



# Celebrating 25 Women Who Influenced and Shaped My Thinking And Work

BY MUKESH GUPTA    MARCH 8, 2023    INSPIRATION, LEADERSHIP



## 25 Women Who Influenced and Shaped My Thinking And Work

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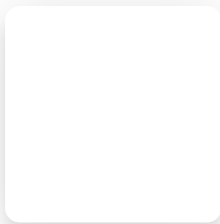
I wanted to take this opportunity this International Women's day to recognise and thank women who have had a significant impact on my thinking in my professional life. I have also been fortunate enough to host many brilliant women as part of my podcast – "Pushing Beyond the Obvious) and want to take the opportunity to thank them for the time and insights they shared with me.

Here we go:

# 1. Bernadette Jiwa

I have learnt more about marketing and more importantly story telling from Bernadette than from anyone else, with the exception of Seth Godin. Her ability to tell insightful stories was simply great, so much so, that she decided to become a professional storyteller and wrote her first novel that you can buy [here](#).

I had the good fortune of hosting her on my podcast, not once but twice. You can listen to our conversations as below:

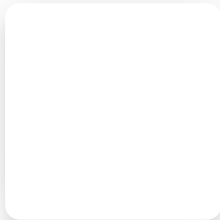


**PBT058: Hunch - Where Insights and Foresights Meet With Bernadette Jiwa**

Jul 2017 · Pushing Beyond the Obvious

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31:40



**PBT036: Giving a Damn is Seriously Underrated and Caring is a Competitive Advantage**

Aug 2016 · Pushing Beyond the Obvious

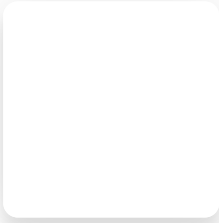
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31:31

# 2. Anne Sugar:

Anne Sugar is an executive coach and speaker who has advised top leaders at companies like TripAdvisor, Sanofi Genzyme and Havas, She also serves as an executive coach for Harvard Business School Executive Education.

In my conversation with her, she shared a lot of great insights on how to be a good coach. As leaders, we need to learn not only how to coach our wards but also coach ourselves. You can listen in to our conversation [here](#).



PBTO S2E10: Things that Matter to being Successful with Anne Sugar

Sep 2018 · Pushing Beyond the Obvious

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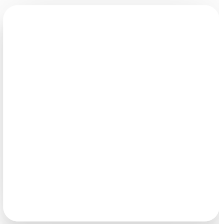
58:27

### 3. Dorie Clark:

Dorie is a marketing strategy consultant, professional speaker, and frequent contributor to the Harvard Business Review.

Recognized as a “branding expert” by the Associated Press, Fortune, and Inc. magazine, she is the author of Entrepreneurial You (Harvard Business Review Press,), Reinventing You, and Stand Out, which was named the #1 Leadership Book of 2015 by Inc. magazine and one of the Top 10 Business Books of the Year by Forbes.

She has a great YouTube channel in which she brings great insights on leadership. In my conversation with her, I learnt how one could go about our own re-invention.



PBTO S2E6: Standing out and Becoming the Best Entrepreneur You can Be

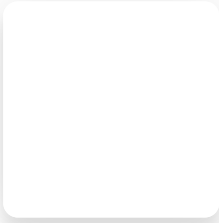
Mar 2018 · Pushing Beyond the Obvious

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53:42

### 4. Sarah Robinson

Sarah is a keynote speaker and an executive strategist for big brands. Her newsletters were one of the few one's that I always looked forward to. I learnt a lot about building loyal communities from my conversation with her. Her advice is still as relevant as it was when we had the conversation.



PBTO23: Building Fiercely Loyal Communities with @SarahRobinson

Apr 2015 · Pushing Beyond the Obvious

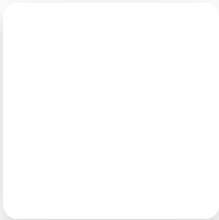
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40:36

## 5. Sarah Cooper:

Sarah Cooper is a writer, producer, actress and author of bestselling books *How to Be Successful Without Hurting Men's Feelings* and *100 Tricks to Appear Smart in Meetings*, both of which are in development as series for television. The conversation tracks her career from being a development manager at Google to become a comedian.

From my conversation with her, I learnt that humour is a great way that we can shine light on things that we want to change, without triggering an immediate reaction to the change.



PBTO38: Office Humour and lessons in Management with Sarah Cooper

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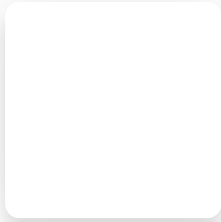
51:03

## 6. Stacey Barr:

One of the incredibly important thing is that the KPI's that we set for ourselves drive our behaviour and actions. Having good one's will help drive good behaviour and accelerates our ability to achieve the results we want and having bad one's can quickly derail our progress.

