amy Vaughn:
everybody gets blamed for the lack of results, but it's like, if you do slow your role and you allow for the education and all of that, then what opens up is the chance for you to look really good, you know, on the other side of it because you're listening to your people and you're understanding their advice. Because I think that, you know, it's always a good indicator when you get that sense of and if you're, like, working on your EQ as a leader, you know, it doesn't take a whole lot to know it, to see it, to feel it. But on the other side of that fear, frustration, or hesitation when it comes to your team, the opposite of that is understanding. And so I think that's where you're right. Like, education, and I think all of the marketers listening to this call, they know. They live this right every day. You know, you have to constantly educate. Yes.

Amy Vaughn:
Okay. I know you want a, you know, 10 page social media strategy with key performance indicators and an ideal customer profile audience and paid media strategy by tomorrow. However, I need to be able to do these things. I need to pull this research and be able to kind of pull all that together. So, you know, it's kind of sometimes I think it seems daunting to have to educate, but I'm like, if you don't speak up and advocate for yourself, who will? And then all of a sudden, the idea becomes that all of these things are done quickly and, without much effort, and then the assumption gets made that that can always be the case, and then you have burnout and people leaving. And, again, we're just falling into the same pitfalls Yep. Over and over and over again. I do wanna jump ahead to one of our questions because I think it ties nicely to your answer for the last, and then stakeholders.

Amy Vaughn:
Right? We've talked a lot about team alignment, but then we've got the stakeholders to consider and build their trust as well. I think some of the things you were talking about so I just wanted to reemphasize some of those points and see if you had other points you wanted to add on. How do you maintain transparency while managing the expectations during complex digital transformations with those stakeholders? So not just your team, but the people that are sitting above you going, we want our numbers. We want our results.

Karen Douglas:
Yeah. I think it's exactly what we were just talking about. It is, you know, regular up front, be updates, being up front, being transparent, being open, you know, as they say, bad news does not get better with age, so you have to bring the challenges up and out as soon as possible.

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm.

Karen Douglas:
Don't be afraid to do it, you know. It it is it is part of the job, right, and I think even that, even even bringing up the bad things or the things that are gonna be behind or that we're we might miss a deadline, it's still about trust, right, because then you can come at them and just tell them the truth and here's the plan that we've got going on or, hey, I need your help to help solve this problem, Like, that is totally fine. It's when you keep it to yourself, that's when you lose trust. So I think other than that, I think, just to reiterate it, I think as a digital product professional and probably this applies to your point to all marketers, unfortunately, we will always be educating, like, whether you like it or not, that's just kind of how it is. And so, I think having, you know, be prepared for that. If you have the materials that you want to use to help educate, if you have, you know, a one pager or something that you want to share, if you have, or and every company is a little bit different, right? So the process is, while we all think we're agile, we're all at different parts of that journey and I think it's important to educate how the processes at your organization work and also be open to feedback when those processes can be improved, or that communication can be improved. So, yeah, it's asking the hard questions of the stakeholders

and not being afraid if they provide you a critique. Take that as an opportunity to just make it better and look for what they need and it's not always a one size fits all.

Karen Douglas:
Sometimes you have to evolve to your c suite or to your direct reports or to your cross functional team, to find the meeting cadence and and the conversation, cadence or or timeline or all of that that works best for the team. Just be flexible.

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah. Yeah. I think those routine types of team check ins, 1 on ones, all that stuff is so critical. And I think sometimes in the busyness of the day, we tend to deprioritize that, but I think that's a really easy door to kind of, you know, leave open and then start having trust and walk right out with it. Yeah. And I love what you said in the beginning there too. I think there's a mindset shift for some of us that, yeah, it is your job as the subject matter expert, as the product expert to point out the obstacles, the barriers, the potential nondesirable outcomes, the issues. Like, that is part of you doing your job.

Amy Vaughn:
I think sometimes we think we have to be all sunshine and rainbows and happy news and everything's going perfect. And not to say you need to, like, be a negative Nelly and point out every possible issue, but it's like, you know, think ahead and be proactive where you can. And then when that kind of stuff hits the fan, like, be that person who's brave enough to step up before. Like you said, don't let it get bad news. It doesn't get old. It doesn't age well, so don't let it just sit there. Because then you're gonna come to them and they're gonna be like, why didn't you tell us this sooner? Mhmm. You know? Yeah.

Amy Vaughn:
That's the worst.

Karen Douglas:
Yeah. Now on the on the flip side to that, and this goes back to leadership has the responsibility of building trust, you know, there has to be, an open enough relationship

Amy Vaughn:
Yes. That's a great point.

Karen Douglas:
Because I do know, and I have worked in environments like this in the past where Yep. You were, you know, they're, you're afraid to give the bad news, right?

Amy Vaughn:
Oh, yeah.

