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Amy Chang is an executive vice president at Cisco. Following the acquisition of her startup Accompany by Cisco in 2018, she led Cisco's multi-billion dollar Collaboration business and its Webex portfolio. In this talk, she describes an approach to networking that's built on affinity and even friendship rather than short-term, transactional goals. She shares how her relationships and network shaped her career as she navigated a path from electrical engineering at Stanford to her current roles at Cisco and on the Proctor & Gamble board, with formative stops at McKinsey, Google, and elsewhere.



Transcript

Narrator Who you are defines how you build.. 00:00:07,530 - So, Amy, you know, 00:00:10,210 I think one of the things that I want to discuss is, is that oftentimes our Stanford students when they're graduating, and I think even anybody, is always wrestling with what to do with their lives.. And some people may be thinking about, should I work at a startup? Should I work at one of the Valley's bellwether companies like Cisco or Google? Or should I go to McKinsey and do a consulting company? Well, you have done all of those.. And so I think you are a rare singularity that I really want to actually allow our students to understand your advice and insight into all those different experiences.. And really, I get at the heart of this issue of what should I do.. There are certain questions that I think are timeless that our students always wrestle with, which is like, what should I do.. And then there's especially items around that that are particularly unique given the weird times that we're living in.. And so with that, I wanted to start by double-clicking on one of the themes that you brought up in your first talk, which was really on unearthing this notion of following your gut and understanding when your body is trying to tell you something.. Or when you really are trying to get honing in on what you're supposed to do and what you're not supposed to do.. And so with that, I want to begin with a clip from your previous ETL talk..

- And if there is something where, 00:01:27,340 when right before you close your eyes to go to sleep and right when you open them, when you wake up in the morning, if you keep finding yourself thinking about something, or thinking to yourself, I should be happier.. Why am I not happier? I should be more grateful for what I already have.. And if you find yourself kind of thinking about an idea or thinking about a possibility, pay attention, and maybe write it down for yourself and go back and look longitudinally across a few weeks, because you'll find that your gut instinct or your kind of sense of what you want is already there.. You just may be a little afraid to act on it.. And so now I try, when there's something that keeps coming up for two weeks or more, I already know, I gotta act on this.. And this is something that is bothering me and I just need to change it.. - I love that.. 00:02:12,550 And so Amy, I wanted to start off by asking if we could double-click on that and just go deeper into that? And especially, you know, with our Stanford students, oftentimes you're rewarded in life by self-sacrifice, especially if you've overachieved to come to Stanford in some ways.. And so I'm wondering when do you know it's right to follow your gut, as you were discussing in that clip, and make a change versus when it's right to suck it up and sacrifice your own comfort for your development? - Okay, so let's take this in pieces, 00:02:41,403 'cause that's a whole series of questions and, you know, a whole chunk of stuff to cover.. So let's first start with career wise, and I'm just going to be clear, I'm 20 years into my career..

You're 20 years into yours and we still haven't completely figured out what we're doing, right? So don't put too much pressure on yourself to know a priori, oh, this is my five year, 10 year, 15 year plan because things are going to come up and staying open and flexible to opportunities as they come up is, I really think, and Ravi, you tell me what you think.. But I think that's a key part of crafting a career is being open to possibilities as they come up, right.. So what I will say is at the very beginning of your career, it's a different story because you may not know yet what you want to do and figuring out what you don't like and what you don't want to do is as important as figuring out what you do want to do.. Because only through some of those experiences where you try things on and you kind of go, "Oh, okay.. That's that is not for me." And then you try to figure out, okay, well, why is it not for me? And you, you know, you get a couple layers under and you look at well was it not for me because I'm not creating and I'm not building something? Is it not for me because it's a really large organization and I feel like I'm only getting a small piece of the whole picture? Or why is it not for me? And so that whole figuring out what you like and what you don't like, the don't like part is actually learning.. It's a lot of learning.. So don't try to fast forward and

never have a year where you're doing something you don't like doing, right.. I think that's a, take a little pressure off, all right, don't expect perfection right away.. Don't expect to love every day right away.. 'Cause Ravi, to your point, there is a certain amount of earning your way into, let's say the ideal role..

