Actuaries in the C-Suite with Daphna Horowitz

Interview Transcript

Julia Lessing: Hi, everyone. Today, we're talking about senior leadership, and in particular, we're talking about some of the challenges that actuaries face when making the transition to C-Suite roles. And I can't think of an actuary better placed to have this conversation with than Daphna Horowitz. Daphna is a qualified actuary currently based in Israel. But these days, you won't find Daphna calculating insurance premiums or reserves.

You're more likely to find her coaching high-performing senior execs to help them up their game in business and become more confident, inspiring leaders. Daphna is a master certified coach and she's worked across Africa, Europe, China, and India with large organisations like Barclays Bank and Coca-Cola. Host of the Leadership Live podcast, a mum of three, Daphna is also a published author, having written two books, Courage to Lead Leadership Lessons from Kilimanjaro and Weekly Habits for Extraordinary Leaders. Daphna, thank you so much for joining us today.

Daphna Horowitz: I'm very excited and thank you for hosting me, Julia.

JL: I'm really excited to hear some of your stories and lessons from being a CEO coach today, Daphna. But before I ask you some questions, I just wanted to say how much I loved both of your books.

DH: Thank you.

JL: And that being the thing that I loved most about them is how practical they were. You know, so many leadership books are very theoretical and they're very interesting to read, but not necessarily helping us to build our skills. And I think one of the things that actuaries often find is that we're book smart. We're very good at doing our solo study and learning how to code and doing all those things by ourselves.

But when it comes to leadership, it's a whole new ball game, isn't it?

DH: A whole new ball game. Yep.

JL: Can't just learn that just from reading? We have to actually do things, and your book provides a whole lot of homework for people to actually try some of those things and build those skills.

DH: Yeah. Thank you, Julia. Thank you for saying that, because my key aim or mission with the books was to create a book firstly that's readable in bite sized chunks. So, the chapters are so you can open them anywhere. And to make them practical, I think, you know, you can read something interesting and I'm a huge reader, actuary passed, but the question is how. How do I do this?

Okay, that sounds really great. How do I do that? And I wanted to give some ideas, whether it's a question or a tip or a tool to really help people who help readers and help leaders implement some of the stuff, apply some of the stuff.

So, yeah, it's I'm so glad to hear you say that.

JL: It's great. It was very practical. And, you know, when I was writing it, I got out my notebook and pen and I was making some notes and doing the exercises as well. So yeah, I thought they were fantastic. So, thank you.

DH: Wow, you just warming my heart because it's exactly, what my intentions are. Thank you.

JL: So, Daphna, as you said, your history is as an actuary. You were an actuary, but now you're a coach. And not just any coach. You're a CEO coach. So, can you tell us a bit about your role as a CEO Coach?

DH: Yeah. So, I do work with leaders, senior leaders who are in C-Suite positions or CEOs because I find the complexity of the role is really, really big. And typically, my clients have come from some kind of a professional background, a lot of actuaries, I have to say, I've worked with a lot of actuaries over the years. And what happens is that, when you're a subject matter expert and you're really good at your job, and also, I think actuaries do tend to be very ambitious high achievers. They want to get further in furthering their career.

So, what happens is there's a typical transition from where you are so good at what you do. You're an expert. You are looked at as an expert in someone as a go to person for specific technical advice, and then you're so good that you get promoted into a leadership position, a leadership role. And then there's a different mindset and different skills that are required in order to excel at the leadership role. And you're actually everything that you've done and everything that you've learned and known are kind of the new foundational level, basic level that's a given, you know, all the stuff that, you know, all the expertise that you've gained and experience that you've gained is the basic. And now you've got to learn something different in order to really excel at a leadership role.

And these are people skills, these are self-awareness skills. These are what is my impact, being aware of that. How do I lead a business on a broader level? And that's a huge challenge. And I know we're going to talk about that a bit later. But how do I lead on a broader level? Those are new skills that aren't taught to us as actuaries, and this is something that leaders need to start grappling with and getting under their belts so that they can succeed at this level.

So, as CEO coach, just to round out the question, it's really how do I make that transition from expert to leader. I'm really good at what I do have been appreciated and acknowledged for that I've been promoted. How do I now lead and much bigger organisation? And that's the leadership gap that I call that I absolutely love to work with because it's exciting. It's about the human element. It's not just, you know, I'm not advising you on how to do your actuarial work. I'm way beyond that. That's in my past history. And let's look at what are the other things that need to happen. And that typically happens at C-Suite level, CEO level, you know, interactions and relationships with stakeholders is on a different level at that at that kind of role.