Stacey is absolutely brilliant when it comes to finding the right KPI's to measure to achieve what we want to achieve. In my conversation with her, she walked me through

her process of arriving at the right KPI's and the definition of what a good KPI is and what a bad one looks like



All about Performance Management with Stacey Barr - The Performance Measure Specialist

Apr 2022 · Pushing Beyond the Obvious

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1:05:21

## 7. Carol Dweck

I can tell that Carol's book – Mindset is one of the most impactful book that I have ever read. So, much so, that my book Thrive is about mindsets and skillsets. My understanding of mindsets (growth and fixed mindsets) and was able to extend it in some form, which I hope was useful.

I would love to host her on my podcast and have a conversation with her on, some day. Until then, her work continues to inspire me. You can watch her TED Talk here. It is time well spent.

The power of believing that you can improve | Carol Dweck | TED



## 8. Lisa O'Neil:

There are a few people that I have come across other than Lisa who are “LIFEFULL”. She runs a thought leadership practice and is the CEO of ThoughtLeaders. Her zest for life and her ability to be able to transfer that to everyone who comes into contact with her world is just awesome. I remember something that she said once on a call that I was (and I am sure I will get the quote wrong, but I will still attempt it):

Every morning, dress yourself as if you are a gift being wrapped for the world!

I would love to host her sometime on my show and talk to her about many things, including, her ability to make complex and complicated things simple. Until then, please enjoy her conversation on How To Live A Happy, Energised, And Enthusiastic Life here.

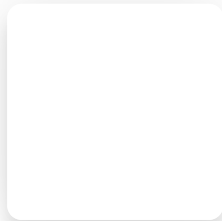
How To Live A Happy, Energised, And Enthusiastic Life With Lisa O'Neill



## 9. Radhika Dutt:

Radhika is the author of an amazing book – Radical Product Thinking. We are all surrounded by products that either make our lives better or a lot of time, not so much. Her insights on what makes a product not just successful but great is simply amazing.

In my conversation with her, she shared so many great stories and more importantly, things that stop us from building great products (she calls them diseases).



**Radical Product Thinking with Radhika Dutt**

Sep 2021 · Pushing Beyond the Obvious

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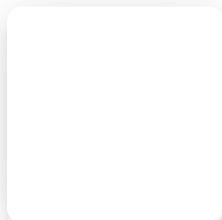
57:47

## 10. Liz Kislik

Over the years Liz has coached and mentored employees from the C-suite to the contact center — vice presidents, human resource professionals, and department supervisors — motivating them with her wit, wisdom, and humanity.

She also is the author of the Workplace Wisdom blog, where she offers valuable perspectives and tips for developing leaders, managing teams, and improving the customer experience.

In my conversation with her, I learnt that conflicts have within them the seed of phenomenal growth, in all its senses. All we need is to learn how to deal with them, which she graciously and generously shared.



**How Conflicts can super-charge your business with Liz Kislik**

Nov 2018 · Pushing Beyond the Obvious

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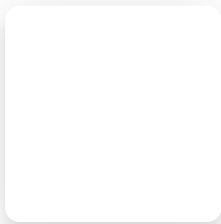
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## 11. Stacey Hanke:

Stacey is a communication expert who understands how important a tool communication is for leaders to influence their teams. It is the way leaders exert influence.

Her key insight was that the influence never stops. Once we become leaders, we are always in the spotlight and everything that we do or say has influence (sometimes good and sometimes not so good) on our teams. Once we recognise this, the way we turn up changes for good.

In my conversation with her, I learnt that we can't switch on and switch off influence. We need to be our best selves "Monday to Monday".



Building Influence "Monday to Monday" with Stacey Hanke

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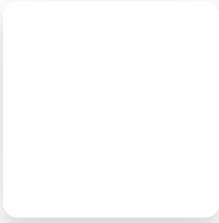
36:09

## 12. Denise Lee Yohn:

Denise is a brand leadership expert. She is a best selling author, keynote speaker and the leading authority on building great brands and exceptional organisations. She wrote a fascinating book titled – "Fusion".

In my conversation with her, I learnt the importance of being congruent as leaders. The importance of ideological, tactical & symbolic (intent and) actions being congruent to each other. I also learnt the importance of finding what we stand for (both as individuals and as brands).





PBTO S2E7: Fusion - How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World's Greatest Comparisons

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## 13. Elena Larriba

When I spoke to Elena, she was just a student who did a design project that won her awards and accolades. From talking to her I learnt that age or experience is not a requirement to do brilliant work.

In my conversation with her, I learnt that there are opportunities all around us. We only need to look with curious eyes. And once we spot them, need to take action.