So the first, I think the first few studies at McKinsey I made copies, Kinko's was still around then.. That was a really long time ago, Ravi we're old.. But Kinko's was still around then.. I made copies, even though I was an analyst, I got people dinner.. Like I went out for lunch to get it for everybody.. There was a certain amount of that.. And that was, you were learning, but you were paying your dues because you weren't fully up to speed to contribute at the same level as people who've been working two, three, five years yet.. So you kind of took the sacrifice, if you will, with the learning.. And that goes on for a couple years, that's to be expected, but you're also figuring out, okay, well, what do I like out of this experience? What do I don't like? What do I want more of? What excites me and how do I get more of that? And I think at every point in your career, if at any given time you took a snapshot, are you doing the absolute best you can do in that job? And are you knocking it out of the park, in that job? Because that will automatically open more opportunity for you, because if people think they can depend on you for something, then they can give you more.. - So at what point do you know, Amy, 00:05:41,720 when you should still keep going at it and not giving up on it? And at what point do you know that you've given it enough and it's time to move on? - I think that's such a personal decision..

00:05:53,300 And I, whenever I'm sitting down with mentees and we're talking through that, one of the things that I'm trying to discern is what is it that you don't like about it? And have you tried to change it in situ, right? In the context of where you are, what have you already done to change the circumstances? Because you don't want to throw the baby out with the bath water, right.. You don't want to say, "Oh, I've been here six months and I don't love everything about it, so I'm going to change jobs." 'Cause that won't necessarily fix it.. What do you not like about it? And trying to, in some cases take a day, like, here's my advice, you take a day off, you go somewhere, somewhere that inspires you.. If that's back to campus, wherever it is, go somewhere that inspires you, sit down with a notebook.. Don't even bring any devices.. And just ask yourself a series of questions.. Like, what do I love about my day? What do I not? What do I want out of the next year, two years? And some fundamental questions, write it down, right.. And then take a step away from it for a week or so, come back and look and see what you wrote.. Because buried in there, right, is a certain amount of insight when you just stop and distill and really are still for a moment.. You get a better sense of where your gut is..

- I love that.. 00:07:03,160 I love that idea of getting still with yourself and being able to self-reflect.. Can you put yourself, Amy, into your 21-year-old self and how you made it to this.... So I want to spend a little time on how you make that initial leap when you're going from the known to the unknown.. And at the time you're a hardcore engineer and you decide to go for McKinsey.. How did you make that decision? And is that something that you would do again today if you were a 21-year-old at Stanford? - It is something I would do today, 00:07:32,690 but I did it for my own weird reasons.. So I had joined the Mayfield Fellows program, and I had realized, as part of that program, that there was an entire universe of stuff I had no knowledge about.. So, you know, when people discuss business models, and value chains, and even supply chain, and basics of business like that, I didn't know what they were talking about.. I was like, this is a different language.. And I have no idea..

And the more I looked at it, if you look at a company or a business as a whole, that entire sphere of go to market or commercialization, even as an engineer, you have to have some knowledge of that.. And I was too cheap to want to go to business school or to accrue debt, to go to business school.. So I figured, if I go to McKinsey, they will basically pay for me to travel because I'd been out of the country once before I was 18, right.. And I really wanted to see the world.. So they'll pay me to travel.. And you know, if I want to go to business school, they'll pay for that.. But it's also like getting, you know, parts of an MBA without having to go back to school.. So that's actually why I did it.. It was a totally odd and personal reason, but you have your own reasons, right, for choosing whatever it is you are choosing.. And I think, yeah, the more you allow yourself to experiment a bit and have some trial and error as part of those first five or six years, the better..

- So there's this one part about getting in tune 00:09:02,377 with yourself and knowing what you really, really like and what you dislike, and also knowing that you've given it your best and then also think about you want to do next.. When you've decided to make that transition, I want to spend a little bit of time about how do you then architect the next steps to get to where you want to go? Especially because a company, which is a startup, which was really a platform for all of this, I think you are one of the leading thought leaders around thinking about how to think longitudinally on creating opportunities for yourself.. And so there's several questions on this.. And I don't want to load all of them on up front, but the first one is we are living in such strange times, especially if you're graduating from Stanford right now in COVID or anywhere in the COVID epidemic.. Do you have any advice for finding a career or a job in the era of COVID? - It is.. 00:09:49,450 I, you know, I feel for everybody having to find their first job right now, it is hard.. And I wish it wasn't for all of you because that part really does suck.. So I was just on call the other night with someone who's, you know, in the midst of kind of finding her first job and we were talking about it.. And a lot of places aren't hiring.. So the question then was, okay, depending on what you want to do in a year, right, because a lot of places aren't hiring right now, what specifically are they looking for? How do you figure out what exactly that hiring manager and that kind of, set of hiring managers is going to be looking for, and what is going to set you apart as a candidate, right? And figuring out, through a whole ton of informational interviews, which by the way, some may be meandering, some may get you exactly what you want, but investing the time to go figure out what's going to differentiate me? What's gonna make me stand out in double the applicant pool? Right, 'cause there's this year's applicants and next year's applicants..