JL: It's a whole new mindset and a whole new ball game, as you say. And I like the way you describe that is, you're very good at what you do and then you get promoted because of that. But actually, when you get promoted, you need to then move in and do a whole lot of different things. You're not just doing your name, you've been promoted because you're good at the technical work, but the new role actually doesn't involve very much technical work at all. Maybe.

DH: Exactly. And there's a beautiful phrase coined by Marshall Goldsmith, who's been coaching for years, and he's based in the States, and he wrote a book about it, and it's called What Got You Here Won't Get You There. And that's exactly the thing. It's everything that you've done that got you to this amazing position and you've got to where you want to be. You, whether it's chief actuary or CEO or whatever, running your own business. I've got actuary clients who've left the corporate world and started their own business, and everything that you've learned is just not going to get you to the next level.

And yeah, it's actually a great book. And he also talks about the habits that leaders fall into, and I also talk a lot about habits. My book, my second book is all about weekly habits. You know, it's consistent action that is going to get you to where you want to be. And so, what are the habits that we fall into, the traps that actually keep us from being really successful in our leadership role?

And that that is also just a really, really important thing to consider, is that leadership is a skill that can be learned and with small, consistent actions, you can become that leader. So sometimes it's really frustrating for actuary and similar expert level clients to think, what is this new thing that is a little bit vague, and I can't really put my finger on it.

And yes, there are a lot of theories, but how do I actually do it? I think a very important message is that it can be learned with consistent practical approach and action. You can do it.

JL: Excellent. So, it can be learned. We just need to know what we're learning and practice the skills and be really consistent. And so, in your role as a coach, you can help facilitate that transition and that learning.

DH: Exactly

JL: And support people making that transition. That's great. So, totally agree with that idea of what's got you here, won't get you to the next place. But what's let's get a bit specific. What is maybe the most common challenge or the common type of challenge that you see when technical professionals or actuaries are making that transition from expert to leader?

DH: Yeah, I think there are many. And I will always say, yes, we're talking about actuaries, were talking about experts, but human beings are human beings, right? So, there's a whole variety of things. I'm just going to say that upfront, but there are things that we see that are common to, you know, actuaries and technical experts in that transition.

And I would say if I had to put it into two categories, the number one category that is most frustrating for them and where they really need to learn a lot of skills is people leadership skills. So, anything around resolving conflict between team members, communicating their ideas or what they want to get done somehow, you know, with everything so clear in their own minds, they know exactly what they want and where they want to be going.

But that translation into how to guide their team into what they want their next steps to be is a little bit sticky, sometimes articulating what's in their mind, sometimes feeling frustrated between, you know, our actuaries are so, you know, they are they're intelligent. They think in a certain way they can see patterns and articulating what they're speaking to the people around them who might even be junior actuaries is sometimes challenging because there's a level of whatever catch up that needs to be done or learning or experience that needs to be done.

So, there's the frustration sometimes about not being understood, you know, maybe feeling that people haven't got to the level asking what we call stupid questions. We say there is no such thing as stupid questions, but sometimes it can be challenging when you feel that you've explained something many times and you've gone through it and your people aren't understanding it at the level that you'd like them to.

So, there's a lot of frustration around that, managing those relationships. Something also around not knowing our actuaries love the detailed works, most of our actuaries and not knowing when to stop the micromanaging part, right? How much to get involved into the detail of the work that's being done. And how much do they think people actually do it and make mistakes and try it out because that's how people learn.

So, and then I'll mention one more thing, which I find is with stakeholders, whether it's the board of directors or your own manager, you know, with your manager as a CEO, that manager might be the chief actuary even, but your chief actuary has maybe life and health experience and you might be a non-life actuary. And there's a difference in level of expertise.

So, how to communicate it in a way that get the buy in of your senior stakeholders is also a huge challenge sometimes. So, I find that some actuaries I've seen have had great relationships with their direct reports and with their team, and they actually are able to develop them and teach them and mentor them. But when it comes to their more senior stakeholders, they struggle to explain what they want to do because they are too stuck in the weeds of it.

