

Flying Solo Megan Della Camina Podcast Transcript

Cec Busby [00:00:04]:

Hi, everybody. I'm Cec Busby, editor of Flying Solo. Welcome to our weekly podcast, where we step inside the minds and lives of Solists and small business owners. According to new data from women's leadership company, Women Rising, career development is key to retaining female talent in the workplace, yet the majority of women are feeling burnt out and far from thriving. but it doesn't have to be that way. Megan Della Camina, founder of Women Rising, joins me today to share the findings from the Voice of Women at Work 2023 report and explains how we can better support women in business so that they and we can reach our full potential.

Cec Busby [00:00:49]:

Welcome, Megan. So great to have you on the show today. Thank you. It's I'm really happy to be here. Excellent. Now let's start by diving into the women rising report, the voice of women at work in 2023. Could you give us a little bit of an overview. Why did you why were you doing the report? Why is it significant for smaller micro business owners? what's a couple of the key takeaways that you think business owners should know?

Megan Della Camina [00:01:17]:

Yes. Happy to. Thank you for asking. So we did this report. I mean, our work is around supporting women, empowering women, you know, hoping eventually to progress the numbers that we see in terms of, you know, women in the workforce, women in leadership roles, etcetera, for all sizes of businesses And I wanted to get a very comprehensive view in 2023 about how are women feeling about work, what are they thinking about their careers, you know, bias in the workplace, their well-being, stress, burnout, you know, their ambition for their careers. So we put this research in the market between January-March this year. And then we've spent the last couple of weeks really pouring through at analyzing looking at the data to, yeah, to come up with the report that we've just published.

Cec Busby [00:02:13]:

So, in terms of some of the findings, one of the things that that I picked out was 71% of women value a leader who walks the talk and who's authentic. So, obviously, I guess that's something we want with all our communications and interaction is authenticity. But In terms of that leadership element and in terms of our audience who are small business owners, you know, they often have a lot closer relationship with their teams. You know, they are interacting with them face to face quite often on a daily basis. So, how can they make sure that they aren't just paying lip service to, you know, equality, gender equity, diversity, and inclusion that kind of thing, that they really are walking the talk and being authentic.

Megan Della Camina [00:03:02]:

Yes. And, look, I'm a small business owner as well. Right? So I run a small business. I've been in big business, but I've been running my own small business first as a solo business owner. And now with a small team for the last decade, So I really understand this, you know, this this aspect and this challenge of leadership, I guess, in in small teams. And I think the first thing for us as as business owners with small teams is to be really clear on the type of leader that we wanna be. And that authenticity that you mentioned is is incredibly important. It doesn't matter what size you know, business that you have and really paying attention to what our people need, how they thrive, what their strengths are, And, you know, looking at from a from a equity, equality perspective, what does that mean for you in your business? And how do you make sure that your leadership, your authenticity, and the needs of your team, whatever they are, don't get lost in the the business and the craziness. I think that small business can be, especially for business owners and leaders when you really are doing all of the things. It's not like when you're in bigger business and you have you know, lots of infrastructure and support around you. You're you're much more at the cold face in, you know, in small business.

Cec Busby [00:04:33]:

So the first part of that, if we just break that down a little bit as well, you said you need to really decide what kind of leader you're going to be. What what do you mean by that?

Megan Della Camina [00:04:43]:

So really tapping into like, what are your values as a leader? When you are showing up authentically, what does it look like for you? What does it feel like for you? And tapping into, you know, your own sense of self as a leader I think a lot of business owners have potentially never thought about that. You know, we think about how to run the business and, you know, how to, you know, how to get the revenue and who are we serving and how are we supporting our teams. But there's so much going on I think it can be a challenge for for business owners to step. I can say, okay. Well, who am I as the leader of this business? What are the values that I'm leading with? How do I know when I'm on track, off track? How do I check-in to make sure that this is working? for my business. This is working for my team. So that's what I mean, you know, around around that authentic leadership pace.

Cec Busby [00:05:41]:

And I guess mirroring those values to your team as well. You know, it's no good going, oh, we're supportive of flexibility, and then you're there till 8 o'clock at night, and your team is seeing you doing that.

Megan Della Camina [00:05:53]:

Yeah. Look. That's such an important point. Right? And this is the piece around walking the talk. You know? Do I do what I tell you I want you to do? And, yeah, things like work-life balance, things like taking care of people's well-being. Completely, you know, I used to have a I used to have a manager who would tell me, you know, we draw the pie chart on the

whiteboard and say, this is what work-life balance looks like, but then expect me to be online at midnight. You know? So so how are we leaving from that perspective?