PBTO S2E4: Rethinking Vertical Movement Inside a Building

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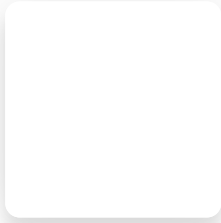
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42:11

## 14. Jill Konrath

Jill is a business-to-business (B2B) sales expert and her ideas and insights are ubiquitous in multiple forums, both on and offline. She is an author of three best selling books and is relentless in sharing her insights about how to be more successful in a sales role.

She is also one of the very few guests that I have hosted multiple times on my show. Her insights are both highly practical and immensely useful. From her, I learnt the importance of taking ownership – of the results that we achieve (or not achieve) and on our learning practice.

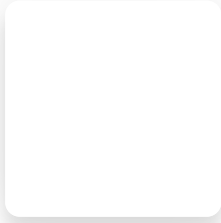


**PBTO S2E2: Jill Konrath - More Sales in Less Time**

Jan 2018 · Pushing Beyond the Obvious

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**PBTO26: Strategies to Succeed as a Sales Executive Selling to Crazy Busy People with Jill Kon**

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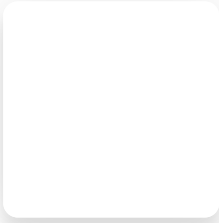
## 15. Dr. Jennifer Mueller

Jennifer is a social psychologist who loves stories. Her work shows that people – even experts – can hide their dislike of creative ideas.

She explores the possibility that embracing a creative idea is not a rational process of knowing the answer, but a psychological process of managing our own and others feelings.

She aims to provide people with tools to disrupt their own and others resistance to the creative ideas that would otherwise improve the quality of their lives and make the world a better place. Her book – Creative Change is a brilliant book that talks about how creative ideas could potentially be blocked and what to do about it.

From my conversation with her, I learnt the reason why most large organisations struggle to come up with their next breakthrough products (resistance to creative ideas is inbuilt in the process of picking the ideas that go through the development process).



PBTO49: Our Bias Against Creativity & How to Overcome It with Jennifer Mueller

Feb 2017 · Pushing Beyond the Obvious

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49:14

## 16. Shraddha Jain:

When I spoke to her, she was one of the most popular RJ in Bangalore, so much so that for many Bangalorean's (me included) the day would not start in earnest if we did not listen to her show during our morning commute to our office. Since then she has moved on to become a social media phenomenon, actress and an improv artist.

I reached out to her cold and asked her to be a part of my show and she was kind enough to invite me to her studio, record the entire conversation in her studio, using the professional equipments and send me the recording. I reached out to her cold, but she was warm and kind and fun.

From my conversation with her, I learnt the importance of having fun all the time, irrespective of what we were doing. Having fun makes the entire experience worth it, not just for us but for everyone else involved. This was one of my most favourite conversation on the show. I was like a fanboy who suddenly got his wish come true.



PBTO42: The Importance of Being and Doing that Which Makes You Happy

Sep 2016 · Pushing Beyond the Obvious

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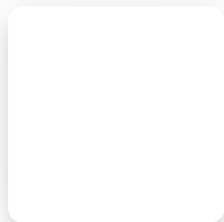
## 17. Dr. Andrea Simon

Andrea is a corporate anthropologist and helps organizations, large and small, drive change by helping them rethink their strategy, customers and the culture in your own

organisation.

This was the first time I heard about Anthropology, let alone corporate anthropology. The impact is that my son now studies corporate anthropology and intends to be an anthropologist. So, you can see the impact my conversation with her has had on me and my life.

From my conversation with her, I learnt the impact of stories on us and our businesses. I also learnt that culture is like the oxygen we breathe, omni-present and invisible to naked eye. As leaders, we need to consciously look for it to see it.



**PBTO40: Transforming Observation into Innovation with Andrea Simon**

Aug 2016 · Pushing Beyond the Obvious

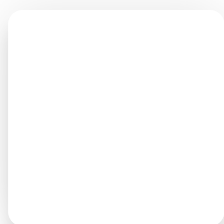
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58:31

## 18. Sairee Chahal:

Sairee is a founder, serial entrepreneur, mom and an evangelist for women's role in nation building. She runs SHEROES – an online ecosystem for women, offering support, entrepreneurial and employment opportunities, content and community at [www.sheroes.com](http://www.sheroes.com) and the SHEROES App and Mahila Money – a community neobank for women.

From my conversation with her, I learnt the importance of coloring outside the lines and defying conventional norms if we want to do significant and impactful work.