They want to get into the technical details of what's working, not working. Whereas your board might really just want to hear the high-level picture and where you're going and what's your strategic view of the situation. So, I know I've thrown a lot of things in there, but those are many of the people related leadership challenges. So that would be, I think if you had to ask the actuaries where their frustration is, that's what they would say. I'm going to add another layer to it because I think it's really important and that is that it really starts with self-leadership. So, in order to be able to understand people and lead them well, you need to understand yourself first. You need to understand your own values, drivers, motivations, frustrations, blind spots, weaknesses in order to be able to relate to your people and help to develop them to.

So that's the layer that I would bring in is I would say when you're having a frustration with someone in your team or maybe with a senior manager, ask yourself, how am I coming across? What is my impact? What am I not seeing about myself and the way that I'm interacting that I can work on in order to build those relationships and have a different approach with people? So, I often say it really does start there and there's no linear approach here, right? You need to work on both simultaneously, but they are very connected, and I think that's not an obvious connection.

JL: Well, I think that concept of self-leadership isn't necessarily something that people obviously think about. They think, well I'm the boss, so I must be right, and you must be the right way. And often I've got more experience than my team. So, you know, why would why would they know better when I've been around for longer? And I think sometimes there can be that sense of I should know the answers. I am most experienced. And as you say, if that's the mindset that you're coming in at and you're not sort of thinking about how am I showing up and how am I contributing to that, I can see how that can be quite challenging and get a lot of attention.

DH: Right. And often because when we have a problem, when we have a challenge, we do look externally to see what can I fix around me, what's not working around me and how can I fix that? So, when something didn't get implemented the way it should, it's immediately, well, who didn't do their job? Who didn't meet the deadline? Who made the mistake and really look at fixing it out there. And that's valid. It's still valid and you need to do that analysis. What I'm saying is add the layer of how can I be the leader that helps people recognise these mistakes before they are saying to the client or whatever the case might be, how can I be a leader that helps my people develop, learn, empower themselves, even become leaders themselves in their approach and mindset and thinking?

So that's the added they are. How am I contributing to the situation? And that's not always an easy place for people to go and look at. They just want to fix it out there. And I think that's just a common, you know, human thing rather than an actuary thing.

JL: Yeah. So that self-leadership, self-reflection, but also sounds like communication's a bit of a common theme in so many occasions in saying it. So, whether it's communication, communicating with your junior people, being able to explain concepts to less experienced actuaries, but also getting the right level of detail when you're communicating with wider stakeholders as well. Why do you think actuaries in particular struggle with that communication?

DH: I think actuaries who work in typical, you know, actuarial jobs roles are very meticulous about getting things right. Okay. They want to make sure that the models are correct. The way of thinking is correct. The answers are correct. And I think when you're dealing with leadership, there's often no right answer. It's about your style, it's about your approach, it's about how you do things, rather than having a very black and white kind of answer. So, for an actuary, it would be, okay, let me get into the detail of the situation, see how I can unpack it, and rather communicate about the topic or the issue that's at hand.

Then think about how am I relating to the person that's sitting in front of me? What is our common goal? What are we trying to achieve here? What is the thing that really matters and focus on that? So sometimes it might be before you get into the technical detail of something is think about what is your relationship with this person sitting in front of you? Is it something that needs to be worked on then? Because when you have a good relationship with someone and there's maybe a disagreement around a technical issue rather than try and solve the technical issue, build the relationship so that when the technical issue arises, they have your trust, you have their trust, and you'll come up with a solution that will be good.

And it might not set in those technical details. And that's actually maybe something that might be useful for your listeners is that I also work with stakeholders that are involved with the actuaries, so whether, the actuaries manager who pulls me in to work with an actuary or whether it's the board that's, you know, having particular challenges. And the biggest frustration from that side is exactly what I spoke about at the moment, at this moment is about the actor wanting to go into the technical detail and explain all of that, rather than saying, hold on a sec, what are we trying to do here as a business, as a company, as a business unit? There's a certain vision, there's a certain strategy that we are working towards. How do we look at that higher level?

I often hear this. I wish they would talk more higher level and understand where the business is going away. This project is going rather than focus on the tiny details that when you're talking with a non-technical person, they're not really you know that to them they might be tiny details that they don't really understand. To the actuary, it's a really important thing. But the actuary really needs to understand that that's not what matters in this conversation and in this relationship. The stakeholders want to trust that you've got the technical staff sorted. Explain to them how this contributes to the project or what you need in order to make the project work.