Cec Busby [00:06:28]:

So one of the other stats that I wouldn't mind jumping into as well, is it said 84% of women say they need good relationships with their managers and support from their managers to be able to thrive. I mean, guess we all need support to thrive. But how on it, on a practical side of thing can business owners show that they're being supportive of their employees? When you know they are a small business. They don't necessarily have the massive resources of a corporation. They can't be going, Oh, here's your gym membership. Here's your yoga at lunch. He's like, like, what are some simple steps do you think that small business owners can take to show that they're supporting their employees.

Megan Della Camina [00:07:13]:

That's a really interesting stat from the report because you know, 84% of women so they need that good relationship with their manager to thrive, but only one in 5 said they have it, which is which is interesting. So look, I think at the end of the day, people want to be seen, they wanna be valued, They wanna show up as who they are, and they wanna get recognized for it. And, you know, again, often in the business and the, you know, just the run and of everyday business, those things can get lost in the getting the things done. Right? Whatever it is. Driving for the results, serving the clients, running the finances, what it you know, whatever that is. So for for managers in small business, you know, the things that I really focus on that we see that women need, but I think it's just basic human need is understanding who I am, understanding my strengths and what I'm good at and what really makes me thrive in my role, the contribution that I wanna make, recognizing the wins, creating space for the failures and rewarding with you know, whatever is within your means and whatever is valuable for, you know, for your employees, whether that is money. But, you know, as as you saw in the research, the relationship with the manager is more important to people than pay. which is counterintuitive for everything. Oh, we all just you know, we need well, of course, we need the money. We're gonna pay the rent, but we want to be seen, respected, acknowledged, rewarded for the contribution that we're making. And I think that's within all of our control, irrespective of, you know, of of how, you know, smaller business is.

Cec Busby [00:09:09]:

And the other thing that you you brought out from that 84% point was the 1 in 5, only 1 in 5 feeling like they had that support. So Does that also mean that then there's this massive unrealized potential because the these women feel like they're not getting the support they need to be the best that they can be?

Megan Della Camina [00:09:28]:

Yes. Absolutely. And we do see that come through very strongly in the research. You know, a high percentage of women feel like they're not realizing their potential at work. And that,

you know, at all sizes of business, you know, in in a small business, you know, it could be just things like? Where's a stretch project? Or where's an area of you know, we're, like, understanding the things that really light your people up and where might there be an opportunity. Well, let's add some of that into your role. You know, you may not have capacity in your team to you know, there's a promotion or whatever because you may have a really small team like I do. But again, there's always this capacity to tap into people's potential and align that to you know, what excites them and play to their strengths.

Cec Busby [00:10:25]:

Mhmm. Yeah. because as you say, a small business, they They're not necessarily going to have that career path that you would get if you're working for a corporate, but can still develop the potential of your of your teams like there can be alternative approaches to help make sure that people are advancing in their careers even if it's not

Megan Della Camina [00:10:47]:

in terms of a title role? Yes. Absolutely. And that's how I look at my team. You know, we were a really flat, completely flat organization. And but but I'm always looking at you know, someone came into our team last year in a customer support, business support role. And as I started to see, you know, see that person's massive potential, The the basic things are still happening, but then there's other things that I've added in that really aligned to her passionate interests, and that will really contribute to the business. So it's not a step up, but it is absolutely you know, expanded responsibilities, and, yeah, more money has come with that as well.

Cec Busby [00:11:34]:

So what are some other stats that have come out of the report that you perhaps have been startled by?

Megan Della Camina [00:11:41]:

Look. One of the biggest stats that I knew it would be an interesting to statistic, but I didn't realize it would be quite so low is that only 8% of women say they're thriving at work. And I think that's a staggering statistic. I think it's a very alarming statistic.

Cec Busby [00:12:01]:

Can I before you move on, can I ask what what defines thriving? Did you were there any parameters to that?

