

Unspoken Realities of Gender Gap in STEM+ | Dr. D Sangeeta | Power Lounge S2 E22

Amy Vaughan: 0:08

Welcome to our weekly Power Lounge, your place to hear authentic conversations from those who have power to share. My name is Amy Vaughn and I am the owner and Chief Empowerment Officer of Together Digital, a diverse and collaborative community of women who work in digital and choose to share their knowledge, power and connections. Join the movement at www.togetherindigital.com. Let's get started.

Amy Vaughan: 0:51

In today's episode, we are going to discuss the gender gap in STEM because it is real, it is here and in some instances, based on our current economy, it feels like it's widening. We are here today to talk with Sangita. She is a dedicated advocate for women in STEM who recently embarked on a new chapter in her career. With over two decades in the corporate world, sangita's passion led her to launch Gotara, a startup, a tech startup that reimagines career advice and tailor's upskilling for women in STEM fields Growing up amidst the male dominated aviation, energy and tech sectors. Her fervor for this cause has deep, deep roots. Gotara, under her guidance, provides the around the clock nano learning opportunities which we will get into, fueled by the latest research and insights from influential STEM leaders.

Amy Vaughan: 1:44

Sangita's journey includes executive roles at Amazon, ge and Nielsen, spanning from areas of research and technology to marketing and diversity. Her remarkable experience includes building organizations from scratch and revitalizing underperforming one. Sangita, I'm so excited to finally have you on this podcast. We have had a few discussions and I we're just very aligned on missions and then I love like the kind of complimentary aspects of Gotara and what you're doing and together digital. So it's so great to have a fellow woman who is trying to help champion the acceleration of women in these underrepresented areas. It's so good to have you here with us and to meet the community as well.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 2:25

Yeah, thank you, Amy, for the opportunity and thank you for what you're doing. I think we got to kind of band together and change the world, absolutely, absolutely Well, let's let's get into it.

Amy Vaughan: 2:39

We've got some good questions for you here today, and then, of course, our live listening audience will also have the opportunity to chime in with questions, either through the chat Feel free to use that or ask your questions at the end. All right, sangita, you've spent your careers kind of spanned a number of roles in research, technology, marketing and more. I love that you've made kind of all of those inroads and pivots. How has this diverse experience shaped your perspective on leadership and innovation, and how would you choose to pass these insights onto others?

Dr. D Sangeeta: 3:12

So I could say that I was privileged or lucky that I had the opportunity to do a lot of the different things and I have a PhD in material science. So I worked on jet engine technologies and I wanted to retire as a Uber scientist, that's what was my goal?

Amy Vaughan: 3:32

I?

Dr. D Sangeeta: 3:32

graduated and lo and behold, after five years at GE, they asked me to take a role in marketing and very, very different. So I just felt like and it wasn't just me, the other leaders too where you're a helicoptered into a role where you have zero background in, and so the first six months were really tough. But you learn a lot, you bring in, bring in outside, in perspective, and they're an awesome experience. So this is how GE did in the old days to develop talent, and I think it's a very unique way to developing the talent and most companies don't do it, but it is, I think, very, very helpful to grow as a leader and so, as a result, pretty much I could do any job as long as I'm not bored.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 4:23

Right, I should be chief legal counsel or chief financial officer, but all the roles I really like. I think that's why I'm a company in this fashion, having all those experience in technology and engineering and in operations and marketing and sales, all those kinds of things that really helped me to do what I'm doing today, and they also helped me in every job because I had a very different perspective where I was coming from. So one

thing that I always hear women say that if I don't have 80%, 100% of background to get that new job, I shouldn't be doing it. I would say you have 0%, you can still do it.

Amy Vaughan: 5:10

Yes, yes, I love that. I think that's a great message Again. I think we get so many women on this podcast that have those journeys, that twist and turn. It's not some linear direction anymore, especially with the given the advancements of technology and things like digital, you have to evolve along with them and sometimes that means moving into different lanes. I'm curious what got them to ask you to move into marketing. I think that that's interesting for a company, like you said, to not just come out and be like, hey, try this, and throw you in a completely different silo.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 5:44

Yeah, so, as I look back, as I was evaluating and I look back, I was making a presentation. This was upstate New York and all the corporate officers from GE Aviation were visiting and doing a review of all the projects they were funding and supporting, and one of the projects was mine. I presented it and in that they asked a lot of questions about competition what are they doing and how does this stand next to the competition and stuff? So I had done thorough literature search of all the stuff that was the competition and I said, well, this is why this is why that blah blah blah. So I must have convinced them that this is the best technology in the world compared to anything the competition was doing. And I believe that was the reason one of the corporate officer, ge, tapped on my shoulder and said would you be interested in marketing? And first I was just taken aback and I was scared, but I'm glad I took that jump.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 6:43

And I said you know, I'll try it out. If nothing it doesn't work, I can always come back.