So what is it that I can do to differentiate? And we were talking through some of that.. And I think this is where scrappiness gets rewarded.. This is where grit gets rewarded, right.. And one of the things that I, Ravi, you and I talked about this last time, the network piece of this.. And I know early in your career, that seems kind of, okay, well, what network, right? I haven't even started working yet.. but you never know which of your friend's parents, or which of your parents' friends, or which of, you know, the folks that you know who are in adjacent industries, you don't even know who knows who.. And there may be someone who can get you to someone who will explain what is that hiring manager going to be looking for, for X, Y, or Z.. Because all you need is a little leg up on, okay, well.... you know the person I was talking to really wants to go into pediatric oncology.. All right, well, are they also in that intervening year, would they be more interested in you if you also, you know, we're well versed in child psychology? I don't know if the answer is yes or no..

But that's something that she should go find out, right.. It's that thought process of, okay, well, if I look at the expanded network of everyone I could ping and ask for an opinion on this and ask for some help, who can I get to? Getting creative and getting scrappy.. - I'm so glad that you're talking about this.. 00:12:11,850 'Cause they don't, you don't actually learn, maybe it's changed at Stanford.. But certainly, and I should say that I've known Amy for 24 years.. So part of me, I'm biased in this interview because I have seen Amy over 24 years.. And I know that when we graduated from Stanford certainly- - We didn't know anything.. 00:12:27,550 - Yes, and I don't think you're necessarily taught that.. 00:12:28,660 And I think in some ways, networking is almost considered this four letter word or there's sort of a classism on different skill sets.. And so I would actually like to move to another clip on something that you said when you came previously at Stanford..

- So I grew up in Texas, in Austin where our entire network 00:12:48,520 was like 19 other Chinese people that we hung out with every weekend.. So I did not understand the importance, and this is why I talked to you guys earlier about the importance of the network and the importance of investing in getting to know people you find interesting, or you find fascinating when you don't have time.. Because it bears fruit in such unexpected ways later.. And I'm on the boards that I'm on because of our product, because two people, Chuck Robbins and David Taylor, the CEOs of Cisco and P&G respectively.. we're using our product, had a serendipitous moment, and we're asking, "Okay, well, who made this?".. That's how I ended up on those boards.. - I know that was aligned with the theme 00:13:25,913 that we were just talking about, but can we make that a little bit more real so that the listeners can grok that.. Are there examples that you can give Amy about how that actually played out in your life? - Yeah, I, the reason I got on the board of Informatica, 00:13:45,510 so I've been on, on four boards, you know, over the last kind of 10 year period.. And two of them have been Fortune 50, and people have always asked, "Okay, well, how did you end up on these boards? How did that actually happen?".. It all happened through serendipitous network connections..

So, and Ravi, remind me to come back to network as a four letter word later, because I think people misunderstand what networking means.. And the people that approach it as kind of a, trying to harvest from it type attitude, that's exactly the wrong way to think about it.. So let's go get back to that.. But I ended up on the Informatica board cause there was a woman named Aileen Lee who actually coined the whole term unicorn, right.. And she's a good friend of Ravi's as well.. - She's spoken at ETL as well.. 00:14:32,330 - Yes, she has.. And she's so lovely.. 00:14:35,030 She wrote an article 10 years ago, when I'm still at Google, about here are 10 leaders who aren't on boards yet, who should be.. And she featured 10 of us in there..

And a recruiter happened to read the article for some reason.. Informatica was looking for someone who was well versed in mobile, social, analytics.. And they found me, right.. And the other candidates were three older, white men.. And I happened to be kind of this strange candidate, but I had more experience in analytics, right.. Because I was running Google Analytics at the time.. And so they ended up choosing me, and Godfrey Sullivan was on the board, who was the chairman and CEO of Splunk.. So when Godfrey was looking for a new board member, okay, well we already knew each other, right.. So Godfrey asked me to come onto the board of Splunk.. And it was funny because Chuck Robbins, who's the CEO of Cisco, became a good friend because he was an avid user for our product, for our company..