JL: Yep. So rather than sharing all of the details, we use this data, we set these assumptions, we built this great model, and you should think we're amazing because we're actuaries and we've done this wonderful actuarial modelling because actually nobody else knows about that except the actuarial team.

DH: Exactly.

JL: So, you're talking to your stakeholders, they want to know the 'so what', they want to know, what does that mean? And can you connect that to the strategy? It's somewhat ironic, I think that as actuaries, we're trained to, you know, project scenarios into the future. But when it comes to our day-to-day work, sometimes we can't think beyond what's right in front of us. We can't think about the 'so what' and what that means.

DH: I was going to say I often hear from my actuary clients. I wish my manager would just get off my back for a minute, you know, whether it's a CEO or someone who's not and actually just let him get off. I just want him to get off my back so I can carry on and do my work. But that's not how it works.

JL: No, there's a reason why they're on your back.

DH: Exactly. As frustrating as that may be.

JL: Okay, so, we've talked a bit about common challenges and, you know, the importance of communication, but also mindset and thinking about our contribution to situations, but also thinking about what others need from our communication. Whether their actuaries or their outside the actuarial team and how we can give them the right level of detail when we're communicating so that our message lands and so that we get our managers off our backs.

DH: And actually, we can reframe that to “get managers off our backs”, as maybe “make them happy”, you know, like make them feel safe and that they're in good hands or the project is in good hands, and then they'll go, get off your back in a way that everybody's happy and everybody wins.

JL: Its win, win. So, give them the right level of information, give them what they need.

DH: Yeah.

JL: The bigger picture in the context, right? It's not the detailed and then everyone's happy.

DH: Yeah.

JL: Okay. So, Daphna now I wonder if you can tell us a story. Do you have a story that you could share about a time when you've helped an actuary or technical professional make that transition into a leadership role?

DH: Yeah, I'd love to share a story about a client of mine who is an actuary and really incredibly successful at what they've done in their life and in their career. And they came to a point where they realised that people issues were getting in their way. And interestingly, it wasn't getting in their way in terms of success of the business, but in terms of how they felt about themselves as a leader. They knew that there were certain behaviours that were holding themselves back and holding them back from having good relationships with their team, their board. And they started to feel that sense of discomfort. They didn't just want this amazing, successful business.

They wanted to feel like they are leaving a legacy in terms of how they are handling themselves. And this is something that I often see coming up. The what is great often at work that works really well, that people are successful, actuaries are successful, as I said, ambitious. They get you where they want to be. They get promoted. They do well in their careers, but sometimes there's a bit of collateral damage along the way in terms of how people feel around them.

So, this client of mine really started to feel that there were some instances at work with their own people who they valued very, very much, were having a hard time with them and receiving a bit of feedback around that. So, really kudos to this person for reaching out because I often find that coaching is not something actuaries naturally tend to look to as a place for support. And when you're dealing with things like developing your people skills and developing your self-leadership, it's not something you can do alone. You really do need that thought partner, that thinking partner to help you see your blind spots and see where you need to improve. And we worked together on creating habits around understanding their impact.

So, it's not only just about getting the job done, getting the work done, having the brilliant ideas that are going to take the business to the next level, and getting your people to do the work. You know, traditional style of leadership is very command and tell. And I think when you're an expert, you really do fall into that command and tell approach.

You mentioned that earlier Julia, where I know the answers, I’m the expert. I know how this works. I've done it many times before. I'm now ready to take my business to the next level and just do what I say, and it will all be okay. Yeah, but you're not developing your people that way. You're keeping them very small and contained, and you can get more frustrated because they're not supporting you in the way that you want.

So, everything is often too slow. They don't understand enough. They're not getting it. They're not doing what I asked. We’re having all these roadblocks in the way things are taking too long. So, we just worked very slowly on actually self-awareness. What are the behaviours that are holding you back? What are the behaviours that are stopping you from having good relationships with your people? One particular thing that was quite dominant for this person was that they would get angry and lose their temper, and that became something that needed to be looked at. You know whether it's a cutting remark in front of other people or whether it's, you know, just shouting the odds and insisting on your way being correct. And as I say, when you're willing to just take that step and look at yourself and say, how can I do things differently?

