00;00;06;03 - 00;00;12;14

Valerie Jackman

Welcome to the CBN Women in Leadership podcast. My name is Valerie Jackman Leadership Lead at CDN.

00;00;13;02 - 00;00;17;25

Joanna Campbell

And my name is Joanna Campbell, principal and chief executive of Dumfries & Galloway College

00;00;19;07 - 00;00;32;24

Valerie Jackman

Podcast, is designed for women who are working in education and aspire to progress their career to the next level. The podcast focuses on what women can do and how they can leverage their strengths to advance and thrive in their career.

00;00;33;24 - 00;00;54;08

Joanna Campbell

Today, we'll be exploring the topic of building effective strategic relationships and also exploring the concept of sisterhood. And I'm delighted to welcome our guest, Catherine McWilliams, who is the nation's director for this should of direct births in Scotland. Welcome, Catherine. It's an absolute pleasure to have you with us today.

00;00;54;29 - 00;00;59;04

Catherine McWilliam

Hello, Joanna and Valerie. Thank you very much for having me here. It's lovely to be with you both.

00;00;59;29 - 00;01;07;08

Joanna Campbell

Tastic. Catherine, could you perhaps start by telling us about your own leadership journey to where you are today?

00;01;08;02 - 00;01;34;08

Catherine McWilliam

Yeah, of course I can. So I've been nation's director for IOD Scotland since the 1st of September in 2022, but been with the IOD since October 2021. And I have to be really honest with you, one of the key things that drew me to the IOD initially was the opportunity to work with the then national director, Louise McDonald, who is now the director general for the economy within the Scottish Government.

00;01;34;09 - 00;02;10;17

Catherine McWilliam

It was the former chief exec from young school. Louise was somebody I had admired throughout my entire career. Going back as far as 2012 when I worked for a PR and communications consultancy and Agent Bre and one of my clients was a coalition of charities campaigning for better rights and support for children with additional support needs. And through that work excuse me, I first became aware of Louise through social media, through Twitter, and I just thought, my goodness, who is this incredible person who just has such a way of talking to people and bringing people with her?

00;02;10;18 - 00;02;31;04

Catherine McWilliam

You know, she was the messaging that she used was always spot on. So the opportunity to experience Louise as as my leader, as my boss was just one. It was was to get an opportunity to pass up a phone call back right to the very start of my career to support as I did PR and communications at Queen Margaret at University.

00;02;31;16 - 00;02;52;12

Catherine McWilliam

And I've always been fascinated with just how we communicate as as humans. I remember sitting with the careers advisor Astronaut Academy, and they have a conversation with me about what I wanted to do when I grew up. I'm still trying to work that out, to be honest. AM And I remember saying to her, I just want to do something that doesn't involve maths.

00;02;52;12 - 00;03;12;04

Catherine McWilliam

I hate it. I want to drop that as quickly as I can. And it was always engaging in the social sciences that I really enjoyed and I just loved, I suppose, how we communicated and how we talked to one another. Sociology was another subject that fascinated me. So I found myself at Queen Margaret University initially studying media and marketing.

00;03;12;21 - 00;03;32;16

Catherine McWilliam

And the great thing about that course was that in your first and second year, you've got such an overview of everything that the schools had to offer. And I quickly discovered that media was not my forte. I should have had an indication when I field higher media studies at a set school before I went on to study at a university.

00;03;32;28 - 00;04;12;12

Catherine McWilliam

But I then discovered that public relations was an area that I really enjoyed and I really liked the thought of supporting organisations to look at their their communications and their reputation and how, you know, we as people could help construct what that reputation and what that brand would look like and how it would be perceived. So moved into that line of work and got my degree in, that was all great, but then had that classic I suppose moment where I finished uni and I thought I don't have the experience right now that's going to let me get a job that will allow me to pay for rent and a flat in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

00;04;12;13 - 00;04;37;08

Catherine McWilliam

So I packed my bags and moved back home to Gateshead experience and found myself working for Dumfries and Galloway Council, delivering a project which was called the Community Engagement Project, and it was funded by Fader Scotland at the time. And the purpose of that project was to go out and speak to people within the work to ensure and help them re-engage with the council services that were available to them.