Karen Douglas:

You know, you have a leader who might not accept that and the truth is, is that's a problem, that is a cultural issue that needs to be addressed at that company, or in that team potentially, because, you know, you you do need to be able to feel comfortable to go share the bad news. In most cases, most leaders I've worked with have always said bring it to me right away.

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah.

Karen Douglas:
But there have been a few in my experience or even just in observation of others, that, you know, there's a fear, in giving the bad news.

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah, no, I agree.

Karen Douglas:
You know, and to be honest, if you run into that, call them out. Right. You need to call out your leaders Oh, wow. On that and ask for support from other team members, because that's you.

Amy Vaughn:
Well, because yeah. And then my thought was as you were describing that, again, all very familiar sounding. It's for me, it's at one point, I just kind of just came to the understanding that that was more of a them problem than a me problem. Like, if I can't come to you with honest feedback about something critical to the business and the business success, because if my only goal and objective is for us to succeed as a business and I'm bringing value and equity to the company while probably getting paid peanuts compared to, you know, what that equity is, then I just it maybe might it might not be the right kind of fit or culture for me. That's right. So I always did well with leaders that, you know, had that kind of open door, open mind policy to you know, because it wasn't like I was gonna ever bring something just to bring something. No. It was always because I knew it was a tried and true issue that needed to be addressed or, you know, have a conversation about.

Amy Vaughn:
So I agree with you. There is definitely a lot of that fear just based on certain leadership styles, I think, you know, because it's, like, within

Karen Douglas:
The majority are not that way. But, you know, just to say, like, you know, it is hard to give bad news sometimes, but the truth is if you have, if you've worked on those relationships Mhmm.

Amy Vaughn:
You

Karen Douglas:

know, it should be

Amy Vaughn:
easy, really. You're like

Karen Douglas:
help. I mean, hard to say it, but easy to do it, you know, because you've built that relationship.

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm. Definitely. Let's talk about cross functional teams as a really important aspect of building trust and relationships. It's really critical. I'm kind of curious, Karen. How are you seeing this, and how are you approaching this now that we are in this world of remote and hybrid?

Karen Douglas:
Yeah. It's a great question. You know, I've had the opportunity to work remotely for almost 8 years now, so before it was popular. And so this took me some time to understand, really, because I was definitely the person who loved to chat, you know, and build relationships in person. I like people telling me I have cute shoes and a bunch of things like that, you know, and you don't get that, right, when you're remotely and things like that. So, I think the obvious answer is we have all these digital tools, like, the super obvious part is use your I'm use your email, use your Zoom calls, do all of that, right? That's the obvious answer. But where I see other opportunities is really, around spending time with your cross functional teams. We cannot underestimate the power of getting to know each other personally.

Karen Douglas:
Yep. Period. Full stop. It is so incredibly powerful. When effort is spent on actually building relationships, we break down the workwalls. Yep. Right? And start to work together as human beings instead of co workers. And that is hugely valuable.

Karen Douglas:
In a remote and hybrid environment, you know, this can look like all kinds of things. It could be 1 on ones, it could be whatever, It could be literally just stopping the conversation altogether because someone mentioned something and forgetting about work for your scheduled Zoom call. Imagine that, right? We're always so focused and we go from next call to next call to next call, and, yes, we have work to do, and, yes, we're all time crunched, and, yes, it's all important, but it's not more important than asking someone about their weekend or understanding what's happening in their family life or finding something that you have in common with them that you are then sharing, things that you found online that might that they might enjoy and getting to know them personally. So in my mind, it's always, always, always should be people first, building relationships, and the trust and the work will follow.

Amy Vaughn:

I love that. Yeah. I like treating people as human beings, not human doings. Yeah. I and I even catch myself. I mean, I really try hard to be intentional about, like, when I start a meeting, I want the first 5 minutes to just gonna be Yep. I really wanna know how to do it.

Karen Douglas:
A longer meeting.

Amy Vaughn:
Right? You know, we try so hard to be like, okay. It's not 30 minutes. It's 25 minutes. It's like, no. Just make it 30 and spend 5 minutes checking in with each other. And then even it sounds crazy, but it's even the little things because I am very much like, okay. Move on things and quick quick quick task tasks that I'll be reaching out to somebody, and I always have to go back. I'll write out the thing that I need, and then I go back and add, like, how are you today? And a little bit of a personal statement after the fact because it's always something that I'm like, okay.

Amy Vaughn:
I don't need to just even if it's a Slack message, you know, something as quick as that, I still try to slow down and make sure I say, hi. How are you? And, like, me and how really, I wanna know how you were doing.