Amy Vaughan: 6:48

Yes, absolutely All you have is an opportunity to learn. I think that's interesting. I had a similar instance like earlier in my career. I'd just gone back out of school and doing advertising for Ford and I was doing search copywriting, which was such a drag, and I found a way to optimize the process and so that I could actually work on more creative projects and the processes that I came up with to actually make that more efficient because it was many years ago and a lot of the more stuff was like very manual the head of strategy came to me and was like do you want to be a planner, strategy planner?

Amy Vaughan: 7:22

And I'm like I don't know what that means. What's my life going to be like? I've seen this path and this journey for so long, so I can't imagine. I definitely relate to that moment of like when somebody sees something in you as a potential that you didn't see in yourself. You are taken aback, you are a little bit like just because they see it, does that mean that's the way I should go? Is that what's right for me? Kind of a thing.

Amy Vaughan: 7:44

But I think it's an important thing to look for and listen to. What do you get tapped for? What do you ask for? What do you get recognized for? Because I think sometimes we undervalue our gifts and the number of gifts in which we have. So I love that you shared that story, thank you. So you made your journey through the corporate kind of ladder up to the executive status into launching your own startup, and I'm excited for people to hear the story because I find it very inspiring. Can you share with our listeners what prompted you to kind of take this leap at the time from Amazon right To Gotara? It was a big move. It was very brilliant.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 8:21

Yeah, working in the largest company in the US and probably the world. Yes to a small little startup. I would say that I always, after the training the leadership training I almost feel like had at GE, I felt like I could run a company why not? And I wanted to. And at that time my husband, 10 years ago, my husband was ready to do a spin-off and start his own. I didn't know exactly what I wanted to run the company for at that time, so I said you go do this and I'll be your financial backstop. And now he's growing and he can be my financial backstop and I could go do something. So that was one of the reasons.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 9:08

The other reason was of picking the topic. I wanted to get something that I'm really passionate about, so it doesn't feel like work. And then, with the Me Too movement and Black Lives Matter movement, I started to see companies are putting their money where their mouth was. So people used to talk before about diversity, this, that and the other gap, the gender gap in technical fields, but really there was no money being spent to make a change. And now I started to see that companies like Amazon and a lot of other companies, the investment in improving the diversity and inclusion metrics went up dramatically, and so I said this is the perfect time to actually go create a business that can be self sustained instead of being an NGO.

Amy Vaughan: 10:00

Yeah, I love it, seeing the opportunity and taking the leap, I mean, and having that kind of flip of support. I feel that as well. I was the breadwinner for many, many years and kind

of did the whole not nine to five but more like eight to seven sometimes for many years and worked my way through things. So it's an amazing opportunity and a privilege to have a partner at some point that you're willing and able to say, all right, I've done the rat race, I really need to step into my purpose and I see an opportunity here for something viable. Let's do, let me help me do this. And that support is definitely tremendous. I am right there with you. I don't think I could have taken that leap without my partner support as well. So I mean, we definitely already touched on and, as the title indicates, you know you're deeply committed to addressing the gender gap and male dominated industries. Could you share some of those specific challenges that either you faced or you've seen other women face in STEM and how is Gautara helping to tackle those?

Dr. D Sangeeta: 11:00

So I will share a couple of things from the research we have done over the last three years. We have about 27,000 members from 175 countries where they are asking for help, whether it is a sensitive request or just a simple career growth question what we are finding based on that research. So this is not a survey, it's behavioral research and what we are finding is the first thing is women feel undervalued. So they may be in a position and if even executive position in some cases and an interesting, high visibility initiative or project comes across, you don't get it. Somebody else gets it, even though you may be actually more qualified, or you were not made the lead, you were made the follower of that, even though you actually deserve to be the lead. Things like that, things like that so they're little things, they're big things of promotion and stuff like that are the biggest reason why women quit their STEM careers.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 12:09

The second one is their direct manager, and in many cases in the technical field managers, people go into technical field to become technical experts and then they realize, oh, in order to rise, rise in your career, you have to actually become a people manager, and with no training, nobody invests money in training managers in technical fields, they'll have online courses and nobody takes online courses. I never took any online courses and any of the companies that I was at other than compliance courses and so being a combination of those two. So the person you're working directly with 100% of the time does not help you grow, doesn't give you opportunities, and not that it's happening intentionally, it is unintentional. They don't even know what is happening and in fact, I'm coaching a few men, managers, who are like 15 to 20 years of experience and some of the small thing that I find it very intuitive to go do for them.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 13:22

It's a aha moment, a new moment, a small thing, but it has such a huge impact. So something like simply repeating what somebody said, a woman said in their group, and if you had only one person, she is being heard. Otherwise people, just. I mean this happens all the way to the executive level, where a woman will bring up an idea and nobody really reacts to that, and somebody who comes Joe Schmoe comes in and he talks about the same idea and everybody's like oh my god, joe, what a great idea.