And so, because he was such a kind of enthusiastic user of it, he figured we should meet for lunch.. We sat down, we got to know each other, you know, we really hit it off.. And then later he asked me to come and join his board.. And so every single board opportunity has been the result of something that is serendipitous.. - Now Amy, some people will say, 00:15:53,880 "Oh, that's easy for Amy Chang.. And you know, Aileen Lee and you have lunch with all these famous people, but I'm not Amy Chang.. How do I get to be on the board of Proctor and Gamble? Or how do I even just get to get a job at this one company that I want to get to?" What do you say when you hear that? - Oh, you indulge your natural curiosity about people.. 00:16:13,840 You invest in them.. You try to help people whenever you can, whenever there's an opportunity to help someone you take it, right.. You invest time in that..

And for me, the advantage was I genuinely like people.. I am an extrovert and I am curious about other human beings.. I like to know about them, right.. So it's easier for someone who is extroverted.. I will admit to that.. But even for someone who is introverted, you probably have deeper relationships, by and large, across a kind of, if you look across the longitudinal time period.. So there are ways to take advantage of that too.. What I will say is, the thing I said earlier around really, really doing the best damn job you possibly can at every single kind of step in your career and putting aside your ego and really doing the best job you can, is the best way to actually get recognized for that next step.. I'll give you an example.. So I was at eBay, and we had this thing called snippets, which were these tiny little articles that you took a little excerpt from and you created this

email that went out every Friday for the executives to know kind of what had happened in the world of startups and e-commerce for that week, right..

And I kid you not, this email was my entire job for a year and a half.. And it was, I was like, really my job is to read articles and cut out excerpts.. A monkey could do this job, right.. And it needed to be in a very specific format.. And if any of the titles, you know, when you cut and pasted them weren't in the right format, you would get yelled at.. And it was this utterly ridiculous, and I thought demeaning job, right.. But I did it to the best of my ability for a year-and-a-half.. And the grandly ironic thing is, so I was interviewing for the Proctor and Gamble board, and Meg Whitman is on the board.. And Meg was our CEO at the time at eBay, right.. So, you know, I walk in and I'm meeting Meg as a kind of peer for the first time..

And she's like, "Did you do the snippet emails? Weren't those from you?" And it was the funniest thing because she actually remembered them.. And she was like, "I really liked those emails.. Your curation was quite good of the content." But it's those things where it will, over a 20 year period, surprise you how things you did will either reflect well on you or not, right.. So I just, I really do encourage every single one of us to whatever you're doing, you love it, you hate it, you committed to it, so do it to the best of your ability while you're in it.. And at the same time, if you want to look at other opportunities and kind of keep your ear to the ground for other things that are happening, by all means do it, but still do the best job you can.. - Do the best job you can, that's so good.. 00:19:11,970 And I want to spend a little bit of attention on addressing this issue about how people have a visceral reaction when it comes to this notion of networking.. Just even mentioning that word, I think people will react with disgust.. And it's also especially if some people, especially, I am introverted actually, I'm not extroverted.. And so the idea, the worst thing in my mind is to go into a crowded room and to have to network..

What would you say to that? - Me too, by the way.. 00:19:33,800 I don't want to go into a crowded room and network.. I would love to go into a room full of people I know and like, and get to talk to them.. But that's a different thing.. Like I still experience, so, you know, for board meetings sometimes we invite customers and partners to come and you'll walk into a room, and I still feel a slight, you know, double heartbeat or a slight hitch in my breath of a little bit of nervousness in approaching this room full of people that I don't know, that I'm then going to have to pick somebody to go talk to and hope that they're fun to talk to, right.. I don't think there are many people who would say they love that, but if you look at it as these are, let's say 30 unknown human beings in this room, and I have the opportunity to pick two or three and get to know them for, you know, let's say a 10, 15 minute period, and maybe there'll be one that I have a connection with.. - And isn't it true that the best networking actually 00:20:36,240 is not one that is a short term transaction, or it's not something that is going necessarily reap fruits in the short term.. And in fact, the most significant networking in your life is stuff where you are just meeting somebody for the sake of just meeting them and the sheer joy of that.. And then it will bear fruit in unforeseen ways in five to, or in different ways down the road.. - You almost can't do it with a specific intent in mind..