Karen Douglas:
You know? Yes. Like, legitimately care

Amy Vaughn:
about doing those things. Even that can always be tweaked or made more efficient. So for those of you who are in leadership positions, or managing others, it really doesn't mean you don't have to move mountains to be effective at this. It really is a nuance thing and and looking at the ways in which you're communicating with your team currently and just finding more ways to be personable and human and, yeah, acknowledge what they've got going on inside their life and outside of life. Because one of the things I heard, from a really great mentor of mine, he said, a lot of times with people when they're struggling, right, if you have somebody on, say, a performance review, which is never fun when you're having to deal with that, he says it's either skill, hill, or will. And skill is obviously they don't have the skills needed to sort of accomplish the task that's been given to them. Hill is the fact that, like, okay. There could be something going on.

Amy Vaughn:
So, usually, like, I kinda come at this when I'm struggling with somebody to say, like, could you have what you need? Do you know what actually needs to be done? Is this clear to you? Do you have the tools? Do you know how to use the tools? And then the other is the hill, and the hill sometimes is personal. You might not know it, but they've got a dog that's, like, having to go into the vet every day that's basically a part of the family, and they're just stressed in doing and dealing with that, especially in our remote world. Right? Because we are multitasking and dealing with things with home and life all at the same time at work as well, which was not so

much the case before. And then the last one is Will, and he's like, that's really sometimes the last kind of straw that breaks the camel's back oftentimes. It's like that's something that you sometimes can't get from them because they just don't have the motivation to do it. But if you can unearth the skill in the hill and get those both solved, then, really, it's just a matter of will from there. And I love that framing, so I wanted to get back and share. I think I might have shared it before in a podcast.

Karen Douglas:
But No. I think that's great. Functional

Amy Vaughn:
things too. It's really, really helpful.

Karen Douglas:
Yeah. It seems so simple, right? Spend time with people. Mhmm. But, you know, we don't. We don't. We have these deadlines, we have all these things, and, yes, they're real. But like we talked about earlier, if we could just take all the time where the angry DMs and Right. And, you know, and watercolor conversations complaining about Mhmm.

Karen Douglas:
And we can take that time and turn it into building those relationships with people. Just imagine what we could do to the bottom line and to the culture and to, like, work life balance or everything else or in just, overall job satisfaction, for individuals, and you can't tell me that there aren't, like, financial benefits Mhmm. To do that. Yeah. So take the time. Mhmm. Make it a priority. Right.

Karen Douglas:
Set up 1 on ones that have nothing to do with work.

Amy Vaughn:
Right. I wish we could quantify that again too to just

Karen Douglas:
I know.

Amy Vaughn:
Really truly understand from the top down stakeholders and all that that really needs to be the case and that there are results behind those efforts. It's not just you know? And I think we're starting to get there with, like it's not just soft skills. These are skills, period, that are essential in leadership and communication and managing teams. On that note, do you have a framework for helping people create psychological safety within teams, especially when you're kind of pushing innovative solutions and or dealing with everything we just talked about. Right? Everything else happening in the world.

Karen Douglas:
You know, it's interesting that psychological safety I have a different perspective, I think, than some, may or maybe, maybe not. I think psychological safety, the whole concept of psychological safety is really the responsibility and accountability of both leaders and individual contributors. Yes. Mhmm. You know, I think, of course, as leaders, our teams deserve to be able to have open dialogue with us. We need to, as I've mentioned earlier, welcome, not avoid, the tough questions and challenges. Of course, be transparent like we talked about earlier as well and and your, again, your team is well aware when you're not. They can tell when you're withholding information.

Karen Douglas:
Of course, there's things that you aren't able to share, things like that, but then tell them that. Just say it, that I'm unable to tell you at this time. I promise you when I can, I will? Let them know. I think it, you know, time spent, as we've been talking about, on building those relationships helps to build that psychological safety and if we've done the groundwork of spending time getting to know people, creating open dialogue, being transparent, giving credit where credit was due, and we've done all these other things we've already discussed, I don't think psychological safety will be an issue. It's not because you've created that culture of trust by just doing those other things. Now on the flip side, as I mentioned, I think it's also the responsibility of the individual contributor. You know, there is a point where leaders do and are asked to make really tough decisions and they're not always popular, right? And it might be exactly what you don't want them to do, but they're in that position for a reason and they're being asked to do those things. So, again, if you have that foundation of the relationship and the trust, you've got to give them a little bit cut them a little bit of slack in that recognize who it's coming from, why it's coming from them, and that they, you know, they have they're in this position and they have to make these decisions.

Karen Douglas:
So, to me, as an individual contributor, if I have that relationship with my leader or team, and as long as those decisions are not unethical. At some point, we need to just get the work done too. Yeah. So I think that the concept of psychological safety, it is, like I said, it's it's a it's a it's more than just a leadership problem.

Amy Vaughn:
Oh, yes.

Karen Douglas:
It's a whole conversation around the trust and all of

Amy Vaughn:
that. Yeah. And

Karen Douglas:
then at some point, understanding that leaders have to be leaders sometimes, and it's not easy.