Because I know that I want my work environment to change, my work culture to change. I want people to really respect me and look after me, not just because of how clever I am and how brilliant I am at leading this business, but for who I am as a person and with small changes, we really got to a place where this client of mine just slowly started to make changes, be more calm, listen to people more, not make them feel stupid for not being on the same level of thinking you know, their boss. And it's amazing because there's been a huge turnaround and it takes time, it takes effort, it takes consistent practice. But the feedback that this client of mine has received has been amazing and people have seen the changes, and the work environment has been better, and people are stepping up more and people are bringing up more of their ideas.

They're not scared to be shot down because they didn't understand something, or you didn't have enough evidence. You know, that's another thing that I see with our activities is if someone comes to them with an idea, they want to see the evidence and the data and come, you know, well prepared and no it doesn't have to be like that. People can come to you with a half-formed idea and listen to them and try and figure them out, figure it out together, and help them to figure out how this can be implementable. And so, a lot of that just taking a step back, looking at themselves and looking at the impact of their behaviour, not at the result that they want in terms of the outcome to be achieved, but rather the impact on the people.

And that's quite a big mindset shift that needs a lot of self-reflection. I think with a partner, because it's not easy to do your own self-reflection in these cases. Yeah, and there was huge change.

JL: Yeah amazing.

DH: Amongst this client that came to mind is it's quite an involved, more complex kind of example. But yeah.

JL: So powerful Daphna, so, you start with, you know, your clients in a situation where things are still going well from a business perspective, but you know, they're not feeling okay in the way they're doing it. And it sounds like their team wasn't really achieving their potential either.

DH: Right.

JL: You know that that can be a really challenging place to be when you've got leaders that are holding on very tight and maybe not trusting their teams or maybe not feeling like they can develop their team members, then, you know, that's a recipe for burnout for leaders as well. And you know, a recipe for disengagement for the team too…

DH: Exactly.

JL: Where they're not having the opportunity to step up and do new things. But it sounds like through your coaching, you were able to take that from being in that kind of less effective kind of situation. And no one's really getting what they need out of the situation, to a situation where everyone's thriving and flourishing

DH: Exactly.

JL: You know, I imagine a knock-on effect to business results when you've got that kind of set up anyway.

DH: Absolutely, there is a knock-on effect to business results. So, you might see your business as being successful because you are constantly pushing and telling and driving and it is successful. But I always say that it hits a ceiling because you can only do that so much. And if you really want to grow beyond that ceiling. And that's what I find is the frustration for my clients is that they feel like they're hitting the ceiling. They're ready to push further, that their team is frustrating them. They don't feel they're getting the support that they need because they need their team to be empowered and independent and thinkers and doers. And yet there's this gap that starts forming where the leader is ready to kind of go to the next level. And the team hasn't been developed to that level.

The team is not ready, but if the leader thinks that by keeping on pushing and telling them what to do and pushing them harder, they would get, there they would bridge that gap. That's not correct.

JL: Not going to happen.

DH: What actually needs to happen is and I do say this as frustrating as it might be for my clients, you actually need to hold off, we're slowing down a little bit, but only in order to be able to speed up later. But you need to take a step back for a moment, slow down a little bit, help your team really learn how to empower them and be that leader that develops them so that they become leaders themselves. That's what I always say, because they need to be thinking them themselves and they need to be leading their team in the best way so that they can come up to where they need to be in order to support that next level.

JL: Yep.

DH: And I think it's just a really important concept of understanding that as a leader you want to develop leadership mindset and thinking in your people as well. And I want to add to that. It's not to say that we never follow if we are a leader, we are never going to be a follower. Sometimes as a leader, you need to follow in terms of some other leader's plans or goals or in terms of even your own direct reports project.

Let them lead a newbie, the follow in terms of support that they might need. So, it's not that okay if a company and I've had those questions so that's why I'm bringing it up. If a company only develops leaders, where are the followers? Where are the doers? It's not that it's not so linear. It's a symbiotic relationship where in some cases you really take the lead and in other cases you actually are in a supportive role following in whatever way got nothing to do with hierarchies. So, it's really understanding that you want to develop your people to a level where they're independent, they're running their own things, they know what they doing, and that only frees you up to really take yourself and your business to the next level.