00:20:58,300 That kind of defeats the purpose.. Like if you approach it from a kind of standpoint of genuine curiosity about people, right.. Everybody has something to teach you, regardless of who they are, they do have something to teach you.. And if you are humble enough to realize, yes, every person has something to teach you, whether it's about life, about work or what, right, then when you sit down with them what you're really trying to figure out is, oh, what does this person have to teach me? And what do I have to help them with? Like what can I, based on my experience, help them with.. And if it's done with that kind of open-mindedness, if you will, a lot of times you may, let's say you have 10 lunches, eight out of 10, okay, that was a nice lunch, but you know, there's not going to be a longterm relationship.. But maybe two out of 10 there is.. And if you're doing, let's say 10 every quarter, over a 10 year period, you have picked up a lot of really interesting people that you can depend on and ask various questions of.. - Do you actually, and are you deliberate 00:22:06,070 about thinking about things like that? Like do you deliberately try to say, "I want to do 10 lunches or a certain number within a certain period."? - I deliberately try to say, even though I'm going 00:22:15,293 to be really busy.... So there is a time when, about two to three years, when my son was just born, that I just could not, right.. Like Google Analytics was up and to the right..

We were, you know, approaching 50% of the web that we were covering at that point.. And it was crazy.. It was like, all hell had broken loose every single morning, right.. I just couldn't find the time.. But beyond that two to three year period where I couldn't, I have, I have always.... And it started naturally.. It wasn't something that was deliberate.. It was, it probably started at Google.. 'Cause I don't think I did it at McKinsey or eBay, but at Google, there were so many interesting people, some of whom were the absolute top in their field, right.. And some of whom were just so much smarter than me..

I just, at so many different things.. And I was so curious about them, like what, what made them this way? What did they think about this thing? What would they recommend for this other thing? How did they think about this, that or the other, right? I still remember meeting this product council named Mike Yang, who later became GC for Pinterest.. And he, I-- GC means general counsel, chief aware.. 00:23:27,320 - Yes, general counsel of Pinterest.. 00:23:29,490 And I watched him in this meeting and he was the first lawyer I had ever seen who had such phenomenal business judgment applied to his legal opinions.. And I just wondered what made him this way? Like what caused him to be able to, instead of being pedantic about, oh, you must meet this legal requirement, his thinking was more, "Okay, here's what we're trying to do with the product.. Here's where we can push the envelope.. And here's where we can't.. And here's why." And he was so phenomenal at explaining how he was applying legal rulings to business judgment, that I just was really curious about him.. So I asked him to have lunch, right..

After that meeting, I just walked up to him and I said, "Hey, I loved what you said today.. Could we have lunch?" - It's just that simple, you just have to ask, 00:24:19,543 you just have to go up to people, yeah.. - And here's the thing is, 00:24:24,162 I didn't choose the general counsel of Google to ask that of, I chose someone who was my peer, who I had something to give to him.. And he had something to give to me, right.. And in the intervening time, yes, he has become general counsel of Pinterest, which is great.. But we started when there was something he was really good at, right.. And he wanted to ask me actually about how we were doing some product trade-offs in the backend and some other stuff.. So we actually had a great rapport together and it started from that.. - And I can assure you, and everybody who's watching 00:24:56,053 from Stanford, I can assure you that all of your classmates are going to have very interesting paths in life, and get to know them.. That's the biggest gift that you have, even in this COVID era..

And also anybody in any community, there are fascinating people around you.. You just need to reach out your neighbors or anybody that sparks something in you.. - This is the best time, right? 00:25:16,400 Because we all do have time.. And these are the best people to get to know because you really can help each other.. - Yes.. 00:25:23,390 And I think Amy and I are testaments that.. We both knew each other when we were both confused engineers at Stanford who went to McKinsey.. And now Amy is, I knew Amy before she was famous, - (indistinct) 00:25:34,590 - I would be remiss, Amy, 00:25:36,570 I know we have just a limited amount of time left, and I want to open this up for Q&A in 10 minutes or eight minutes.. But I'd be remiss in not asking you to talk about boards because I think boards are these mystical entities that very few people understand.. And I'd love to demystify that a little bit..