00;04;37;21 - 00;04;59;12

Catherine McWilliam

So take for example, the the council, the job clubs that were happening or people who had disengaged from education that maybe might like to get more involved or those that maybe needed some extra support from a literacy and numeracy point of view. And that was a two year project and it was such a good experience for me in terms of my comfort zone.

00;04;59;12 - 00;05;25;11

Catherine McWilliam

A big part of the job was door knocking and you never knew who was going to answer the door to you, how you were going to be. You know, received by Sage Pierson, who was answering the door, whether they would get the dog to chase you down the driveway in case you've been, you know, annoying them. And it was it was a really interesting role just in speaking to different stakeholders and different audiences and thinking about how have I presented myself in those different situations.

00;05;26;00 - 00;05;48;12

Catherine McWilliam

And it was that classic. I was just getting into the swing of things and the funding stopped. The funding came to an end and it wasn't renewed. So I found myself thinking, Right, okay, you know, I would really like to get away and, you know, do something else using some of the skills I learned at university, but just wasn't stoic, wasn't quite get in there, was just get knock backs from the types of agencies I was going to.

00;05;49;13 - 00;06;13;10

Catherine McWilliam

So totally rethought everything and was very fortunate. I had an aunt in America based in San Francisco and she had a friend who ran a PR agency, and that friend very kindly offered me an internship in San Francisco. So I found myself working for Mitie PR, which at the time was quite it was a start up. It was quite a new organisation.

00;06;13;10 - 00;06;34;02

Catherine McWilliam

There was only two or three employees and they did a lot of work around tech and mobile. And back in 2012 the iPhone five was just coming out and push notifications and apps and social media as it was, was still very much in its infancy. And I found myself working for an agency that had a specialism across all of these areas.

00;06;34;14 - 00;07;00;08

Catherine McWilliam

So that was one day in particular that sticks in my mind the day the iPhone five launched. And one of our clients was with a company called Spark, and they created accessories for mobile phones. And there was this huge, big kind of hush hush thing going on because Apple had changed the shape of the phone. The iPhone, for the first time, and there was a lot of guesswork going on about the dimensions of the products and the accessories.

00;07;00;08 - 00;07;22;08

Catherine McWilliam

And I remember sitting packing all these boxes for journalists with, you know, samples and then having to sit and phone the journalists up to try and get them to, you know, cover the spec product. And again, it was thinking about, you know, what I need to do when these people over I've got a minute here to to make them think that my product's the one that they need.

00;07;22;22 - 00;07;52;00

Catherine McWilliam

I am. And it just was yes, it was a fabulous experience. And again, all good things come to an end. The visa that I was on only had to be in the country temporarily. But after I had completed that internship, I had something that made my CV a bit different to everybody else's bus forwards, came back to Edinburgh and got the job with Orbit, where I worked on a variety of different clients, including a coalition of charities, but also did a lot of work around commercial windfarm development.

00;07;52;16 - 00;08;25;07

Catherine McWilliam

And the best way to describe that was me going in to communities as the sacrificial lamb to try and sell this idea of a community having a wind farm up on the hillside. And I got that rule within orbit because of my community engagement experience I'd had with the Police and Galloway Council. So I found myself bringing together my degree, but also my my experience that I had in the work place and looking at how again, how I engaged with different stakeholders now at a meeting.

00;08;25;07 - 00;08;48;00

Catherine McWilliam

But again, one particular example in Dumfries and Galloway, an ex coal mining community where there was an application for quite a large wind farm and this was the time, you know, there was I think Dumfries and Galloway Council had a ridiculous like 50 leave applications at the time for wind farms around the countryside. It was everybody was trying to get in before the National Grid reached capacity.

00;08;48;00 - 00;09;15;03

Catherine McWilliam

And it was a it was a no go again. And what we had with the community that we were talking to was a community that had been kind of really adversely affected by the closure of the coal mining industry, and it never quite picked itself back up again. And the community saw a real opportunity with the proposed community benefit funds from this wind farm to really deliver lasting change at local level.