Amy Vaughan: 13:59

The woman sitting there saying did you hear me?

Dr. D Sangeeta: 14:01

I just said the same exact thing, you're right. And so you sitting there as a manager or as a peer or as a mentor, you can say oh Sangeeta, that was such a great idea. Maybe you and Joe can work together Something to recognize the fact that she actually talked about it. So some of those are the things. Those are the things that they may smaller times, but it all adds up in women critic.

Amy Vaughan: 14:32

Absolutely yeah, because it's just like it's the death by tiny cuts. Right, it's a common set of what they call them microaggressions and not one in particular you just mentioned. I heard a term many years ago actually, probably like 10, 12 years ago. They call it bro appropriation, so because a man said it, oh it must be a great idea. And or giving more credit to a man versus a woman, and I love that and I realize I agree, like I don't think everyone who goes into the technology field is someone who is meant to be a people manager, and the fact that the only way you can rise in some organizational structures is by being a people manager does feel unfair to those who have an amazing core skill and then get stuck in a place, either financially or visibility wise, because they don't have a natural aptitude for managing people. But I think training and mentoring and teaching those folks a little bit of what it means to bring some EQ into that space, I think is really excellent. And I agree I think leadership training I don't know, it's interesting.

Amy Vaughan: 15:41

I went through a lot of leadership training when I was still in agencies, but for me the best leadership training was honestly through volunteering. I was a volunteer board president actually for Together Digital. I was a member before I was the owner and the years that I had had experience managing creative teams and going through leadership workshops. Nothing taught me the importance of communication and clarity and candor than managing a group of 7 to 12 volunteer women. So if you have the opportunity to volunteer, it really helps you learn how to, and challenges you to,

communicate with people from all walks of life and all different backgrounds. This is even in your school former PTO president. Here I also learned a lot about myself and how to work with others in that. So volunteerism if your work doesn't provide leadership opportunities is a great way to grow your leadership skills.

Amy Vaughan: 16:38

And the last thing I want to re-emphasize that you mentioned is, yeah, people do quit bad bosses. It happens they don't leave good companies because they're bad bosses. So if you're not spending the time and energy to make sure that your leadership team has that EQ skill set to help protect and or reflect or detract that whole, those microaggressions, or address them, then yeah, you're going to be losing your female talent. And so then we have that double whammy of female talent leaving tech companies and women being overwhelmingly laid off from tech companies, so that gap's just getting bigger all of the time. All right, let's talk about this idea of nano-learning.

Amy Vaughan: 17:22

Actually, wait, sengita, I want you to share a story that you shared with me at dinner. Talk to me and share. I hope you can remember it. It was about when you first got your role at Amazon. I think it was Amazon and one of the first things that you said when you were looking to hire a couple of roles I believe that you had said that you made some interesting kind of I don't want to say demands, but demands as to who and how and things would be done in the way of hiring as soon as you got into that executive role. I can't remember it was Amazon or maybe a different role, do?

Amy Vaughan: 17:49

you remember what I'm talking about.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 17:54

I remember, I think it was probably Nielsen.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 17:56

Okay, okay yeah, yeah, so I can share that. That is very, very relevant in this forum. I was asked to take the lead for data science organization at Nielsen, so what consumers watch and buy, and this is like the crown jewel this is the heart of innovation for the company and it was in bad shape. So I was there to help turn around the organization and grow the organization and I had 17 reports across the globe and they were all men

and so I just assumed, like technical fields, chances are there are very few women, if any, and my HR comes back and tells me that there are 50% of the population is women.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 18:46

So I said, oh my God, what's going on? And so I asked to find three senior, most women, who are top talent, and I would like to interview them. And I talked to them and I essentially had all three of them report to me directly, gave them double promotions and increased their compensation and I just broke all the rules that the company had about promotion and compensation and stuff and I said I'm gonna take a chance and this experiment may work, may not work, let's see what happens. And a year later, those three women were my top five and so clearly, either they didn't raise their hands, or they raised their hands and nobody paid attention. So in fact, I asked that question a few years later and they all said it was a combination of both, and all three of them are doing awesome and very senior roles today.