JL: I love that, Daphna. And I can see why, as I'm listening to you explain it, I can see why actuaries may struggle with that greyness of, you know, leaders and followers. It's not a binary thing. We might be having followers in the same role and just in exaggerations. And that can be a tricky thing to unpack and to understand. So, okay, so it sounds like coaching has been very instrumental in being able to help people make that transition from yeah, from being the expert to being not just an effective leader, but a leader that is enjoying their work and feeling like they're in, you know, they're doing great work and that they've got a team around them who are also feeling empowered to step up and to do great things as well.

You mentioned that actuaries are not always, you know, going to a coach isn't always the first thing an actuary will do when. So, when we find funding that we're struggling with this. So, can you maybe demystify coaching for us a little bit? What does it look like? What does a typical CEO coaching or senior executive coaching session look like? How does it work?

DH: Yeah, so I think very important. You say that first off, coaching is not consulting. I just want to say that upfront because often what I do see and I'll just maybe explain that while I personally coach the senior execs or the CEOs, I also work with a team of coaches and sometimes we go into an organisation and coach at other layers as well. And so, I see a lot of you know how coaching is brought in when it comes to actuaries and as we say, as a technical expert. And often there's an expectation that when you go see a coach, you're entering into some kind of consulting relationship where the coach will tell you what to do, right. You need some skills.

So, the coach is going to tell you, teach you, there's got to be some kind of a maybe a formula or a recipe for how this works. You'll go to the coach. The coach will tell you what you need to do, and everything will be great. And I want to say it doesn't work like that. Actually. There's no recipe and there's nothing that's quick and easy anyway, but the role of the coach is to help you think through some of the things that you do and some of your behaviours and some of the feedback that you've received in order to do better, in order to improve yourself.

And that is highly individualised. There is no recipe. There is no one approach. Of course, we've got a bag of tools and models and frameworks that we bring in, but it has to apply to you and your situation. So, the coach is not going to come in and say, okay, here's the problem and this is what you need to do, and there we go. It's going to be let's think through this together. And I find that that sometimes a source of frustration if you're expecting answers. Okay.

So, I think it's really important to understand that coaching is a process that is going to help you take a step back from your situation and brainstorm and think through stuff and try different things, analyse those, what's working, what's not working, what do we tweak in order to get to the next iteration of what am I going to try?

And it's really got to work for you as a person. It's not some, you know, general thing. Some of the general things, of course, help, but you want to make it apply to your situation. So, I find sometimes going into a project coaching projects, in organisations coaching plans get taken a little bit of back by that hold on a sec, we're just going to figure this out together. Yes, that's what coaching is. You figure it out together because each person is unique in terms of their approach and what's going to work for them. So having said that, there is quite a bit of structure to a coaching process because if you look overall, the structure is the goals that we set together. So, you know, you'd meet with a coach for the first time, you'd want to understand what is it that you want to work on.

Coaching is about change. So, what is it that needs to change for you and what are your goals? Often this is a question that I ask and something our listeners can think about if this was going to be an incredibly valuable and successful engagement, what would you want to see happening differently six months from today? What would be different for you? What will have changed? So, to think into the future and say, well, I want to be a better communicator, I want my team to respect me. I want my board to help me get my business to the next level or whatever it might be. And have those goals in place in order to really understand what we were talking about.

And we figure those goals out together so that they're really quite nailed down in terms of being specific and understand not being too vague. And then we start working together, as I said, figuring things out, bringing tools and techniques, looking at specific situations. So again, for me, a really important distinction with coaching is there is so much information available.

You say that as well at that they can read leadership books. You can go on to Google and figure out and you find out now ChatGPT will give you recipes for how to solve certain problems, even people problems or behavioural challenges with your own habits that you want to change. And so, it's not about the theoretical framework. It's about how does it relate to you. So, you might take a theoretical framework and say, well, I love this framework, I want to see how it applies. And then we look at specific situations that happened for you on a day-to-day basis and say, okay, how do we break it down? You had a meeting that didn't go well. You lost your patience, and you lost your temper. And you know, we're a bit abrupt. Let's look at what happened to you.

What were you feeling? What were you thinking? What were your behaviours? Have you received some feedback from people? Can you ask people what they suggest? You know that you would do? You could do better. And we really break it down into the components and how we want it to be different next time. And often, you know, it's about tracking over time, you know, every time then you have a meeting. How are you different? Did you ask some people for feedback? Did you feel differently about it? Did you get a different result?

