

NO LIMITS ALLOWED

REFLECTION & CONVERSATION

Season 1, Episode 1 It's an "And," Not an "Or" with Susan Neely



————— A 10-15 MINUTE REFLECTION ON A STRENGTH YOU MAY BE UNDERVALUING —————



THE IDEA

Susan Neely once thought of communication as a soft skill.

Compared with strategy, technical expertise, and results, it did not seem as important.

Over time, she discovered that communication was not secondary to her leadership. It was her superpower. It helped her build trust, advocate for ideas, navigate complexity, and move people toward action.

Susan has spent more than 40 years leading across policy, politics, and business. Her experience includes helping stand up the U.S. Department of Homeland Security after 9/11 and guiding organizations through complex issues involving policy, reputation, and public trust. She is also a two-time Trade Association CEO of the Year.

Her story raises an important question: What strengths might we be undervaluing in ourselves and others?

Leadership is not strategy or communication, results or relationships, expertise or empathy.

It's an "and," not an "or."



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Use this reflection on your own or with your team. You do not need to listen to the episode first. If using it alone, write down your responses.

If using it with others, invite one or two examples. Keep the conversation focused on the work. It does not need to become personal or overly deep.



START HERE

What capability does your work rely on that receives less recognition than it deserves?



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GO DEEPER

CHOOSE ONE:

1

Where might you be creating a false choice between results and relationships, strategy and communication, or expertise and empathy?

2

What might you be losing by undervaluing communication, listening, advocacy, or relationship judgment?

3

Can you identify a meeting, decision, or project where an undervalued strength changed the outcome?

Complete this sentence:

For the next 30 days, I/we will stop treating _____ as secondary and begin using it to _____ .

Choose one visible action you can take.

THE LINE TO CARRY FORWARD

The capability we were taught to call "soft" may be the one our leadership depends on most.

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