Amy Vaughn:
Right. And I think that's where leaders showing up in a vulnerable way and a more transparent way serves them well when they have to sit down and have those difficult conversations. Right. Forward to

Karen Douglas:
your goal. Mistakes.

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah. Exactly. Because there are certain things that it's 100%. It's out of their control, and it's like, I've definitely had those leaders that have been that. They've been authentic. They've been transparent in a way that is still, like, professional, but helpful and supportive, and it has allowed us to get through really difficult situations and scenarios. And for me, being on the receiving end of some of the negative side effects of those scenarios, I walked away mad at one less person. Like, it's like when you get bad news, that's all you need is to have more angst, more anger, more anxiety over one person.

Amy Vaughn:
So I think, again, like, you know, as a leader, you know, having led a lot of teams, I have just really found giving them an appropriate peek behind the curtain to some things and being like, I don't always have the answers. I don't always have the final say. In true honesty, it's so much easier than trying to pretend I have all this authority that I don't so that when things come down the line and I really, maybe I've I've they do I've advocated because that's just who I am. Right.

Karen Douglas:
I've advocated Mother there.

Amy Vaughn:
Said some things, but, like, at the end of the day, I didn't win. And this is what it's gonna be, and that's not easy. But then that too, again, that to me just feels better and, like, okay. I get it, but I can get behind that. It's not that I'm not gonna love it, but I know you're not loving it either. And I think that that's really, really helpful, in the way of, you know, or of just creating a space for psychological safety. I don't think we have to be accountable for anybody else's psychological safety per se. I'm kind of with you on that.

Amy Vaughn:
I think it's more about creating that space to allow for it because even still, like, you're you have to think about the fact that people are coming with baggage and past experiences and trauma, so you can create all the psychological safety you want as a leader. That doesn't mean they're still gonna be able to show up in that way. It's going to take time, energy, effort, maybe a little bit of digging even. And that's where I also think managers and leaders, especially leaders of innovation that maybe kind of frightens people, I think that's where, you know, just the vulnerability as a leader actually comes into play to help you be stronger as such, because it's

like instead of people being fearful of you every time you wanna come and talk to them, they're just like, oh, yeah. No big deal. Alright. Let's talk about what the thing is. You know?

Karen Douglas:
Yeah. Yeah. And I've had lots of experiences with that, you know, both where I received the news I didn't wanna hear and where I had to deliver news that I knew wasn't going to be popular and it's hard, it's hard. I think you said something earlier, as long as your team knows that you're advocating, I think that's important, right? They need to know that you're behind them as a leader and you've got their back. You know, I have been called mama bear in the past.

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah. I

Karen Douglas:
take it as a huge compliment. Huge compliment. Uh-huh. Because I think that's my job as a leader, and I always look for leaders that are going to treat me that way, that are going to advocate for me and speak up for me and remind people that I have value, right, or that I have good ideas, just like I want to do with my team. Like, we talked about giving credit where credit is due.

Amy Vaughn:
Yes.

Karen Douglas:
I think that's important. I think if you have that trust that, to your point, even when you have to deliver the bad message, they know it's not you, right, and they know it might just be budget, it might just be tough times, or it might just be a, no, not right now, it it might be coming from a board member, who knows what it's coming from, right, a million other reasons, you know, they know it's not you, they know you tried, they know you gave it your best effort. It still stinks when you have to deliver those messages that people don't want to hear, but then I think you can also be vulnerable and say, you know what, I agree. I wish that this was different. I wish the situation had played out differently, but it didn't. Here's where we are, and we have a choice to make it out. It.

Amy Vaughn:
Right? Yeah. You're not sleeping under the rug. You're not diminishing their feelings or the outcome of what's being done. You are acknowledging that in full. And like you said, this is just trust is such a true two way street. Creating psychological safety for one another is a two way street. And I have to say, outside of just getting your business goals and objectives done and making money and hitting metrics, like, all that's important, but there's longevity to this too. It just reminded me of when we had a mass amount of layoffs at one of our agencies, and I'd forgotten that I had done this.

Amy Vaughn:

And when I tell people, they're like, of course, you did that, Amy. 1 of the c suite guys came out of one of the rooms, the huddles where they were doing the layoffs, and he just was a wreck. Just looked miserable, and I just walked up, and I guess I gave him a hug, and I said, are you okay? Do you need anything? And it was years later, and he tells me that you did this. He's like, I don't know if you remember doing this, but you did this for me, and I have never forgotten. And I kid you not, this person has supported this organization. He has supported other initiatives for minorities and things like that. Like, you know, he has used his privilege, you know, to show up and has been a great supporter and even friend to me since then. And it was just one small little moment that I honestly barely remember.

Amy Vaughn:
But, you know, again, when you show up even with a little bit of creating psychological safety for your own coworkers, even your leader sometimes, and being that safe space for them, pays off in the long run because at the end of the day, we're not just this one job. We're not

Karen Douglas:
just this one role. Right? Yep. Absolutely. Relationships. Yeah. That's I love that story, and and and you're right. You were probably in the thick of your own blur in that situation. Yeah.