00;09;16;00 - 00;09;48;05

Catherine McWilliam

And it was really interesting because what there were obviously there were still people who were vehemently opposed to it, but there were some really forward thinking people within that community that thought actually we could use this money and a really sustainable long term way that's going to not just benefit is for the 25 years that the wind farms here, but, you know, for the next hundred years if we if we think about how we really effectively use it and do it and not tell you my built up quite a relationship with the community council and other local schools and I really, really enjoyed that.

00;09;48;06 - 00;10;09;17

Catherine McWilliam

I really liked that, you know, that public peace and engagement, that heart and it was that classic case of you got to the point where the planning application was submitted and then my work was done and I then got kind of pulled out and I did that thought rule for two and a half years. And I again, you know, I got to see lots of Scotland through it.

00;10;09;17 - 00;10;37;29

Catherine McWilliam

It was fabulous. But there was something missing for me and I realised it was that work at community level that I particularly enjoyed. So then I find myself scrolling through good moves and there was a job with Development Trust Association Scotland or details as it's better known, and it basically was a two part rule that was communications and community engagement and I thought like it, I'd never seen a show about it that was more me.

00;10;38;06 - 00;11;04;28

Catherine McWilliam

And I thought if I could have said exactly what I wanted to do. And I went into details with very much that mindset, I thought, This job is made for me and you guys need to, you know, you need to see that. And thankfully I managed to convince them and I got them round the table because I think at the time I was still quite I was in my mid-to-late 20, I think I was 26 at the time and I, I do think they were looking for somebody with a bit more experience.

00;11;05;24 - 00;11;23;19

Catherine McWilliam

But what I actually had and the experience that I had gained over the past couple of years were able to match up elsewhere because I also had that comms background. So I went into detox and it was just it was it was one of the best experiences I've ever had in my life in terms of work environment. It was a really supportive space to be working with then.

00;11;24;01 - 00;11;43;18

Catherine McWilliam

And it just so happens that at that time my career was going very well, but I experienced the first kind of hardships in my personal life. I lost my first grandparent. My mum got breast cancer just absolutely fine. No, thank goodness. But it was it was a space where I could have gone to pieces. But I was so supported by the team that I was with.

00;11;44;00 - 00;12;18;08

Catherine McWilliam

It made me want to do more. And I just I loved it. And through detox, I did a variety of different roles and moved up through the through the of development officer ranks while still doing my communications. But then I got to a point after about six and a half years when I thought, this is great and I love it, but I'm not going to be able to then, you know, discovered my ambition and I thought, I'm not going to be able to take this next level in my career with such a niche area of experience.

00;12;18;08 - 00;12;38;23

Catherine McWilliam

I need to broaden my network, broaden my own experience and my horizons. And I started quietly looking around for other opportunities. And it just so happened at that time the IUD was recruited and for my the festival that I did, which was senior branch manager and that then goes back to that point about Louise and how I ended up there.

00;12;39;10 - 00;12;40;26

Valerie Jackman

Oh that's so lovely.

00;12;41;14 - 00;13;05;29

Joanna Campbell

Yeah, amazing. Such an amazing journey. Catherine And you spoke about effective communications. You spoke about your own personal resilience and overcoming that and then that whole thing about, you know, taking that risk to do something different, but also ultimately a leap of faith as well. So really, really fascinating. And I didn't know you had worked in Silicon Valley, so there you go.

00;13;05;29 - 00;13;09;03

Joanna Campbell

I've learned something. You know, the about.

00;13;09;03 - 00;13;29;10

Valerie Jackman

What I what I love when I hear these stories as well is that you really couldn't write a script for it. You know, it is about following your passion and following the things that you're that you're interested in. So thank you. Thank you for sharing that with us. So and today you were really talking about and, you know, building effective strategic relationships.

00;13;29;10 - 00;13;58;13

Valerie Jackman

And it sounds as if you've done a fair bit of that and and and, you know, exploring the notion of of sisterhood. So as and the idea has been, you know, really successful in building and leveraging strategic relationships. And as a director for Scotland and I wondered if you could talk just talk us through, you know, your own experience of how you have built effective strategic relationships.