Amy Vaughan: 19:41

That's amazing. I just love that story so much. I don't know why I didn't have it like written in the formal questions, it just kind of came back to me as we were talking. That's such a good power move and I think that's something, as we move through the ranks, for those of you who are climbing that ladder and ascending to the apex of your career you gotta look behind you and realize like you have the opportunity and the ability to pave the way for others. And I think sometimes it's so hard when we're so busy looking up to look back and take the time to be intentional, to challenge the systems and to look for those opportunities to leverage our newfound power to help bring others along. So I just I love that story so much.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 20:18

I think one of the very important thing is know when you have the power. Many times people will reach to the executive levels and they're still taking permissions from the CHR and the CFO to do anything. And my point to them is you don't realize how much power you have. You do not need the permission to do most of the things, and guys will not do that.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 20:42

Maybe, some guys will, but how many? And we gotta use our power. We're not using our power as much as we could, so I would like the men's spiral up. That's the whole point. Go, change the rules If the rules are not good. That's the best way to change the rules rather than being an activist.

Amy Vaughan: 21:01

Yes, I absolutely agree. Yeah, because the systems are what really need the most changing. So it's holding us back. Love it All right. Now we can get to the next question for reals. Earlier I talked about nano learning opportunities when we were speaking about Gotara. What are these nano opportunities that Gotara offers? I definitely want listeners to check it out At Kaley's. I already dropped it in the Slack and we'll include it in the show notes, but can you let us know what are these nano learnings and how do they contribute to closing the gender gap?

Dr. D Sangeeta: 21:32

So nano learning, the way I define it is, is just in time and addressing the real root cause of the problem. So you can have a company, can have wonderful policies and the leadership can have the perfect intention to have the diverse organization, to have high performing organization, but you cannot police what is happening. One on one.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 22:03

Going out for lunch, going out for drinks or not being invited to go out for drinks, and a woman sees it once, twice. Third time they're out. You don't even know that, and so we on our platform, both in the upskilling program and in answering the advice, we are catching this in the moment and we are addressing those issues within 24 hours, so you can come in with a sensitive topic. Hey, I just came out of a meeting and my manager, or my peer, threw me under the bus and, for whatever reason, it could be that you actually created all the models, but they took the credit for it and they never mentioned your name. How do I course correct? So people know that this wonderful work is actually done by me, and so they'll get an advice from somebody who's actually lived in their shoes to take the steps that they need to take in the next 24 hours or the next week.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 23:05

So those are the kinds of things that we do, and that is where really inclusion and diversity the rubber hits the road. That's what I say, and if you cannot manage that, you are at a very high level here. You're not really addressing the root cause. By the way, it was happening to me, I needed Gautara, so, as a senior leader who's so passionate about this? My CTO, who had 100 people and there are two women in the organization and one of them was leaving and I was given the reason. Well, she has two year old daughter and four year old son, so she's gonna go spend time with them and it's a noble cause you say, okay, you move on. Now that I know that 95% of those women are being forced out from the workforce, it has nothing to do with raising the family.

Amy Vaughan: 24:00

Yeah, it's not even a choice. It comes down to the, the pressures or the inequities. I share the story a couple times on the podcast where I was. I came back from my second maternity leave and I was still in agency and was told that the an account that I helped to pitch and win I was not going to be the lead-on because they just assumed I would want to travel. Now that I'm a second kid, I'm like well, I would have liked to have been consulted matter, and that was definitely, you know, one of maybe a few of the final straws.

Amy Vaughan: 24:28

So, yeah, you're right, it does happen and I love that Gotar is creating that space again.

Amy Vaughan: 24:32

It aligns so nicely with what we do together digital, with giving women a safe space and marginalized groups a safe space to ask those questions, because I think there's a lot of, you know, unwarranted but understandable shame around when we get, you know, othered or isolated or singled out or, you know, have a microgression Against us in front of others and nobody stands up for you.

Amy Vaughan: 24:57

You need somewhere to go to be like Tell me I'm not alone and then please tell me how in the hell do I get past this? And you're right, it's an urgency thing. It's not. It's like that you need to send out that bat signal and you need somebody now so you can kind of calm yourself down, get back to focusing on work but then also not let that moment pass. And so I have a similar asks channel where it's kind of personal, professional, but you know, the need is there for people to be able to ask for help in a safe space and get really kind of Emotionally intelligent but also well-informed Answers. And I love that there are places that people can go for that, because, I agree with you, I needed those. I left so many meetings and near tears, needed that space.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 25:41

Me too. You know one of the things we do is your whole process on the platform with our platform is Anonymous, so in the individual member who's asking the question is anonymous and the advisor who's providing you. So there is no like recruiting happening or stealing happening or the advisor can give as deep Advice that they can without being Posted on LinkedIn that this person gave me this advice and now that person is out there. And all that and also for the individual. They will come in with very sensitive questions that are related to the manager or the peer and sometimes even their partners, and we help with all those all those yeah yeah.