**PBTO39: The Importance of Serendipity and The Courage to Defy Conventions with Sairee Ch**

Aug 2016 · Pushing Beyond the Obvious

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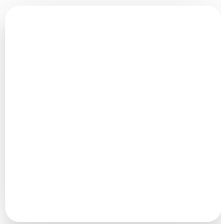
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## 19. Yogita Agarwal:

In her short career so far, Yogita has already won multiple awards for multiple products. She has won The Michael Kalil Endowment for Smart Design 2015 and The James Dyson Foundation Fund at Parsons 2015 for her product Jhoule.

She was also the team that won the Wearables for Good Challenge by UNICEF, Arm Technology and frog design, for her product – Soapen.

Another example for the fact that breakthrough work doesn't necessarily need age or experience on your side. The willingness to be curious and follow the curiosity is often the starting point for great work.



**PBTO33: Creating Award Winning Products with Yogita Agarwal**

Apr 2016 · Pushing Beyond the Obvious

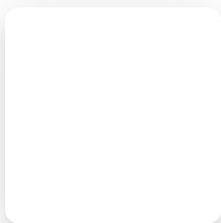
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1:03:27

## 20. Karin Hurt:

Karin is a leadership expert and runs leadership training programs. She has written many books and talks about the importance of teaching leadership skills (which are also many times the basic life skills) to children from a young age.

From my conversation with her, I learnt that in order to truly lead people, we need to not only engage their minds but also their hearts.



**PBTO13: @LetsGrowLeaders - In conversation with Karin Hurt**

Oct 2014 · Pushing Beyond the Obvious

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46:02

## 21. Yasmin Awad:

This list can not be complete without my current boss. She has been leading my team now for almost a decade. The best thing about her is that she knows when to give complete operational freedom to someone and when to pull back. She understands the people that she leads, what motivates them and what ticks them off. She is then able to use that to keep everyone on her team engaged – a key ingredient for a good leader.

## 22. Donella Meadows:

Dana, as she was lovingly called (she is no longer with us, but her work stays on) was a teacher at heart. She was one of the foremost experts (according to me for sure) on systems thinking. Her book – Thinking in Systems had a tremendous impact on me and my thinking. Her ability to explain complex concepts in a simple yet profound ways was legendary. You can actually see her in action teaching about “Sustainable systems” here.

Dana (Donella) Meadows Lecture: Sustainable Systems (Part 1 of 4)



## 23. Susan Jeffers:

Susan's phenomenal book – *Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway* had a huge impact on how I approach work. The book practically ingrained in me, my current philosophy of “Better to ask for forgiveness than to ask permission”. This is a philosophy I have always followed since I read her book. I know that all of us experience fear at some point in time.

Some of our fears, we are able to overcome easily and some not so much. I still am working on overcoming my fear of water and fear of being wildly successful..

You can listen to her sharing her insight in this short interview.

Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway (Part 1) | Susan Jeffers, Ph.D



## 24. Marie Forleo

Marie was the first YouTuber that I started following. Her YouTube channel – Marie TV was one of the few channels that I would never miss a video from. Her ability to share byte sized, actionable insights for solo-preneur or info-preneur or entrepreneurs is legendary. When she released her book – *Everything is Figure-out-able*, I bought a copy and poured over it, multiple times.

The most unique thing about her that differentiated her from a lot of other content creators was the fact that she realised that many of us had multiple passions that we wanted to develop. When the whole world was telling you to niche down as much as possible, she was coining the term – **Multipassionate Entrepreneur** and that is what I think I am.

You can subscribe to her YouTube channel [here](#).

The Secret to Achieving Your BIGGEST Dream Even When It Feels Impossible



## 25. Caroline Criado-Perez

**Caroline Emma Criado Perez** OBE is a British author, journalist and an activist . Her first national campaign, the Women’s Room project, aimed to increase the presence of female experts in the media. Her book – **Invisible Women** was an eye opener for me.

In the book she documents the gender disparities in society and how we live in a male-dominated world. Her book has been the most important influence in shaping my view of the need for gender imbalance and why it is important to bring it back to balance. I am hoping that one day, soon enough, I get to speak to her and learn from her directly.



# Conclusion:

In conclusion, I would say that I have been extremely fortunate to have been informed and influenced by so many brilliant women. It would be unfair to end this post without acknowledging the important role that my wife has played in my life. She has taken care of me when I was down and out. She has been a pillar of strength and support all through the 22 years that we have been married to each other.

Overall, I think women make up for more than half the world's population and have some of the most connected hearts and minds and they look at the world very differently than men do. So, we would be fools not to take in their perspective into consideration – both in our personal and professional lives.

Again, to all those women, who had an impact on me and my thinking whom I haven't been able to include in this list (you know who you are) and to all the women who are on this list, my heartfelt gratitude and wishes for a very happy “**International Women's Day**”.

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