00;13;58;13 - 00;14;20;28

Catherine McWilliam

Absolutely. And I mean, it's such a timely question, actually, to be asking that already, because one of the things that I'm very aware of coming into the role as nations director, and I think I wouldn't have been as a weight of it had I not had that prior experience with working with the IOD, which just everything that we do is about added value for our members.

00;14;21;10 - 00;14;39;28

Catherine McWilliam

So the question I'm always asking myself in any piece of work that I do is, you know, what will the members think of this? Will it help to add value, will support the membership? And one of the things that we've been exploring as IAG Scotland, the way that we are, we are kind of set up is there's myself and one other that are the staff team.

00;14;40;07 - 00;15;09;19

Catherine McWilliam

So we're very, very low on resource, but we have this fantastic network of ambassadors who run our kind of seven branches throughout Scotland. And with everything that's been going on in the wider economy and the uncertainty that's facing a number of our business leaders right now, the big thing for me has been about looking at ways that we can support members at both a national Scotland or a local or national Scotland white level and then a UK level.

00;15;09;19 - 00;15;28;20

Catherine McWilliam

And that's the kind of the three species that we can kind of provide that value. So at a local level, with my branch chairs and my committees, we are looking at other organisations that we can partner up with to to deliver events, to create those kind of connections where you're not just bringing the same people into the room to quite often have the same conversations.

00;15;28;20 - 00;15;59;13

Catherine McWilliam

We're looking at ways that we can bring different people together, get different conversations going and stimulate ultimately different outcomes at a national can. The Scotland label, it's much more about, well, you know, how can we pull that together and look at how we can, I suppose, influence that at that level. So, you know, looking at our longer or our vision and strategy, for instance, is trying to bring on board a younger demographic of members.

00;15;59;24 - 00;16;29;20

Catherine McWilliam

So for me, I'm thinking, right, you know, what other organisations and stakeholders can I reach out to and make a way to Viotti Scotland on what it is that we're working towards? How can I also do that in a way? Would I recognise the value I've got in my and my existing membership? You know, some of them maybe are getting towards the later stages of their careers, but then have 20, 30 years of insight and experience that they are possibly going to be able to share with younger and aspiring directors coming through.

00;16;30;02 - 00;16;54;06

Catherine McWilliam

So for me, I'm thinking, well, there's a real opportunity there to to bridge a bit of a gap and support entrepreneurs and Start-Up leaders coming into the work space. But also there's some reverse mentoring need as well because we can actually support those who maybe are not as as technologically savvy or as a way of the kind of digital and digital evolution that has taken place over the past decade or so.

00;16;54;16 - 00;17;15;18

Catherine McWilliam

And I think it's very much about looking at what the issues are that affect our members and what's going to help them move their own thinking and discussions on. And we have key areas that we're looking to be very active in, like sustainability and and and I mean, that's a conversation for another day because I think we're all very guilty of looking at those two things in silos.

00;17;15;18 - 00;17;40;00

Catherine McWilliam

And it's about, well, how do we actually embed them in the DNA of our organisations? Yeah, but on that very point, one of the things I think that we need to be doing is creating case studies and base practice and highlighting, you know, where people have done a really good job. And again you get those stories and you get those, those anecdotes and that feedback by building relationships with people and just having conversations.

00;17;40;00 - 00;17;43;07

Catherine McWilliam

And I think that's one of the most important things that we need to be thinking about.

00;17;43;07 - 00;18;12;19

Joanna Campbell

Just I like what you said there, Catherine, about the alliances that you've built and learning that reverse mentoring aspect. And, you know, I'm very aware that certainly within my sector we have a lot of experienced leaders, but equally there's a need to reach in to those who have, you know, who are aspiring future leaders. And there's a lot that we can learn from them.

00;18;12;19 - 00;18;33;16

Joanna Campbell

So you know, and you've just given an example of where you're you're looking at that in the Institute of Directors. And I think that's really fascinating. And I'd be keen to hear more about that once you've got, you know, more more of the case studies, if you like, of how successful that's been, because I'm sure it will be successful.