Amy Vaughan: 26:26

Confidentiality is key and essential to that, like ability to make that space seem safe, because it is hard enough for women to feel comfortable with asking or even thinking to ask. I think sometimes we just go through these moments in life and work where we think you know it's just me the only one dealing with this, there's no solution, I just have to figure it out for myself. And that's not the case. I think women need to get more comfortable, specifically women, with asking, you know and sharing, because you know when you do that, I can guarantee you there's another woman who went the same thing today or last week or last month and whatever help and support she's getting, you know. It's that ripple of fact.

Amy Vaughan: 27:03

Co-hatch is a new kind of shared work, social and family space built on community. Members get access to workspace amenities like rock walls and Sports simulators and more to live a fully integrated life that balances work, family, well-being, community and giving back. Co-hatch has 31 locations open or under construction nationwide throughout Ohio, Indiana, Florida, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee. Visit www.cohatch.com for more information. Awesome, all right. Let's see as you as an executive who has worked with well-known companies like Amazon, GE and Nielsen, and you've experienced various aspects of the corporate world. How do you see women's roles evolving specifically, kind of in these areas and STEM fields like? Do you feel like?

Amy Vaughan: 28:03

there's much forward movement.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 28:06

So I don't like the results we have right now, but this was my hope as we went hybrid and virtual and all that and you may have seen a lot of articles that women managers actually did really well and in the virtual world, and I wouldn't say all but majority of the women managers. They just have a better leadership skills in certain aspects and I was hoping that during the pandemic and after the pandemic, the number of women managers and leaders were just skyrocket, because they are the better candidates or they are the best candidates and they will grab those opportunities. Instead, what I saw was great resignation. And then, when I'm seeing some of the layoffs and technical so feels that as a higher percentage of women being laid off than men, and and and this is this is where I'd say women have to spiral up to big positions, where they're changing the rules on the way some decisions are being made and so we continuously have to. We cannot give up.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 29:17

See, it's very easy. I remember one of the questions that I was trying to answer. This woman, highly successful technical woman, was going to leave her job because she was just so frustrated and she was. She would say that, oh, my husband makes enough money. No, you have.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 29:37

Worked so hard to get here, you cannot give that up. Don't throw it away and instead of just giving up, so so that not only to stay in the workforce but also to grow in the workforce. Yes, you'll see some hurdles, but People have to pave the way in order for the rules to be changed. Activism Takes much, much longer than you spiraling up and changing the rules.

Amy Vaughan: 30:01

Yes, I 100% agree. That leads into our next question, which I'll get to here in a second. But I want, I have, to agree with you. Like the fatigue for women during and post pandemic is real, and a lot of it is because the additional emotional labor that we do at work and at home. There's still such an imbalance within many of our households and our societal systems that puts a lot of weight on women to kind of carry these extra loads, and if they don't have the support and the systems that they need, you know they're gonna, they're gonna get exhausted, they're gonna get tired.

Amy Vaughan: 30:35

I do get this general sense of just Overall. I don't want to call it, madam. Maybe I could call it feminism fatigue, fatigue. I know not everybody loves even the term feminists anymore Because I realize it doesn't always carry inclusivity with it, but both the best of the intent of the word, like this feminism fatigue.

Amy Vaughan: 30:51

To me I'm feeling it like when we started together digital in 2016. It was the same at the height of the me too movement, and since then, where we've come along is, you know, now we've got row versus weight overturned and I just feel like we're all kind of carrying this burden and this weight, but it's hard, I think, for women to stand up and say and speak and do something about it, um, but through those of women who are out there doing it and doing it tirelessly, tirelessly, I see you and I appreciate you. And for those who are feeling the fatigue, I think really focusing on when and where and how we're placing our energy Is something that's really important as well, and it seems a little woo-woo, um, but I do. We have a lot of conversations within together, digital and other women's groups about understanding, you know, not just our time management but our

energy Exertion, mentally, physically, on things, because I think we realize we are maybe going around the world, feeling so much more, taking in so much more that if we don't create either boundaries or, um, you know, are aware of how and where we're spending our energy, we lack that energy to continue to push forward and fight, because it just feels like you're constantly going and going and going.

