

**Host**

Hi, Priti and Hi, Meera. Welcome to Mrigashira. It's great to have you guys on board. Let me start with this fundamental question women don't focus on mentoring and networking, as naturally as men do. What's your take on that?

**Meera**

Thanks for this question, actually, Radha. So, you know, we tend to agree with you, I think, in our experience, also, personally, as we were going to the corporate life as ourselves, as well as much later on as well, when we have interacted with women during our coaching interventions, we do tend to see that women don't focus as much on mentoring or networking, mainly some of the reasons we think are that you know, women are very focused on operational work, right, on a day to day, we look at a career like what is the job today. So, I've got to finish this, I've got to go home, I have to finish all of this stuff at home, then you come back the next day, you focus in the day, a day's job, right. So very few women actually take the, you know, step to look at their career as a very strategic view, or, you know, a very long-term view of the career, it is very, very short term and operational. And hence, the things like networking and mentoring, all of that seems to be a little extra for the women and we don't seem to focus on that as much as men seem to take a very long-term view of their career.

**Host**

So, you, you're saying that the big picture is missing?

**Meera**

Yeah, so the big picture or looking at the career as a very long-term thing that spans several decades, right. So, you look at it very operationally, because we have 100, things lined up for us at home as well. So just looking at finishing up the job at work, and then rushing home to finish up our house responsibilities as well, because we are juggling all these multiple things so it's a very, very day-to-day operational view, rather than a very long-term view. This is what I have seen personally.

**Host**

So Priti What have you got to say? What's your experience in this?

**Priti**

Like Meera said take a long-term view, if you have like, short term view, and also, you know, when you're younger, your careers, interventions as something that you do in addition to your regular day job. So, you're always am I, do I have to spend more of my personal time on this, you know, will it eat on to my personal time and family time. So you kind of have these things on the back burner. But in reality, that's not so it just can become a habit as you practice day to day basis and start coming very naturally. Yeah, so that's my view on why women focus that much.

**Host**

It takes some time for us to fit it into our schedule, and we tend to push it or postpone it thinking that we don't have the time. So somewhere, I guess, women are accustomed to thinking like that when it comes to mentoring, right?

**Priti**

Yeah, yeah. And also, I think, so far, the benefits of mentoring or coaching have not been so you know, researched, and openly put out there. Right. So, I'm hoping that with more organizations or more, you know, organizations investing in these kinds of initiatives, you know, women tend to understand what might be the benefits, and so try and put a little bit more, you know, time and effort behind this.

### **Meera**

Just adding on to what Preeti said, right, so these benefits of, say, mentoring, or coaching are not immediate, you're not going to get returns on day one, right, it's going to take some amount of time, and effort on your side. And also, it takes really a long time for all of these, you know, things to, the seeds are sown, but actually when the efforts are all going to reap is going to be much later. So you have to have the patience to you know, go through these engagements completely, before you actually start to see some benefits. So that amount of patience and time and giving that kind of importance to your carrier, I think that is also very critical.

### **Host**

Many times people confuse between mentoring and coaching, sometimes people don't know, when you should have a coach and when you should have a mentor. So how, how does this both work?

### **Priti**

Now good question. Meera, actually, you know, Meera and I spend a whole lot of time, you know, just explaining to organizations, to clients about, you know, what is mentoring? What do you expect from coaching engagement, what to expect from mentoring? So, it's very common for people to get confused between the two. But mentoring really is skill development. Mentoring is skill-building. So, I would say in a nutshell, mentoring you can get yourself a mentor as early there is no such time, as a good time, every time is a good time to get a mentor. Because mentors are experts in their you know, in the subject matter, right. So, you can learn from a mentor, at any stage earlier, the better. And mentors are for life they teach you skills, you can talk to them for any subject matter expertise that you need, it is long term, right. So, start mentoring as early as possible, even from the first day of your professional career. It could be an informal buddy thing, you know, meet somebody who's more senior to you, who you think you regard for the subject matter expertise that they bring to the table, right. So, really, mentoring is skill-building, it's about problem-solving. It's about learning from somebody, you know, industry experience. Coaching, on the other hand, is we would recommend when somebody is had a little bit of more, you know, work and life experience, coaching encourages you to introspect, it makes you reflect upon, you know, what, what your strengths are, what works best for you, blind spots, etc. So, coaching, you should have maybe one or two coaching engagements in your entire, maybe career, career span, right, because coaching is at a very crucial juncture when you're probably taking on some extremely crucial or life-changing kind of decisions or career changing decisions. So, and a coach is, somebody who will help you just think about your own self-development.