00;18;33;16 - 00;19;06;23

Catherine McWilliam

Absolutely. And I think it's really it's about leveraging that that talent that we've got from across the ecosystem of our membership right now. One of the things, you know, what are the biggest issues that members TALOS that they're faced with is talent and skills, you know, getting the right talent and the right skills and to into the organisations and, you know, I've been having lots of conversations about the the fact that we're seeing lots of senior leaders leaving the workforce early and I that sometimes that's through director fatigue, sometimes that's just an opportunity to kind of move on.

00;19;07;00 - 00;19;34;19

Catherine McWilliam

People are looking at moving into non-executive and roles as opposed to executive and I think, you know, whilst there might be issues further down the line with that, we are getting a real opportunity to look at, well, who are these ambitious younger directors coming through? Can we help support with the skills and the tools and the resources to help people take that leap of faith and that staple into becoming a leader and support, you know, the future growth and sustainability of those organisations?

00;19;35;05 - 00;19;43;20

Valerie Jackman

MM Yeah. What's work particularly well would you say? You know, and I'm thinking as well, how would you encourage others and.

00;19;45;21 - 00;20;07;26

Catherine McWilliam

I think shading is definitely the key to all of this because you don't know what you don't know. And I think one of the, one of the most important things for particularly those who are aspiring leaders, I suppose, because I think it's like, you know, we run the risk of staying young all the time. People assume it's young and age, but maybe it could be young in terms of experience.

00;20;07;26 - 00;20;26;21

Catherine McWilliam

But, you know, thinking about aspiring leaders and those who are who are very mature in that journey, it's it's you know, you need to be able to see good examples. You need role models and you need to be able to, you know, ask the questions in a safe space where you feel that you're not going to get judged or shot down.

00;20;26;21 - 00;20;54;23

Catherine McWilliam

And I think that's what's worked very well for us recently as we are throughout events, through our own member networks, through our local branches and the work of ambassadors, we are looking at creating those spaces for those conversations to take place. And what's nice is that, you know, being a leader is a very lonely space at times. And over the course of the past 12, 18 months, you know, business leaders have been expected to have all the answers and they don't.

00;20;55;02 - 00;21;17;03

Catherine McWilliam

And whether you're that, you know, a new director or, you know, you're a longer and the director that's been doing it for years, there is still uncertainty out there. And you will not know the answer to everything. But having that mechanism and that network to tap into, to ask those questions and just sense, check that you're not alone in how you're feeling is incredibly powerful.

00;21;17;17 - 00;21;22;03

Catherine McWilliam

And I think is we are where the idea really has something to offer.

00;21;22;24 - 00;21;24;22

Valerie Jackman

Lovely. Thank you. And a good time.

00;21;25;03 - 00;22;00;05

Joanna Campbell

I was just going to add to that. I think you're right. Leadership is a lonely place and that's why those strategic relationships are so important. And the thing I like about ideas that you are able to build those strategic relationships across your own sorry, with your own sector and really develop that network of peers that you can lean into for support and, you know, take informal soundings or so I think what you described there, certainly I've had value from some of the events that you've been running and being able to speak to other people who are there in a similar position.

00;22;00;05 - 00;22;10;25

Joanna Campbell

And, you know, I've followed that up after the events as well. And some of these people are within my strategic AIM relationships and I value that very much.

00;22;11;21 - 00;22;30;28

Catherine McWilliam

That that that is exactly what it's all about. And I think it's it's one of those things where maybe, you know, even at the time, if you go along, even, you know, an informal networking reception and you're talking to people, you're not necessarily at the time think, you know, I must ask the question and I must get the answer to this because I need to feedback on X, Y, Z at the time.

00;22;30;28 - 00;22;54;14

Catherine McWilliam

You're just looking at building a rapport with people, building a relationship and building a better trust. And I think that is where it's been so important when the time comes to be able to go and see it. Really do was talking to you about this and I don't remember a previous conversation that you indicated you've got experience there and it's just it's knowing where to go, I think, and not feeling stuck.