You have experiences from boards from several different perspectives, having been a startup founder that had to assemble your own board, to then also serving on startup boards, to now serving on public boards.. And so I want to unpack a few things on this, if we can.. - Of course.. 00:26:11,990 - First, I want to start off with startup boards.. 00:26:14,210 And there is a clip that I'd love to play that on something that you mentioned before when you came here about why boards are so important.. - Choose your board members carefully.. 00:26:23,720 'Cause it's a seven to 10 year relationship, right.. It's a long-term relationship.. So it's not just the money they bring, but is this the person you want in the boat when the stuff hits the fan? Is this the person you want to be seeing every, you know, month to two months across the table for seven to 10 years? Do you like this person enough to do that? And I think, the weekend before taking the term sheets for our seed round, I actually called 26 CEOs, because I wanted to understand what did it look like when you failed with this investor? What did their face look like then, when things were not going well? Did they stay with you in the boat? Did they abandon you? Did it get ugly? How did it look? And I think that, talking to founders who have failed with that investor will tell you far more than almost anything will about them.. - So, Amy, I want to first just start to demystify 00:27:18,430 what boards are..

Can you explain, what does a board do? Fundamentally, what is a board? - So at the most fundamental level, 00:27:29,284 the board answers to stakeholders, primarily shareholders, right, but also other stakeholders like the employees and the leadership team, et cetera.. But really you're there to hire and fire the CEO.. That is your job.. It is not your job to act as a member of the management team, and actually try to get in there and operate anything.. It's your job to ask questions.. And it's your job to judge whether the CEO is the right CEO for the phase of the company that the company finds itself in.. - And when you're a founder and you're raising capital 00:28:00,900 and you're assembling a board, let's say you appoint somebody onto your board and you realize after three months, "Oh, I really don't like this person." With an employee, you could fire them, even with a co-founder, even though it's awful, you could split with them.. How do you get rid of a board member that you don't like? - That is a painful, painful thing.. 00:28:17,110 I never had to go through it myself.. I have known some other entrepreneurs who have..

Just don't put yourself in that situation, do your homework before you choose your board.. And the thing, every, you know, every board member looks good for shining successes.. Like if the company is on that hockey stick portion of growth and everybody's happy, revenue's flowing in, everything's great.. So talking to the CEOs for their superstar companies, okay, everybody's going to look like a rockstar, right.. But again, talking to the CEOs where the companies failed and went under, that's where you're going to get the stories that you really want to hear before you choose this person.. - Yes, It's very critical.. 00:28:59,193 And just to re-underscore that.. You basically can't fire a board member for a startup, just so you guys, everybody understands that.. So you're really stuck with them because they're legally embedded into your articles when that happens.. And so Amy, can you talk to us about how a startup board is different than a public board? 'Cause you've served on both..

And how do you get on a public board? - They're very different kettle of fish, I would say.. 00:29:28,940 So on a public company board, a lot of it is about governance, right.. So you have committees.. So there's always audit committee, there's always compensation in leadership development as a committee, and then there may or may not be other committees.. There may be MNA, there may be nominating and governance, but all kinds of different committees.. And each board member serves on, let's say two or three committees.. And that is a fair amount of the work.. On a private company board there aren't those committees, because you aren't reporting to a public entity like the SEC on a very set number of things.. And there isn't kind of a whole governance aspect to it quite yet.. You're more trying to help that founder really see around corners, right, and see macro-trends that are going to hit the company..

You really trying to test their thinking on the strategy and really make certain that they've asked themselves all the questions they need to.. You're helping them from a leadership team formation perspective.. You're helping them on any and

all aspects that hat they may need help on.. But you're there to ask questions, give advice, give guidance, give help, opening doors to accounts and that kind of thing.. On a public company board the schedule is much more regimented and it's much more about the governance pieces.. - And can you talk about the gender composition 00:30:49,753 of these boards? So you've been on the boards of Procter & Gamble, Cisco, Splunk, Informatica, these boards are oftentimes these cloaked entities that very few people know how to get inside of.. Can you talk about the dynamics of being a woman on these boards and maybe how they were, it might have been different across different boards? - Do you know, Ravi, what I've loved? 00:31:12,450 So I have been the only woman, one of two women, and one of four women on these boards.. And being one of four women is so glorious because your gender stops mattering.. Nobody even cares what gender you are because it's almost half-half, right.. When I was the only woman, there was one time when someone said, "Well, let's ask Amy for her perspective." And it was on women in general for, you know, a customer question for this..