Karen Douglas:
And this is just, again, that humanness, that remembering that people are still humans at the end of the day. Yeah. You know, people first.

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm.

Karen Douglas:
Always.

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah. He was like, that was the worst day of my life. He's like, the worst day. He's like, but that really helped me in that moment because, you know, I still wreck for the rest of the day, the week, the month, however long. But and he's like, I never wanna have to go through that again, but he's like, it really did make a difference. So, yeah, it's just awesome. Don't be shy about showing up even for your leaders because sometimes they forget they're human too. And I think for me, that was a really good way to get through even some of my most challenging and most difficult, either whether it was a cross functional team member or another team member or a leader.

Amy Vaughn:
It's just kind of creating that psychological safety for them as well. Again, I think we do ask for it a lot as employees, but, you know, we've got something to offer as well.

Karen Douglas:

That's right. Good point. Good reminder. Yeah.

Amy Vaughn:
Alright. I would love to hear a little bit more about your unique perspective on turning small wins into enterprise wide impact because you've worked at some big places as we've mentioned already. Yeah. I'd love for you to talk us through a little bit of your approach there.

Karen Douglas:
Yeah. You know, we've touched on it a little bit, but I think turning small wins into enterprise impact, it all goes back to what we've been saying. You know, my foundation is always in this building relationship, give credit where credit is due. I think the number one thing we can do as leaders is brag about our team, promote the small wins across the organization, give credit where credit is due, and recognize the hard work and the efforts of the team early and often. Even if the work is relatively small, it's still important to celebrate it. You know, when we do that, we not only energize our team and, and make them feel good, which will then encourage them to do better work, but we also promote the team in a way to the organization so that the organization will then have trust in us. Yeah. Right? So if we can prove to the organization, you know, in a digital product perspective that we can launch something small, maybe then the cool work will follow.

Karen Douglas:
Yep. Right? The cool work will follow because we all want to do the cool work. Right. And we'll be trusted with that bigger initiative because we've proven the small wins. So the small wins have a huge impact to the overall larger initiatives because, again, the team is tested, proven, and then all of a sudden, we we get into a rhythm

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm.

Karen Douglas:
And then here you go. Their new cool initiative gets funded

Amy Vaughn:
Right.

Karen Douglas:
And there's confidence across the organization and the team that you can do it.

Amy Vaughn:
I love it. That is fantastic. Such a good reminder because I think, yeah, it's true. We just kind of move from one small initiative to the next small to the next big, and we never really slow down to take a moment and celebrate. And creating those moments of celebration reinforce the positive. Right? It sounds silly, but, like, if you're if anybody's here raising kids, you know, like,

punishment and fear and all that kind of stuff. A lot of us were raised that way. And it worked to a degree, but it didn't substantiate trust.

Amy Vaughn:
It didn't necessarily create better outcomes. But by kind of building up these wins for your team, it's building momentum and giving them the opportunity to show up and shine and and be their best selves. One thing I learned, I was at a company where when I first started, they asked me what my love language was, and I was like, you what? What's a love language? I didn't even know at the time. And, then I wanted to know, well, why? I was like, I'll definitely take the test, and I'll tell you, but I'm curious as to why. And they said, because that's how we like to make sure we recognize people. You know, with one guy in particular, words of affirmation were not his jam. Like, it really put him in an uncomfortable position. But then some of us who we often think of love languages, if you're not familiar, say that we often give love in the way in which we like to receive it.

Amy Vaughn:
However, certain people don't always receive in the same way. So it's things like words of affirmation, physical touch, gifts, acts of service, and what's the other one? Oh, quality time. Look at me. I remembered all 5. Very good. And so, what's the other one? Oh, quality time. Look at me. I remembered all 5.

Karen Douglas:
Very good.

Amy Vaughn:
And so knowing what your team's individual love languages are actually could translate into how you acknowledge the things that they're doing at work, the ways in which you might celebrate the wins. Because I knew never to make a public admiration about Steven because he would literally be in the corner in a ball huddled up, like, if you don't position, like, just please stop talking about me. You know? It was really more, let's the 2 of us go hang out and have lunch together or buy them a small gift. You know? So kind of knowing those individual things will, I think, even take what you just said, which is brilliant. That kind of celebrating the small wins to the next level, not just for your whole team, but on an individual level as well.

Karen Douglas:
Yeah. I love that. I think that's a great connection to love languages. I'm very familiar. Yeah. And you're right. And in a virtual world, it's trickier. Right? And so not everybody wants the Slack message with all the little emojis next to it.