00;22;54;14 - 00;23;29;17

Catherine McWilliam

I mean, we have, you know, people that experience all sorts of different situations, both positive and negative. And again, it's just, you know, where do you find the information? You know, if you're not if you're the NSA, me based in Dumfries and Galloway, and you have the opportunity to export your product on an international level and you've only been gone 18 months, yes, there are all sorts of organisations you can go to for a fact sheet, some health, but you imagine being part of a network where you can pick up the phone to somebody, you meet a mate, work an event and say, you know, well, I just I'm not sure I can.

00;23;29;17 - 00;23;44;18

Catherine McWilliam

You, you know, how did you do it? What down need to be aware of what what's worked and more importantly, what didn't. You know that's absolutely golden and just having that opportunity, you know, it's it's you can put a price on it, really, can you. And the value of it.

00;23;46;01 - 00;24;08;17

Joanna Campbell

So often in but we're staying in that theme with leveraging strategic relationships. I think my sort of perspective on it and I actually am I think it's weekly documents the well, women are often less comfortable with life leveraging new strategic relationships. What's your experience of this and agree with that?

00;24;10;00 - 00;24;32;05

Catherine McWilliam

I do agree with it and it absolutely pains me to have to agree with it because we shouldn't be. And I know you know, I remember coming into this role and having lots of conversations about imposter syndrome and, you know, people within my network who are mentors to me and have supported me tell me, you know, you're going to fight with this every day for a while.

00;24;32;26 - 00;24;47;20

Catherine McWilliam

And at the time I thought, you know, whatever, but we'll make it. This is so right. You know, you find yourself just going into situations and you think, well, you know, I'm the newbie here. I don't know what I'm doing. People are going to think I'm a daft. We'll say, you know, all of these things run in your heads.

00;24;47;20 - 00;25;19;29

Catherine McWilliam

And I think at times we are far too apologetic about asking for help. We feel that it's a sign of weakness and absolutely is no. And two, we feel almost apologetic by asking people to support what we're trying to do. And, you know, we shouldn't be. And I think, you know, there's this whole the whole gendered argument is one that, particularly in leadership positions, is one that, you know, can can get people quite exercised.

00;25;20;09 - 00;25;43;09

Catherine McWilliam

But I think it's fair in all of that to the side. I thinking about that that whole sisterhood idea, as women, we have a real opportunity to use the positions that we are in to make it easier for those that are coming up behind us. And that's definitely something that I want to do in every aspect of of of my life.

00;25;43;20 - 00;26;09;05

Catherine McWilliam

You know, I have grown up surrounded by strong women, be it kind of in the family setting, my friends, my colleagues, even even, you know, women you look at in the media there, there are some fantastic role models out there. And I think naively, perhaps if we if, you know, maybe one of these days we've got to break that, you know, break that ceiling, that's going to kind of change, change the narrative and change the dialogue.

00;26;09;18 - 00;26;37;26

Catherine McWilliam

And maybe it's coming. Maybe it's no, I was at a really interesting event last week the Open University and BBC Scotland were doing, and it was outstanding. Women is a woman who changed modern Scotland and it was it's a three part series that's been presented by Kirsty Walk and then the panel discussion after that. There was a lot of conversation about social media and how that has started to have quite a negative effect on women in leadership positions, specifically women in politics.

00;26;38;08 - 00;26;56;26

Catherine McWilliam

And I think we do have to be quite careful about the talks. Look, society that's kind of floating about in the lead at the moment and actually as a sisterhood and as women, we need to stand stronger together and support each other and, you know, celebrate achievement, recognise.

00;26;56;27 - 00;26;57;26

Joanna Campbell

Good practice and.

00;26;57;26 - 00;27;05;21

Catherine McWilliam

Share the stories so that we can break down the barriers and stop them. You know, becoming bigger than what they what they need to be.

00;27;06;13 - 00;27;38;02

Joanna Campbell

Yeah, I think you're right. The thought, Catherine and come back to what you were saying then. A bit imposter. Imposter syndrome. I think everybody suffers from that when you're new and to see you all see all role. But I think you're better. I think women quite often suffer more or thought than men because I think generally speaking and this might be a bit of a sweeping statement, but I think gen men generally suffer from hubris more or display who plus more than women am.