Amy Vaughan: 31:59

Yeah, we're stopping, but stopping is so important, yeah, so, on the note of leaders, and again, your, your story actually might, uh, that you had that we shared earlier, that I got excited about and jumped ahead on, but so if you have another kind of example. That would be great. Empowering senior women to take risks to drive change is a key focus for you, obviously, as you demonstrated in your earlier story. What are some other strategies that you found effective in cultivating leadership and innovation among women, who traditionally are in male dominated sectors?

Dr. D Sangeeta: 32:31

So I would say this is not limited to just senior women. Women at all different levels can do this, and the phrase I use is no risk, no gain. So you got to take some risk and it may feel scary, but the the gains are enormous. So when you establish a track record of doing a great job, people will say that well, she didn't have any background in that, but she did it and she did it better than others. Then your Value in the organization continues to grow and go up.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 33:08

Um one thing I would say is um, take the job. That is one of the hardest job in the company that nobody wants, because you'll have to work your ass off or you have to deal with a lot of people. It's not very siloed organization. Take their job. Commit to the first six months to just getting your hands dirty and learning about the job through. Gain the respect of the people within your own organization and create a new vision for the organization and then start executing and then know if you have the right talent.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 33:48

So the way I had always looked at a new job that you would take, a new risk that you would take, is you first begin to kind of understand what this organization does Understand who is your customer and what are the customer needs or what are the hurdles we have today. Then you evaluate who's the talent. Do we have the right talent? Do we have to upgrade the talent? Do we have to find new talent to fill some gaps that we have? And then work on do we have the right processes? Then work on innovation. Even then, the data science organization that I talked about it was about innovation, but

I did the first three things to actually earn the right to innovate. I needed to convert most red KPIs key performance indicators to green before we could work on innovation, so that I mean, it can be actually the risk that you're taking can be actually hypothetical.

Amy Vaughan: 34:50

Absolutely. I mean, and I love that advice because what you're encouraging women to do is don't wait for the challenge and the opportunity to come to you. Like, challenge yourself and look for those opportunities and don't be afraid to do that, because, regardless of the outcome, the opportunity is growth and if you kind of can detach yourself from this idea of like just not just the organizational outcome that's obviously important in your strategy and your approach and how you talk about the opportunity and what you want to achieve, detach it from that as well and really look at what it could possibly provide you in the way of experience and opportunity to learn and to grow. Because I agree, the times in which I stepped into roles or opportunities that felt I was like I'm gonna be in so over my head, we're the hardest, but also the best, because I came away with the most learning. So I love that advice. Awesome, all right.

Amy Vaughan: 35:45

Diversity and equity are vital for progress. We know this. The numbers show it. Could you share some instances from your own journey where diversity of thought has led to more innovative outcomes, and how can organizations start to foster this kind of environment? I mean, there's probably a few obvious answers, but what else have you got on that?

Dr. D Sangeeta: 36:03

You know. I would just kind of describe an example that will make the point. So in 40 years I got 24 patents when I was in a GE corporate R&D and I didn't think much about it until afterwards where people said how did you get out of the lifetime? Having 24 patents is a lot and I realized that the guy next door who had a lab next door was probably smarter than me. I mean, it's not like I'm the smartest person. There are a lot of smarter people in the organization, but they didn't have as many patents. Why? It was because I chose to have diversity of thought, where I invited people with different backgrounds, different experiences, different levels of experiences, young and people who just started versus people who've been there for 20 years, and the innovation was not just mine. I opened it up to everybody and we said if the idea comes up in this room, everybody's name goes on the patent. Don't worry about it. So don't hold it back because you are afraid to share it. And, as a result, this idea started flowing and there are a lot of people who got patents as a result of it, and all the patents were actually very relevant to

the business, so they filed for it. And here you go we had lots of patents. So it's a direct correlation.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 37:35

Diversity of thought is so critical and I kind of applied that at that time. Without knowing I applied that fact. But I have applied in my whole career this diversity of thought thing and I've seen others, my peers and other people who have applied it. Where you are going to have a strategy and vision discussion, for example, you invite all your direct reports and that's it, to come up with some new stuff or vision, I would invite actually the most junior people who had just started and some of the key talent who we feel that are going to grow. It actually made a lot of senior people very nervous, interesting, and I don't know why, but I think it is actually the most inclusive way you can invite innovation, because I just feel like people graduating from college today are going to think about the same thing as we think about in a totally different way, and that's what I wanna know.