Megan Della Camina [00:12:09]:

So it was they chose that words. So there was a you know, we had functioning, thriving, burnt out, etcetera. So there were, like, 6 choices. So it was their own perception of, you know, where they sort of sit on a scale between thriving at sort of the top end. There was

functioning in there and then burnt out at the other end. So, you know, that self self you know, self self chosen, self determined view of, yeah, I'm thriving. Like, I'm I think we all know what that, you know, what that inherently means. And we also saw very high levels of stress over the last 18 months and very high levels of burnout over the last 18 months. So when you put those things together, like, that's a challenge that we all need to be looking as well, number one for ourselves in our businesses. Like, how are we doing, really? Are we thriving? Are we fun are we feeling burnt out? Where do we sit on that spectrum? And what are we doing about that for ourselves? because, of course, our teams look to us. And then how are we making sure that our people even if you've only got one person, Has the tools that they need, the environment that they need to you know, get too thriving. We don't wanna all just be functioning. Right? We wanna be doing you know, we wanna be living our best lives, if you will. So that that statistic was was hugely concerning for me.

Cec Busby [00:13:48]:

So in terms of that mental health support, perhaps, what can business owners do to help with that given, obviously, they don't have the budget for specialized HR programs where they're gonna be providing their teams with mental health support? Is it just about some kind of awareness or, you know, walking the talk in terms of the parameters around work as well so your team knows So okay to to have a day off if you're sick, you know, stay home. Like, what are some things that business owners practically can be doing to be more supportive? in in that aspect.

Megan Della Camina [00:14:24]:

Yeah. One of the one of the first things and the most basic things, but often a very challenging one, particularly in small business, is managing the workload. And one of the biggest challenges that came out in the research for women at work is and unmanageable workload. And we're seeing this across. You know? Again, all sizes of companies, all industries. So, you know, number 1, for a manager, like, what are the things that are on our plate? What are the things that are on our agenda? And then looking at your team members and saying, like, where are you? You know? Are you, you know, at a 5? Are you at an 8? Are you at a 15 in terms of your manageability? and then actually doing something about it, you know, not being, like, my old manager who, you know, drew the circle and then said, well, you know, return the email at midnight. So how we manage in people's workloads? The second thing that you said right there, which is spot on is awareness. So around all aspects of well-being, including mental well-being, having the awareness as to where are my people at? And that's, you know, general course of the day. Is there something going on in their personal lives? Do they have a sick family member? Are they trying to do some study on the side? Like, whatever it is, how are they going and having that awareness of how they're going? And then looking at, well, what are the potential things that I can do as a small business? I know to support my people. And it could be yes. Exactly right. As you said, we're not gonna have some big employee wellness program, but you may give everyone access to the headspace app. You know, it's low cost. They can access it on their phones. They can build a meditation practice. They can do some stress management techniques. That would be one really tangible simple tool that you can give them and then then the other things. You know? Yeah. Absolutely, if you're sick, don't work. But, also, when are your holidays?

When are your restoration breaks? How are you bringing in some well-being practices throughout your day, whether it's going for a walk or having a walking meeting, etcetera. So there's lots of things that we can do as small business owners that don't cost a lot of money. I think the most important thing out of all of that is how are you? How is your workload? what can I do to support you and then take it from there. Mhmm. And and what about

Cec Busby [00:16:59]:

we're talking about leadership style earlier. What about male leaders? What role do they play in terms of I guess, being more effective allies for women in the workplace, women in business.

Megan Della Camina [00:17:15]:

Yeah. Look. We need male allies. you know, to to achieve the shift that we need to see. to have, you know, more women participating in the workforce, higher rates of participation, for women progressing through to, you know, more senior roles or more responsibility. Male allies are of the utmost importance. And I see the shift and the data backs it up, you know, of what happens when A man steps into an relationship role and the shift that we see for women in the workplace. So we're doing a lot of work around porting men to be bet better male allies really understanding the lived experience for a minute work and giving them the tools to just be more effective leaders and be more effective male allies. And the thing with the thing with men is that you know, in in the data we see about 77% of men wanna be part of the solution. Like, they want to do better. They're asking for support. and we can support them in that process, all of us, you know, together.

Cec Busby [00:18:31]:

So there's also some unique obstacles for women in terms of progression through the workplace? How can we tackle those better you know, there's often career breaks looking after children. There's, you know, there's things that happen for women statistically that we know about that impacts their ability to earn money and to stay stay at work. So How can we identify that and address that when we're just a small business and make sure that we're hanging on to our talented women and creating opportunities for them to return to work, and I don't know. So it's a big picture thing really.