And I was kind of like, okay, so I'm supposed to represent half the population of the entire globe with my viewpoint, come on.. Like that is a recipe for failure.. So I love it when there's more balance, because gender is not even in the consideration set for the dialogue, right.. Everybody brings their point of view.. 'Cause you're, you are more than just your gender, right.. You are a whole amalgamation of things and an entire perspective that's been informed by all your experiences.. So having that diversity of thought in a much more balanced way, you know, across the board has been fantastic.. I've loved that experience.. - And I'm going to end with one final question.. 00:32:17,200 Then we're going to open it up to the, for any questions from the listeners..

Do you have any advice for our female listeners right now? Anything that you want to tell them? - I do.. 00:32:32,970 I sometimes will ask my female friends if they're debating, ah, is it too aggressive to say that, or should I ask for that? And my sister's 11 years younger and she went to Stanford too.. And we often talk about career stuff.. And we'll call each other on this.. Would you say that if you were a dude? And we will literally ask each other that question.. Would you be worried about this if you were dude? And we were not trying to point out that, no, I wouldn't, but we're asking one another and keeping each other honest about what insecurities or what things, what vulnerabilities we might open ourselves up to just because, you know, we've had a different experience the whole way through.. And I like that we call each other on that, because a lot of times the answer is no.. And it's freeing when the answer is no.. And you're like, "Oh, okay, maybe I shouldn't.... I don't need to self-flagellate about this quite so much then." Then the other thing is at Cisco, we were half women on the executive leadership team..

I haven't had that experience anywhere ever before.. So our chief revenue officer, our CFO, you know, myself on the engineering side, our chief customer officer, and our chief PR officer, we're all women.. And it was the comradery there and the fun that we had together, I wouldn't give it up for anything.. And I think for all of us, one of the things that I had earlier in my career, when, you know, there weren't that many women kind of on the leadership team that I was in, we had a group of four, and it became five of us where we had slumber parties.. So once every couple months we would kick our spouses and children out of the house, we would take it over and we would spend the night chatting, and eating things, and drinking things and just talking about life and everything together.. And it was so lovely because it was this blend of life, and work, and friendship.. But you could be vulnerable with those women in a way that you might not at work because, you know, you let your hair down and it's a safe environment.. And having, and forming those friendships and maintaining them through getting, you know, getting married, through having kids, through all of that, nurturing those relationships is so important and making it still a priority to maintain them.. - It's so important.. 00:34:55,180 And the very moment that you need it, it's too late to build it..

So you do need to just start that.. And so it's also, you'll do it for the right reasons.. So if you start it because you intrinsically love it and it'll reap rewards later.. I want to turn over, I don't want to monopolize all the time.. Everybody wants to ask you things and I've been taking a lot of the attention.. I'm going to turn it over to the Q & A list that we have.. The first question is, and I'll just read this verbatim, "It's great to hear from you, especially knowing the conversations that went on in Washington, D.C.. today.. It seems like both sides of the aisle are upset with big tech for very different reasons.. Is it possible for tech to be agnostic to political interests? If so, how?" - I will not profess to be an expert 00:35:43,200 on answering this one..

And Ravi, I'm sure you can render your opinion.. I think this is a really hard one.. So having been at Google for a really long time, you're trying to protect free speech, right.. And you're trying not to be the arbiter of what such a large audience of people, in Google's case, billions of people will see when they ask about any certain topic.. And I think some of what Twitter has done, which is just to put people on notice that there may be some factual misrepresentation in what's been said here.. And not taking sides, just letting you know that there may have been some factual misrepresentation.. And you might want to look into it further as a responsible reader of this content.. That feels like it does not prohibit free speech, right.. While at the same time, helping inform users that they do have a responsibility to get informed.. But it is, we grappled with this all the time with search results..

We grappled this with this, for YouTube results.. We grappled with this for, you know, what is okay to serve ads on and what's not okay to serve ads on? And which ads are okay to serve and which ones aren't? I think it's highly nuanced and very, very complex and comes down to our, you know, some of our constitutional and very fundamental rights that this country was built upon.. It's not a simple one.. - Not a simple one, not a simple one.. 00:37:15,083 I agree.. I think, yeah, governments are

being replaced, I think by networks in many ways.. And I think it's not, that is not an easy question.. - Ravi, I like the second question, 00:37:29,590 where this person is asking about the difference or similarities between making professional connections and making friends.. If you're doing it right, there's very little difference, right.. If you're doing it right, a lot of those....