Karen Douglas:
So, that's saying congratulations or celebrate, right? So that's a really good point to make. It becomes a little bit more tricky because you don't have access or quick access to all of those. So you have to get creative. Maybe it's sending a digital gift card, right? And that's enough, but I think you're right. You've got to get to know and invest in your team and kind of understand what

it is that they like and appreciate. And, again, I think those small wins, it is just the kudos in whatever way is necessary. Are they just, again, creating an environment where they wanna be there. Mhmm. They know that they're respected and they're appreciated.

Karen Douglas:
Mhmm. And, again, bigger things can come from that.

Amy Vaughn:
Yes. Yeah. Absolutely. I had a boss when I was, I worked all through college, and I did so much for that office. And it was so funny because he was not the kind of person who ever said thank you. And I wouldn't say that I'm really high on words of affirmation, but I think at the time, I certainly was. And with that job, it was something that I needed more of. Because I remember being blindsided when I left school, and he, like, offered to, like, double my salary to stay.

Amy Vaughn:
Once I finished school, and I'm like, but you don't even like me working here? I had because I had no verbal affirmations whatsoever for him from, like for 3 years. And all of a sudden, he's like, oh, let's go to breakfast. Let's talk about you staying. And I'm like, but I just went through 3 years of school to get out of here. But if you would have been working all along and understood and knew what I needed and the ways of affirmation that I was doing a good job, then maybe I'd have been ready to say I would consider staying, but it was just so out of the blue. I'm like

Karen Douglas:
Out of the blue.

Amy Vaughn:
Who is this person? Yeah.

Karen Douglas:
You kinda missed the mark on that, an opportunity that whole time. Right?

Amy Vaughn:
But yeah. No. It was funny. It was a good scenario there. And yeah. No. He was fun to work for still regardless. But, alright.

Amy Vaughn:
How do you balance the need for rapid iteration with building trust, that constant tension of deadlines, timelines, and then all of these nuance things we're kind of talking about in building trust?

Karen Douglas:
Oh, gosh. To me, this is easy. It stops moving the goalposts. Just stop. Establish clear goals and priorities from the top down. Mhmm. You know, we talked about earlier, you can't have 10

number ones. And while there's nothing that, nothing, in my opinion, nothing derails a team or reduces the trust more than constant change.

Karen Douglas:
Yes. I mean, it's just not something, you know, we we're we're a lot of us are type A's and we're planners and we're organizers and we map out what we think our next month is looking to look like for work and then to have it flipped on its head and have to recreate the wheel 10 times

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah.

Karen Douglas:
Really destroys the trust. So, you know, like I said, that's a leadership challenge, right? It's where it's all the c suite or the decision makers aligned. If they're not, stop, get aligned, and then come back to the team. Don't let the team sit in that swirl.

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah.

Karen Douglas:
Because, you know, and that's what I mean by stop moving the goalposts, right, because, you know, the deadlines can't keep shifting, the scope can't keep getting bigger, the, you know, and again, I'm probably preaching to everybody who's listening because we've all lived this, but it really does affect the trust.

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm. Absolutely.

Karen Douglas:
And you're gonna slow things down, not speed things up. Mhmm. Because you have to replan and reorganize over and over and over and over again, and no actual good work fits out the door.

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah. Should be on a t- shirt. Stop moving the gold. That's a sound bite, by the way. Yeah. For the postproduction team right there, that was, like, solid gold there, that little, like, 15 seconds. It's so true. It's such a simple answer, and sometimes it doesn't seem that simple, but it is.

Amy Vaughn:
It's so very true. The more the dynamics and the change, it's just like you because, again, right, then all of a sudden, you're just like you start working towards a new direction, and then you're like, what's the point of working so hard on this? Because I know in 5 minutes, it's gonna change.

Karen Douglas:
It's gonna change. Yep. Yep. Exactly. And it's not a and no one wants to feel or, you know, I don't want to feel like I'm not accomplishing something. Yeah. And I think when that happens and frequently, or frequently it it just creates that environment where nothing ever gets done. And it's a common It

Amy Vaughn:
almost seems like a joke after a while, right?

Karen Douglas:
It's common, unfortunately, in digital products and so this is near and dear to my heart.

Amy Vaughn:
Yes.

Karen Douglas:
And I feel this to the core when I talk about it. But really it goes back to what's your company's strategy? What do you wanna be when you grow up? What do you wanna do in the next 6 to 12 months, right? Like, what are you, what's your target? Mhmm. You know, what customer base are you going after? What market do you want to enter into? What, I mean, there's a million questions, right?

Amy Vaughn:
What

Karen Douglas:
Are our users needed? How do we increase revenue in this way, instead of trying to boil the ocean? Because when we boil the ocean as leaders Mhmm. That's when the goal posts change.

Amy Vaughn:
Yep. Yep.

Karen Douglas:
And you need a c suite or or a leadership group or a board who's all aligned to the same goals.

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah. No. I love that. That's another hour. Right?

Karen Douglas:
It is. Like, I can feel it in my chest. Oh. Like yes.