So coaching is self-development, it is not skill-building. So your coach can be from any industry need not be, you know, subject matter expertise expert. Right. So, everybody needs a coach, but, you know, you should get a coach when you're ready to self-reflect, introspect. Yeah. So, we would recommend coaching at a stage when you have a little bit more experience and maturity to accept some of the things that you actually introspect and learn about yourself.

### **Meera**

Just to add to what Preeti was saying, right, you know, in subject matter experts, so they usually happen to be seniors in your own organization, or in your domain, or the industry that you're working in, right. We help you navigate your career in your specific area, right within your organization or within your industry. But coaches are really focused on helping you challenge whatever limiting beliefs that you carry within yourself, right. And that will help you in whichever career path you choose. So, it's not really specific to any particular domain Industry, right. So, you can you can just, you know, bank on a coach for your own self-development and behavioural changes. That is what coaches are here for, and mentors are really subject matter experts.

### **Host**

And you were also talking about, you know, when we come to coaching, right, what are some of the specific areas where women typically come to you guys for coaching help?

### **Preeti**

Yeah, so what we've seen Radha, is many times, even it might be not really specific to women but some of the interventions that we have done with women, some of these goals kind of stood out for us where women struggled to build their own brand within the organization, you know, become more visible within the organization. So, this also leads to how do they do some strategic networking and build out their own support group and strategic connections within the organization? This is a very clear area that comes out for many women. And in addition, we've also seen an area of say assertive communication, right? So several times what happens when you communicate, they either come across as very aggressive, or they tend to come across as very submissive but striking the right note in a room, which is mostly dominated by men, right, and having your own voice heard in a very assertive way, is I think, some development areas that we often come across when women who are coaches

### **Meera**

Yeah, and I would add that these are things that can be fixed very easily with coaching interventions, at the, let's say, mid-level, you know, leadership level. So, we would encourage organizations and women to look at coaching, about, you know, the time they're about eight to 10 years within an organization or within a career span. Yeah.

### **Host**

Meera, you were talking about, you know, personal branding, or how we sort of need to network well, within the organization to be seen, at the right place at the right time. Right. So, what are some of the typical, you know, kind of tips that you can give to women? Who, because it doesn't come naturally to us?

### **Meera**

Right, so, there are a lot of self-limiting beliefs I think that women carry on, you know, how, how to network with whom to network, and whether it is in your personality itself to go out of your comfort zone and, you know, be seen networking, it shouldn't seem like you're asking favors, you know, we carry a lot of things in our mind as such, right. So, working with a coach in order to figure out what are your challenges? Why do you have these kinds of thoughts that limit you and your, you know, your ability to go out there and connect with people, and also making the right kind of connections, right? It's not just about connecting with everybody that matters, you know, creating the right support group, who will help you navigate your career and take it to the next level. I mean, those

kinds of things are the best. We've seen that you know, coaches work with women for like Preeti said I think, you know, rather than me giving tips, I think it is it each one each woman right, has her own challenges and her own strengths that she can actually play with. So working with a coach identifying their, your own strength, and then, you know, trying to go and fix it. I think that is important. That's about it. I don't have any specific tips like that.

**Host**

Preeti Do you want to add to that?

**Preeti**

Yeah. So, to young women, of course, who are starting their careers, you know, I'll circle back to what we said initially, don't take a very short term view of your career, don't think, you know, a career as one performance review to the next. Right. Look at it as a long-term marathon, so to stay, right, so, and there are going to be ups and downs, you've got to identify and play to your strengths. And if you're struggling with that, by yourself, then a coach is the best person to help you identify and work. Right. So that's what we would say, like, stop taking a short-term view.

**Host**

Women now look at experts like you as coaches on their own, or they still believe that you know, if the organization is pushing them to do then they take up this kind of activity. So, do you see more and more women as individuals coming to you guys or is it still part of a larger organizational initiative?