00;27;38;12 - 00;28;05;16

Joanna Campbell

And I think generally speaking women are quite you don't have the same consider and levels and because of that imposter syndrome possibly bit in terms of sisterhood and you spoke really eloquently about it there is there any sort of advice that you could offer women on how to create that support network across female CEOs? I mean, for example, what has worked well for you?

00;28;07;02 - 00;28;32;12

Catherine McWilliam

I think openness and letting yourself be vulnerable is is you know, it's authenticity. You know, if you're if you're open and and you let people see that you don't know all the answers and you're fully prepared to admit you don't know all the answers it creates that that transparency that and it starts to build the trust from day one.

00;28;32;25 - 00;29;09;13

Catherine McWilliam

And I think that's what we need to do. I think we all need to trust each other and talk to each other and create opportunities to get together and, you know, safe spaces. We'd actually look in as as IAG Scotland that are a group of members on non members actually, and we're looking at pulling together a kind of pilot around safe space, women in leadership conversations, you know, a place to just go and, you know, share your experiences both positive and negative and talk about what has shaped how you lead as a leader.

00;29;10;05 - 00;29;34;11

Catherine McWilliam

And it's something that eventually I would like to see rolled out across all of our seven branches, because I think there's something very powerful in that localised approach as well, you know, knowing that there's somebody in the same geographic area as you that perhaps as you identified earlier, Joanne, as a different industry or sector, but you can maybe meet for a coffee and have that really, really safe discussion where you know that, you know, they're not a competitor.

00;29;34;11 - 00;29;39;10

Catherine McWilliam

It's not somebody that's going to I just think trust is important.

00;29;39;19 - 00;30;02;26

Valerie Jackman

It's is. And I was working with a group of senior leaders last week and we were talking about imposter syndrome. And the women seem to feel that it's the women that feel it, and interestingly, the men that were there. So we're saying, no, actually, we feel this as well. But it's not it's not it's not something that you can openly say as a man.

00;30;02;26 - 00;30;20;08

Valerie Jackman

You know, this kind of there's a different kind of pressure on men. But one of the things that came from that conversation was that they felt that if going for a more senior role, men felt that they had to show they had the potential to fulfil that role, whereas women felt they had to prove that they could do it.

00;30;20;27 - 00;30;43;16

Valerie Jackman

And I and I wonder if there's something around this, you know, women just, just supporting each other to see the potential that they have, you know, that each other has. And, you know, I wonder if you think there's a place for that that, you know, you're talking about trust and being vulnerable, but also being able to share and help each other, see what potential we have and develop that.

00;30;43;28 - 00;31;05;19

Catherine McWilliam

Absolutely. Valerie, I completely agree with that. And just as you were talking there, it got me thinking about some of the work that Women on Boards UK does, and it's very much about that, you know, recognising that the different, I suppose not text, that's the wrong way to describe it, but the different inherent things that men and women have that they work through.

00;31;05;28 - 00;31;33;22

Catherine McWilliam

And actually I mean I was one of the very first events I attended as an IUD. Scotland's employee was a women on Boards EOD Scotland networking event, and I was really struck at the number of men in the room and, you know, talking to talking to some of them and they were saying, well, actually there's a real role here for allyship because, you know, we talk about, you know, the sisterhood and women supporting women.

00;31;33;22 - 00;31;53;03

Catherine McWilliam

And I absolutely think, you know, that is a critical thing. And all women should have a network of of a sisterhood that they can reach out to and as should men, because, you know, there's a whole thing about, you know, women are much better discussed in their feelings and their emotions than may not. And actually, there's a whole space for men to feel safe to be able to do that.