Megan Della Camina [00:19:15]:

It is. It's a big it's a it's it's one of the biggest questions. Right? I think for us I mean, it's a different picture when we look at it from a, you know, larger organization than from a smaller organization, but some of the principles are the same. you know, looking at like what is the career path for this person? And how do we factor in the career the the career break, the parental break. And what's gonna happen when when the woman comes back? from maternity leave and what's required? What's required for the for the woman? What's required for the business? How do we make that work? One of the biggest challenges irrespective of the size of business that we see that impacts women's careers, particularly around career breaks, is maternal bias. And this bias that we all have irrespective of our

gender, it's the, you know, the 6 types of gender bias very well researched. The number one is maternal bias and understanding the bias as a business owner that we bring Other people in the business may bring that are gonna impact that woman's career path. Things like oh, well, she won't be interested in doing this. because now she's a parent. She's not gonna be interested in traveling because she's a mother. You know? She's not serious about her career anymore. because she now has kids at home. These are all very real biases that women deal with every single day that have a significant impact on them coming back from work, managing work, getting access to opportunities, and those things that we talked about right at the start. around being seen and respected and valued for the contribution that they bring. So there's a structural things, and then there's also the leadership And management pieces, particularly around bias that we need to pay really close attention to.

Cec Busby [00:21:16]:

And I guess so much of it is unconscious as well. So it's it's difficult to deal with because if you don't even realize you have those biases -- Yes. -- how can you address them? Yeah. And they are unconscious. So the first part is making the unconscious conscious.

Megan Della Camina [00:21:35]:

And starting to question yourself and the decisions that you're making, the thoughts that you're thinking. One really helpful way to do it is, like, flip the script Like, if this was a man in front of me, would I be having the same thought? Would I be asking the same questions? Would I be making the same assumptions? you know, across the board. So, you know, triggering the awareness And then the questions around this can often be enough to make us realize, oh, hang on a minute. you know, that that's not right. Or I I am being biased here, and, you know, let's take a different approach. But it takes work. Like, it really, you know, it really does. It's not like, oh, well, you know, we realize there's bias in the workplace, so now we're queued. It's it's not that. I wish it would make my job so much easier.

Cec Busby [00:22:31]:

Now What about I mean, we've spoken about being more inclusive and supportive in terms of the work environment for women. But what about if the you know, it's a woman with a disability. It's a gay woman. It's like there's all these other other biases and things that are going on as well. How can we just make sure that in general, we are adopting more inclusive practices?

Megan Della Camina [00:22:56]:

Yeah. Absolutely. And and I'm glad you I'm glad you raised that. And this is the intersectionality, yeah, which is which is one of the 6 types of bias that we see that not only do a lot of women face gender bias, but then they'll face another type of bias. So women with a disability, we're seeing massive amounts of ageism, at all ages of being a woman at work came through in the survey, which I was a little bit surprised about. So young women are dealing with it. Older women are dealing with it. so is everybody in the middle? And then, yeah, sexual orientation, like all of it. So that the the pace around making the

unconscious conscious, questioning how we're dealing with people, why we're dealing with people, what assumptions are we making, all of those aspects for gender, but for every other aspect as well for non binary people for every you know, for everybody. It it plays across the whole spectrum. of individuality. And the piece around bringing it back to, who is this person? not what are their identifying character. Who is this person? And what do they need? And how do I, you know, acknowledge and support them? And coming back again to that, you know, that authenticity is a leader piece and aligning to our values. Yeah. It's across the board.

Cec Busby [00:24:25]:

I think we've probably got time for one last question. So I guess broadly speaking, what kind of advice will you give to small business owners who wanna proactively support and empower the women in their business based on the insights that you've you've gained from the report.

Megan Della Camina [00:24:44]:

For small business owners, I would say number 1, the leadership piece that we talked about. So you your leadership style, your values, your well-being, your authenticity because everything stems from that. and then, you know, get to know really get to know and understand everybody, but for this conversation, you know, the women in your team? What do they need? How do you support them? How do you get a really good manager relationship going? and that's different for every person in terms of what they need and how they work. Identifying the, you know, career objectives and aspirations and how you can, you know, bring in other projects or skills or development that's gonna really support them and their growth, which is gonna support you and your business and focus on their well-being. you know, really focus on levels of stress, levels of burnout, manageable workload, and always always check your bias.

Cec Busby [00:25:53]:

Great advice. Thank you, Megan. Thank you so much for dropping by and talking to me today and sharing all of the insights from the report. Is there somewhere that people can download it if they wanna get a further look? Yes. They can. They can go to women

Megan Della Camina [00:26:08]:

rising co dotcom, and you'll see it right there on the on the home page. And you can download it for free and have a have a good read about it.

Cec Busby [00:26:17]:

Awesome. Thank you so much. Thanks for joining me. Thank you so much.