Amy Vaughan: 38:45

Yes, I 100% agree. Diversity of thought from an age perspective is tremendous and often overlooked. I think we also sometimes just seem to think about gender or race as that diversity of thought, but even socioeconomic status, is a huge opportunity if you have an understanding of where their background lies and that could bring new and interesting perspective. And I totally get like the pride that kind of is behind the idea of owning a patent or a certain IP. And, as many of our listeners may already know because I've shared in the past my husband's a professor at the university here in Cincinnati and working and seeing him kind of work through research how much more powerful the projects and the research and the patents are when they collaborate. And it happens in universities as well, where a lot of research that's like basically, well, I wouldn't say universities are creating the most innovation anymore, but that's a whole nother topic for another time.

Amy Vaughan: 39:38

But whether it's a company or a university, if people are power hoarding, if they're not collaborating, they're trying to compete, it is it's absolutely holding us back. So I love that you brought up that collaboration piece and not just the diversity of thought but really truly being okay with bringing others along for the journey and the opportunity to have an own, some kind of credit to what's being done and innovated upon, because that's how you're gonna get the best out of people. Anyways, you give them credit. Oh my gosh, it's crazy. I don't know why this is so hard to figure out. Yeah, yeah, All right, let's talk about the fellas for a moment, because men are obviously an important part of the conversation. Giving them the opportunity to be involved in closing the gender gap it's

absolutely critical. Could you provide some examples of successful collaborations between men and women in STEM fields and how we can begin to amplify those efforts?

Dr. D Sangeeta: 40:36

So I would say a couple of things. At Gotara, we are all about closing the gender gap and empowering women, but we realized that without actually working with their managers when the majority of the cases are men we are not going to be successful. So we launched a program called Voyager for men and women both managers and they're going through exactly that. So imagine if a participant, who's an individual contributor, a woman, and their manager, who's a guy, comes into the program together and they're solving some problems together. So we are beginning to see that and it's really really very, very effective.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 41:17

And the second thing that I would say is I would want any of these topics that we talk about diversity or gender gap should not be limited to women. So when we say women in technology, women in science, so only women show up. We already know what the problem is and maybe we have here to learn about the solutions. But imagine if you had half of the room was actually men. You would get bigger bang out of the box, because most of these men have good intentions. They just don't know. And without opening their eyes, how are you going to expect them to start behaving differently? So I remember I was in Cincinnati speaking on a panel and I said I see mostly women and Pete Blackshaw, who's a centrifuge leader. He was the only one. So I said well, Pete, thank you for representing the 50% of the population. They should be there. We should invite them, because you can't solve a problem without half of the population not knowing what the problem is.

Amy Vaughan: 42:27

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, you have to recognize it and realize it. When patriarchy lives even within women, it's such a part of our society, in the way that we've all been brought up. It's not easy to see the waters in which we swim in. Those unconscious biases are real and without stories, education and understanding, are they ever going men they being men in this case able to kind of come along with us and see what it is that we're all experiencing and going through? I think not to go totally off topic, but I think reading I've loved reading the commentary that men have about the Barbie movie, because, as I'm watching it the whole time, I'm definitely surveying the audience to see how many men are in the room and I'm really curious, like what do you think about this?

Amy Vaughan: 43:10

How does it feel to be in a world that's all of a sudden quote unquote flipped in the way that women are the ones running everything and doing all the things that men do and men are kind of just there as an object? Maybe that does the future? Yeah, right, I know I love it. If you all haven't seen it yet, I was definitely. It took me a while to get to it. I finally got to it, so glad I did Kind of enough t-shirts for all of my guy allies, but if you haven't seen it yet, it's just a great.

Amy Vaughan: 43:40

I think it's a great educational tool. I think it's, through entertainment, the opportunity to create empathy and understanding for something that women have experienced for decades and decades. Well, let's just go ahead and say hundreds of years, since the beginning of our existence. However, for a back, you want to go. All right, I have a couple more questions and then we will open it up to our live listening audience if they have questions as well. If not, we'll end on these two. So if you have questions, feel free to drop them in the chat. Go to our combined technology and empowerment, which I love Two of my favorite things and you highlight some success stories from women who have benefited from your platform and how has it contributed to their growth and STEM careers.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 44:18

You know, there are hundreds and hundreds of examples that I would love to share, but I always have a hard time picking one example. But I'd share this one because I was directly involved with this one, where this woman had 16 years of experience in engineering and was budding heads with the operations leader on fixing the bugs that were in the system and, as a result, the company was bleeding dollars to customers because of defects. And she comes on the platform she's very appreciative of all the tips, tools and techniques she's getting and she immediately thinks it's a conflict that she has to resolve. And what we realize is that it's really not a conflict, it is actually having a tough conversation. And so we ask her to take having a tough conversation skill and another skill and she goes through it, and then the next bug that comes through in the next eight weeks are career sprints are eight weeks, and so within that eight weeks she actually helps solve the bugs the next bug in two weeks rather than six months, and she takes the guy out for lunch and recognizes him who she hated. That's amazing, and so that was a wonderful example.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 45:46