00;31;53;19 - 00;32;34;01

Catherine McWilliam

But then meeting in the middle, there's allyship and there's there's, you know, those who can see inequality making a conscious effort to address it. And that comes from a from a gender, from an ethnicity, from a cultural, from an inclusive point of view. You know, there's there's there's something even in that. And I remember, you know, those conversations were just exactly around that with with women who were saying, well, you know, I had to work very hard to prove that I was able to do the, you know, be in the possession amendment and conversely, the men were fighting back that they continue to have to work very hard to prove that they should be in

00;32;34;01 - 00;32;52;08

Catherine McWilliam

the position that they're then. And it's just a you know, it's that old adage, was it manna from Mars and women are from Venus or vice versa. So there's there's something that makes us distinctly different. But actually through the vehicle of of allyship, maybe we can start to bridge that gap a wee bit.

00;32;53;00 - 00;33;24;19

Joanna Campbell

There's some there's some interesting work being done by a woman called Dr. Tina Opie. She's actually American. And I love Harvard Business Review. And I actually stumbled across her and one of the HBO idea cast podcasts. I can't see that it's difficult to be an idea cast podcast. And she speaks about a shared sisterhood. In fact, she's written a book, Corner will try and find the link followed, and we'll put it in the notes for the podcast.

00;33;24;28 - 00;34;02;02

Joanna Campbell

But she talks about three practices Dig, which is about, you know, reflecting on yourself and your own strengths. And in the other practices about bridge, and that's about developing interpersonal connections with others. And then the third aspect of shared sisterhood is about collective action tool. That's the Ally shop and doing something together and really challenging. It puts you in the work place and reaching out to others who have a common purpose to do that.

00;34;02;02 - 00;34;16;02

Joanna Campbell

So I haven't read the book. I have to confess I won't read the book because it sounds fascinating. But Tina Opie, if do you Google her? She's done TED talks and all sorts fascinating.

00;34;16;02 - 00;34;19;08

Catherine McWilliam

She sounds exactly the type of person I need in my sisterhood.

00;34;19;24 - 00;34;48;26

Joanna Campbell

Exactly. Okay. So we're almost at the end, Catherine, and I think will be really good for our listeners to hear is what top three tips would you like to give women who want to progressive career and the leadership journey So forget about a strategic relation ships or sisterhood. Just talk three tips. Any tips about anything at all in terms of women in leadership?

00;34;50;18 - 00;35;24;26

Catherine McWilliam

First thing I would say is just don't be afraid and put yourself out there and ask questions and build your connections. For me, it has been incredibly useful to have mentors around me. I am some of some of them don't even know they're my mentors because it's not official, but you know, people that I can I feel comfortable picking up the phone to in, you know, can you just if you get time for a quick cup of coffee to chat about X and building that network in that safe space and trust yourself trust your own strength, instinct, trust, trust your gut and just go for it.

00;35;25;16 - 00;35;47;19

Catherine McWilliam

I remember having a real tussle with myself. It was a family party. It was like grandparents, diamond weight, and I was at the stage where I didn't know whether I was going to apply for this role or not. And I spoke to lots of different members of my family about, you know, the what I thought were the pros and cons and and kind of weighed everything up.

00;35;47;24 - 00;36;03;24

Catherine McWilliam

And ultimately they all kept saying, you know, it's it's your decision. You're the one that's got to go for it. And I kept thinking, but you know what? If it's the wrong decision, what if I get it wrong? And ultimately I came back to trust in my gut and and I felt that it was the right thing for me to do.

00;36;03;24 - 00;36;30;17

Catherine McWilliam

And I wanted to to to almost prove to myself that I could. And I think that's, you know, that's what drives me. And I think that's another step is really think about what drives you, what motivates you, what gets out your bed in the morning, and make sure that you are doing something that helps, that you know that drive continue because we spend far too, far too long a period of our lifetime working to not enjoy it.

00;36;30;17 - 00;36;41;06

Joanna Campbell

Great. Thanks, Catherine. Those are brilliant tips and I'm so glad you did applied for that job today. So thank you very much from me. All right.

00;36;42;00 - 00;36;54;13

Valerie Jackman

Yeah, that that brings us to the end of today's episode. Thank you so much, Catherine. What a wonderful, inspiring journey and what great tips that you're passing on to other other women on their journey. Thank you both.

00;36;55;13 - 00;36;58;25

Joanna Campbell

Thank you very much for having me. It's been a pleasure.