And we tracked some of those things and say, okay, well, over time, what has changed? What really works for you? What doesn't work for you, and how do you build on the things that are really working well? So that you can start to see those behaviour changes and have a different impact on the people that you are working with and the results that you want to see.

JL: I love that, Daphna. I love the way you talk about being so individualised. And, you know, I the idea of someone coming in and just telling you what to do, as you said, coaching is not. You know, sometimes I think when we're feeling frustrated, we do want someone to just tell us what to do. But I found I guess if someone came in and told us what to do, they might tell us something that's not actually the right thing for us. It might not be the right solution for us.

So, it sounds like what you're doing with your coaching is to come in and actually work together and collaboratively to help people work out what they need to do, what's not working in the situation for them and what might work for them. Because what works for you might not work for me, might not work for the next person.

DH: Exactly.

JL: Yeah. We're also we know that they're different.

DH: Yeah. I mean, if we look at a specific example that I love to use, the example of time management, you know, that's, that's often a key challenge for many people. And if you look at time management, there is tons written about it. There are so many tools and techniques and frameworks to use and yet it's not working.

You know, time management could be a topic coaching that I could say, well, there's so much information going to do trial. I know these try everything and see what works and yet it doesn't and yet people still struggle with it. And why is that? Well, firstly, because different methods will work for different people so that some people swear by the Pomodoro method or some people's way by using Trello or, you know, whatever tool that they decide to use that's going to help them.

And some people just none of these tools work for them. So, then you have to look deeper. What is it? Is there something in your belief system, in the assumptions that you make? Is it about prioritisation? Often, it's about that. Is it about how you create lists and how you look at your lists? Yeah, there are so many different ways, and every person is going to find that one way that's going to work for them or understand that it's something about mindset maker belief system that has to be kind of shattered down before and then built up again before you can actually get it right. So yeah.

JL: Yeah, and like you said, Daphna, it can be hard to figure that out by yourself when those things are not working. You can read all these graphs and be still not quite sure why you can't manage your time, but having a coach or a partner or someone that can help sort of work through and unpack what's actually going on can be a really much more efficient strategy to get to the bottom of it.

DH: Yeah, exactly.

JL: Amazing work that you're doing as a coach Daphna. So, thank you for sharing some of your stories and common challenges and how a coaching session might work and what coaching might look like. I want to wrap up with one final question for you today, Daphna, and it's this. What's one tip that you'd have for actuaries who are aspiring to C-suite roles?

DH: It's really important not to ignore the people leadership stuff so my tip would be don't think that because you're really good at what you're doing and because you've really been on that fast track of promotion and career development, that you've got it all sorted out because it's that point where you're going to see that you need some other skills to really get to that success and leadership.

That and for me that's around the people leadership. So, build relationships with people along the way, make sure that you're not really so focused on the project or the task or the expertise that you haven't taken the time to network and build relationships and understand how those dynamics work with people. And my add-on to that is don't be scared to ask for feedback all along the way.

So, I'm a big believer in feedback and I think there's an approach to doing feedback and we haven't really spoken about it much. But I would say that if you want to learn and grow in terms of your self-awareness and in terms of your impact on people, the only way you're going to figure it out is through actually asking people for feedback on that.

And I do believe that you can ask for your own feedback. There's a lot of theories about that, and process is also to ask for anonymous feedback and I think there's a place for that. But I think on your own, if you taking responsibility for your own development as a leader and focus on relationship building and networking with people in a way that's comfortable for you, I know networking is also a scary word for a lot of people, but there's a way to do it, especially after there's a way to do it that suits your personality. And this is where coaching comes in because, as I say, individualised.

So, it's either, you know, go to a massive party and just start speaking to people because that's not going to work. But don't ignore the relationships of people elements and along the way ask for feedback. Again, not in a threatening way. You can say, you know, at the end of a meeting or an interaction, go to someone you trust and say, how do you think that went? What could I be doing better? And if you ask it that way, nonthreatening, just, okay, give me a tip so that can improve and do better next time. That's how you will learn and that's how you will build your leadership skills.

JL: Great advice. So much great advice there today, Daphna, and so much more that we could talk about. But I'm going to finish our conversation there because I think that's a really great place to end. So, Daphna, thank you so much for your time today on We Are Actuaries.

DH: Thank you so much. Julia. Lovely speaking to you always.