I think we have all gone through stuff like fish. We all had stuff like guttara, but I would say that a lot of women who have gone through our programs in general, 90% or more of

them are either actually getting promoted or they're getting higher scope jobs, or they're getting higher visibility jobs, or they're getting improvement and compensation. So something or the other is happening as a result of that, and it is not because they went through this program. It is because they actually leverage what is happening in the program and apply it. And the leaders and the managers were seeing the benefit of it and they said, oh my God, I want to hire Amy. And the three managers lined up to hire Amy as soon as she's available now, because she was able to show a different Amy to each one of the leaders.

Amy Vaughan: 46:38

I think that's so important, especially for women, as you start to age and you worry and get concerned about relevancy. You know, kind of staying on top of your game, staying on top of your skills, understanding where your gaps, like that level of self-awareness. To me it's something I kind of wish for all leaders as they kind of grow and move through things. But self-awareness definitely helps to kind of help you understand and see where are the opportunities in which that you can leverage resources like Gautara to do that thing that you hate to do, like our conversations, I totally feel her. I'm an Enneagram 9, conflict, not my thing. So definitely having that self-awareness and then having this tools or skills or support to help you figure out how to do that, oh my gosh, it's like the best thing ever. I totally agree. I've shared so many stories in the past about how relieved I am after one of those hard conversations. The anticipation is the hard part but I always try to focus on the outcome because I know that's my thing where I'm just goes down.

Amy Vaughan: 47:41

Yes, we're all just trying to get to a good place here. Don't need to worry about the. You know the back and forth so much. But just like, let's focus on what the outcome to be here. That's fantastic. I haven't seen any questions from our group yet in the chat, so we must be doing great. Tinkita, I will go ahead and ask you this last question, but if you all have the last minute question you want to ask, let us know. Closing the gender gap requires both an individual effort, as we've been discussing, and a systematic change. Is what advice would you give to women aspiring to excel in STEM fields and what steps can organizations take to create a more inclusive environment? It's a big job.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 48:19

So there is a lot packed in here. But if I had to just pick one thing, what I would say and many times with some of the organizations that I've talked to as customers and individuals who will say I'm doing all the right things If the organization just changes. There I mean the policies need to change, the rules need to change. Yes, it's like pointing

fingers at something else. I would say don't wait for that change. Be the change. You drive that. You get empowered. You figure out what it is that you can do in your own power.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 48:57

You will actually, if you take that challenge on, you will spiral up to a position to actually start making changes. That would take hundreds of years to change and know that you have the power. In fact, in everyone's career you know the inflection point where you've got the power. I knew when I got back and I used my power to the fullest I actually said if you want me to take this role? At first I said I'm not interested in this role. But they came back again to ask me to take that role again I said, okay, I'll do it. I'm not sure I'll be successful, but these are the things I want from you.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 49:40

People will come running to you, complain to you about all of something that is doing this, that and the other. You'll take it from one ear, take it out of the other. I don't want you coming back and questioning my decisions. Having that conversation was very, very critical for this role. That is what I would say. It's changing the environment. It starts with changing the view.

Amy Vaughan: 50:06

Yes, I absolutely agree. Thank you so much, sankeeta. That's so inspiring again, especially in the power alone, ironically speaking, about owning our power and leveraging it for the betterment of everyone. I just love it. Thank you so much for everything you're doing. Tell everybody where they can go to learn more about Gotara, connect with you. All that good stuff.

Dr. D Sangeeta: 50:26

All right, the link is in the chat www.Gotaracom. If you're not already a member, become a member. You'll see how beneficial it is. We get a lot of good feedback and ratings from folks who do use the platform. If you're at a senior level and you'd like to give back RB2C side is totally free. Please do that. Come and connect with me and my leadership team at Gotara platform.

Amy Vaughan: 50:57

Love it. It looks like we've got a couple members listening as well Wonderful.

Amy Vaughan: 51:00

Rachel I love it Wonderful. Well, thank you again, sankeeta. This has been a fantastic conversation. I hope you've enjoyed it as well. Everyone, we're excited to see you next week. We're going to be talking about the evolution of PR beyond the press release. So if you are even within earshot of talking about PR and press releases, we hope you'll join us for our next conversation. Until then, keep asking, giving and growing, and we will see you all next week. Thank you again, bye, bye.