Amy Vaughn:

Because, yeah, it does. It becomes a joke. People don't take things as seriously. It's the one who's driving wolf in business form and building products.

Karen Douglas:
Exactly. Exactly. And, like, that applies to anything. Right? Marketing campaigns and anything. Right? Stop moving to goalposts.

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah. I love it. That's great.

Karen Douglas:
I mean, and within reason, of course, there are some pivots that are required, right, market shifts and some, you know, look, we have an example in California right now that there's fires happening. Something's gonna have to change and drop because something catastrophic is happening or something, a huge market shift is happening. So, of course, there's always those exceptions, but most of the time, they're just exceptions, not the rule.

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm. No. I love that. I like and you said there, it's a great example. Give context. Yes. Again, context and clarity, more transparency to why it's okay. Yeah.

Amy Vaughn:
The post is moving, but here's why. That's right. You're gonna get better alignment and better reaction. People might not be happy, but at least they have an understanding going in as to what happened and why, especially if it's out of anyone else's control. Alright. Let's see. Okay. This wouldn't be a marketing and product conversation without bringing up AI, of course.

Amy Vaughn:
So I was curious to hear from you what role trust plays in AI implementation and adoption because that's a struggle for some people in different places and organizations.

Karen Douglas:
Yeah. You know, it's funny. You know, in digital, every few years, we have a new trend. Right? It was, you know, responsive design at one point. I'm dating myself. Omnichannel, you know, transformation, like, all these things, right, are the buzzwords and that it's AI, right, and we know that. And believe me, I use AI in my personal life, in my professional life, almost daily. I mean, it definitely makes life easier, it's awesome.

Karen Douglas:
But coming from a digital product perspective, I will say we need to ask ourselves or continue to ask ourselves, what problem are we trying to solve with AI? Yes. Right? Regardless, you know, we tend to get all wrapped up in the new hotness and the new shiny object of the day, and that's what AI is right now, and again, awesome, but what let's go back to our fundamental roots of how we solve things for our users. Right? You know, what are the problems the users are

seeing? You know, what does our current data tell us that AI is going to help with? What problem are we trying to solve? Can our current infrastructure even support it? I mean, I I have seen and have been part of organizations who think, oh, I'll just build AI and I'll just bolt it on to what I've got right now, but the truth is is it it's not going to happen because there's a whole foundation that needs to be built before we can implement it. Right? Yep. Are there bigger pain points that we should be addressing with our customers or our users first? Yes. Because, yes, it's cool, but if our fundamental ecommerce site, for example, or our digital app, you know, whatever experience isn't even at par Mhmm. Why are we talking about AI?

Amy Vaughn:
Exactly.

Karen Douglas:
Right? Like, I think before insisting that the team go off and build these things, let's like, you know, just because it's the new cool thing, let's make sure that we're focused

Amy Vaughn:
and

Karen Douglas:
We have the strategy behind it, that the data and the strategy are front and center, and truly and then it will make the team and it will create trust within the team. Absolutely. The just because answer because everybody's doing it isn't gonna cut it for the team's perspective. And we talked about earlier not being the smartest in the room. Listen to your experts, about what needs to be put in place prior or where you might want to focus some efforts or parallel path, right? Fix the foundation and focus on innovation, right? Like do do some of those things together. But, that's kind of my perspective. I think it is not going away, but I think we need to be smart about it and make sure that we're really tackling the right problem. Yeah.

Amy Vaughn:
Agreed. It's kind of like getting a titanium and a cool grip handle, hammer and being like, take this and go build a sand castle with it because it's the new tool that everybody's using.

Karen Douglas:
That's it. Right? Like, Calm down, everyone. Let's make sure we're doing the right thing. You know, not saying that it's going away or or that it isn't shouldn't be part of the roadmap. Right? It might need to be. Yeah. But let's make sure we're we're we're focused on the strategy, not just going to build

Amy Vaughn:
It's just a problem. Yeah. I agree. Alright. We've got just a few minutes left, so I wanna give a nudge to our live listening audience to see if you all have any questions. Please feel free to drop them in the chat. I see that you guys have been having some conversations, so we love seeing that as well. While we're waiting to see if any other questions come through, Karen, I would love

for you to give us a quick snapshot of how you work to rebuild trust after maybe a failed digital product launch or initiative.

Karen Douglas:
You know, I think we talked about it a little bit. It's acknowledging what went wrong. It's coming in as a leader with humility and transparency, and communicating openly to the team or to the executives or to whoever about what didn't go according to plan and then spending time after the fact to focus on, you know, sort of that post mortem, what are the lessons learned, and how do we take concrete next steps to ensure that we improve the processes or deployment or whatever, in the future? You know, how do we make sure we don't run into those same issues in the future? I think you just have to be honest and truthful.