**Preeti**

No, I was saying, it's not specific to women Radha, I think, in general, we see that, you know, men and women take coaching when the organization is offering it to them. It's very, it's very one of for somebody to approach on their own.

**Meera**

Yeah. But to add to what Preeti said, it is also a question of awareness, right, coaching in India is fairly new, as compared to training or, you know, something like counselling, you know, these words are often heard, but we don't really hear carrier coaching and stuff like executive coaching or leadership coaching is fairly new. And hence, I think, it could also be a question of awareness, that maybe at some point, when the awareness is more there, and you know, the word coaching is very prevalent in India, in corporate India, then people will also look at coaching as something that they can do it on their own, even without the organization investing in it for them. But as Preeti has rightly said, today, we see, you know, maximum traction when the organization invests in its leaders.

**Host**

You guys have been professionals, working, and then now entrepreneurs, so you have had a long journey as well so what are some of your own challenges that you came across? And how did you handle it as you went along?

**Preeti**

Yeah, so I'll go first, Meera, now, you can add to, you know, what I've said, definitely, you know, between, you know, where we, when we started, and now, I think organizations are a lot more supportive in the development of their employees. So, when we see organization offering, you

know, leadership resources or leadership development resources, you know, we wish we had that when we were young and building our careers, right, really miss having a, you know, strong mentor very early on in my career, or maybe a coach towards, at the time when I was actually may be taking on a larger role, etc. Right. So, incidentally, that's one of the first things we did when Meera and I started this venture, we went and got ourselves a coach. Right. And it has been of immense help. And of course, it was time-bound. He is no longer coaching us but what that really set us off, it put us on the right track, our frame of mind also became extremely positive just working with the coach, but really coming back to what how did we handle the challenges when we were building our careers, there's really, I think, one key thing is just being, you know, asking for help. Right, right from the beginning, whether, you know, early in our careers, mid-career, and even now as entrepreneurs, I think Meera and I have been very, very open in believing in understanding where our limitations are and seeking help from experts in those areas. Yeah, whether it is let's say, breaking some business development challenge or understanding some financials, some financial experts, some strategic, you know, business growth decision. So we seek help, I think we just go out and seek help and say, this is not where our forte is so can we talk to you for a few minutes to understand how to do this. So, I think my advice would be for women to, it's impossible to do everything and know everything on your own. So, ask for help. There are tons of experts out there and ask for help. That's one definitely and also was, no same on the help side, even on a personal front, right, when children were younger, seek help from your support systems, you know, whether it is parents, in-law's siblings, family, whatever, I think we should all learn to take help and give help. Yep. And that that makes it a very strong ecosystem. Yeah, yeah.

### **Meera**

And, you know, at the what, I have to say, in this regard is, you know, it's very important to kind of recognize what your strengths are, and somehow choose a career path that plays to your strengths. Right, Preeti did mention this before. But very unwittingly, I think both of us have done that. And today, where we are in the career, that career path that we are in, we are definitely playing to our strengths, you know. So, like she said, you know, in the beginning, if we had a coach, right, who had worked with us identified some of our strengths, it would have been fairly easy for us to kind of choose a career path to play up to our strengths, but somehow it has evolved now. And now, where we are, we just see that both of us are pretty in this space, because we are playing to our strengths.

The other thing that I also wanted to say is that, you know, important to have a friend at work, I think, really critical that through your carrier and right now, the way Preeti and I work with each other, we're constantly there to support each other, through both our personal as well as our professional challenges that we are facing. So, we always bounce off, you know, all our challenges to each other, we have some sounding board. And constantly, we are talking to each other about the challenges that we are facing, or the small victories that we have on a day-to-day basis, right, whether it is a celebration, or whether it is dealing with some issue, we both are there to support each other. So, this concept of having a friend at work is really critical. I mean, having to know that there is someone who cares, whether you show up at work or not, you know, just not just to come and do your deliverables on a daily basis, but also somebody who's caring for you beyond that. Right. I think that keeps a lot of us going.

### **Host**

Yeah, That's good. And I think, you know, that's very important, the point what you said about having a friend, and having somebody as a sounding board I think is very, very essential. I mean, at

least I can relate to that. Thanks a lot, Preeti, Thanks a lot Meera. It was a pleasure talking to you guys.