So we mentioned Aileen earlier, Aileen is a dear, dear friend.. Like she is a real friend.. Godfrey is a friend now.. I would consider these people actual friends, right.. If something went wrong and I needed their help, they would help, and vice versa.. If they need me, I am there, right.. And so it's not, it's not about a network.. It's actually about a series of people you're curious about that may or may not develop into friendships, and may or may not develop into longitudinal friendships.. - And don't you first approach them as friends? 00:38:19,040 And then if that's the only thing you have to think about, is do you want, is this somebody that you want to spend your precious little life spending time with.. - Yes, and what do you have to give to them? 00:38:29,113 Friendship is mutual, right..

And there's certain amount of chemistry in friendship.. That's inherent in friendship.. You're not friends with people you don't naturally have an affinity for.. And so - And you're not, and just to be clear, 00:38:43,400 it's not even about mutual gain that you're friends with them.. I mean, you're helping them because you actually, it's the intrinsic delight of helping somebody you care about like a friend.. - It is about affinity, right.. 00:38:54,583 So you and I have been friends for a really long time.. I think you're hilarious and you're so fun to hang out with.. And you've been that way for 24 years.. So when I see you, there's a pleasure in, Oh, there's my friend, Ravi, I love seeing him..

If you feel that way about somebody, then yes, there's absolute potential for that to become.... - It's very true.. 00:39:15,123 Even when I see Amy, I don't think about all the amazing accolades that Amy has.. I think about Amy's laugh.. And I think about how she'll just say what's really on her mind.. And that's just really what I honestly feel and think.. And that's, and I think that is what endures.. - So when you find somebody with whom you share 00:39:33,597 that affinity, grab onto it, invest time in that.. And over time, if you find two people a year like that over the course of 20 years, you'll have 40 people for whom you feel that kind of affection, that's awesome.. - And so true, it's so true..

00:39:46,030 You don't need that many too, when you're beginning.. It's so true.. - No, you really don't.. 00:39:52,114 - If there's any other questions that are jumping out 00:39:53,690 at you feel free, Amy.. Otherwise I'm going to exercise my prerogative on some of these.. There's a question about, about, does every company have a board? When does it make sense to have a board? - When you take money, then you probably 00:40:07,320 have a board because the person who gave you money will probably want to be on your board so they can help make sure that strategically it stays going in a direction that they believe in for their investment.. So generally speaking, that's when you would start to have a board.. - A board is a legal entity, 00:40:22,260 it's a legal requirement of any company.. So when you start to set up a company that has a board, it's just the default board is the founder or the CEOs.. - Is the founders..

00:40:29,000 - And the board is legally required to appoint 00:40:30,260 who the CEO is.. It just gets more formalized, as Amy said, as you become a more, as you fundraise and bring on other institutional investors.. - Question on what are your thoughts on taking a gap year 00:40:44,770 in order to get to know others during college in person and make those deeper connections? - Oh, that's a great question.. 00:40:49,430 - Okay.. So I didn't get to take a gap year.. 00:40:51,610 I would have loved to have taken a gap year.. I think it's a fabulous idea to really kinda, because once you start working, things kind of just move into a lane and you're kind of just on a path.. And you're working, and you're working, and you're working and, you know, you may or may not have time to do some of that self-exploration that you would have liked to have done years ago.. So I'm always a fan, especially if you're super type A and super ambitious, of actually giving yourself a little bit of space to do that.. - And do you think now is an especially good time 00:41:25,683 or bad time to do a gap year? - It depends, if what you wanted to do was travel everywhere 00:41:31,920 and that was your plan for your gap year, that hat's a little harder..

If your your plan was to invest in getting to know people, if there was something, a particular area that you were very, very curious about, it's not a bad year to do gap year at all.. But during your gap year, do give yourself, if you can, some definite goals, right.. So that are also going to help prepare you to be that much more competitive for whatever it is that you want to do after your gap year.. And you don't need to be obsessed with it or spend 80% of your time on it, but maybe 10%, right.. (upbeat music)..