Amy Vaughn:
I love that. It also reminded me. I'm such a quote gal. I read a quote recently that was Nelson Mandela that I wanna put in my 7 year old's room because he's such a perfectionist, and we've talked about, like, failing fast and failing forward and all of that, but it was I never lose. I only win or learn something. And I was like, I love that mentality. I kinda wanna put it everywhere right now. Yeah.

Amy Vaughn:
Because, again, all of the pressures that we have coming on us as, you know, at work, at home, in life in general, it's just, you know, we've just really gotta find a way to embrace that idea of it's not necessarily a failure. It's not a reason to stop and quit. It's a reason to learn something. So

Karen Douglas:
I'd love that. Great quote.

Amy Vaughn:
That's a good one. Like I said, I love to love a good quote. Awesome. Alright. Well, I didn't see any questions come through from our live listening audience. We've got, like, just a minute left, so we'll see if we can squeeze in this one last question. What is one trust building exercise or practice that you wish you had known about earlier in your career?

Karen Douglas:
Yeah. This is a whole personal reflection moment. I honestly think simplicity is learning how to listen first, You know? When you're coming into a new organization, a new team, new project, new initiative, whatever, we cannot assume that all of our past experiences are going to apply. I'm sure some of them will. That's why you're there. That's why you were brought to that project or that team. But we need to spend time, sometimes even months, meeting people, asking them about their day to day, trying to understand their goals, their challenges, you know, getting to know them personally, like we talked about before, all before coming in and trying to change the world. Yeah.

Karen Douglas:

And that is hard when we instinctually, you know, and as someone who's been doing this for a while, I instinctively often know what to fix.

Amy Vaughn:
Yeah.

Karen Douglas:
But I can't go in and fix it on day 1. Yeah. I need to spend the time and the effort to truly understand the players, the people, the goals and objectives. So I think that's what I wish I had known Mhmm. Early in my career. I think I've learned that through trial and error, quite honestly. Yes. And so that's what I would do, that's what I would recommend.

Amy Vaughn:
I love that because it is true. I think about the take and I always love being, like, the new kid on the block. Right? And then being able to play that card of, like, well, I'm new here, so I don't really know because you have to investigate and understand before you can start to make you know, to advise. Because, yeah, I think you need to really prove that you've done your time and the research to know that you're speaking from a place of, you know, understanding. Otherwise, you're just gonna keep bringing to the table things that you're gonna be told. We've done that. This is already happening. And so it looks kind of like you're just running around shooting off ideas without having taken the time to get the foundation down and understand what's there and what's being done currently.

Amy Vaughn:
And it can be, again, it can be a factor of breaking trust because then you're like, well, are you looking at the things? Are you reading these things? Are you doing these things? So, yeah, I think being an investigator when you come into those kinds of spaces, and making recommendations for innovation and changes. I agree. I've always tried to make sure. I'm, like, dot my i's, cross my t's because I don't wanna come and be like, look. I have this great idea, and they're like, here we tried it, and it failed. And there's all kinds of documentation about it for you that we shared with you, but you didn't look at it. I was like,

Karen Douglas:
oh, my bad. Yes. Yes. Yes. And there will come a time where you can come in and make those recommendations. Yes. There will. It will come.

Karen Douglas:
It just might not be right away.

Amy Vaughn:
Mhmm.

Karen Douglas:
You have to be patient for it, and

Amy Vaughn:
that's something

Karen Douglas:
yeah. For sure.

Amy Vaughn:
Wonderful. Well, Karen, thank you so much. This is such a wonderful conversation. I hope all of you got as much out of it as we did. It was really great. Like, again, as as you're speaking, you're giving me so many thoughts and ideas and bringing back a lot of memories and and things that we have to all work through and kind of just knowing that trust is a a paramount factor in in moving the needle forward in kind of all things business life, you name it. You've given us some really great takeaways today, so thank you for that.

Karen Douglas:
Oh, thank you, Amy. It's a pleasure to be here. I could talk about this for hours, so thank you for giving me some time today with you.

Amy Vaughn:
Absolutely. It's been great, and we'll be talking more soon. Karen is gonna be at our Columbus event, talking about partnerships on January 22nd. So if you're listening and you're in the Columbus area, be sure to hop on over and check out that fantastic event, along with our co hatch partners. Karen will be there with a couple other speakers. So excited to hear about how that goes, Karen. Thank you so much for being here.

Karen Douglas:
Thank you again.

Amy Vaughn:
Alright, everyone. That's it for now. Speaking of failing forward, that's gonna be all our topic next week as we're talking with the young woman who put together Salesforce, Trailblazer. So if you are a Salesforce, you know, fiend and you're on Trailblazer, you're gonna get to meet the young woman who created the content for that in one content marketing world's project of the year. But first, she's gonna talk to you about how she fell flat on her face first. So, hopefully, you can join us next week. Until then, everyone, keep asking, keep giving, and keep growing. We'll see you all later.

Amy Vaughn:
Bye.