

Episode #152: The 10 Best Things I've Done in My Career



Full Episode Transcript

**With Your Host
Dr. Janel Anderson**

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Hello and welcome to another episode of the work and conversations podcast where we talk all things leadership, business communication and trends in organizational life. I'm your host Dr. Janel Anderson.

Today we're gonna do something a little bit different. We're gonna get a little personal. What are the 10 best things I've done in my career and my professional development. Now I get asked for career advice all the time, and today I'm sharing the top 10 things I've done for my career. Now, even though I'm an entrepreneur, I have extrapolated the lessons of what I've done. So that they're universally applicable to people in any industry or any sector of the market, from getting mentored to hiring a coach to investing in myself and a few more surprising things I've done along the way. I'm bringing you the best 10 things I've ever done for my career on this week's episode of the working conversations podcast.

Number one, getting an education. This is above and beyond. This is above and beyond. So important. Now in my case, I studied communication as an undergrad, and I knew that that was the direction that I wanted to go in. Now, as I got further into my career, and became a trainer or corporate trainer, I realized that I wanted to advance my education and have higher credentials because what really sparked it for me is I wanted to be a college professor.

I learned that along the way as I was in the field of training and development. I loved the education I loved the light bulb going on for people who were afraid of something or didn't think they could do something. And in my role as a trainer, I got to be that facilitator and help people have the light bulb go on. So I wanted to do that on a grander scale. Now I'm not saying graduate education is the right move for anybody and in fact, even a four year degree isn't the right move for anybody. But whatever it is that you're getting into in your career, get the proper training for it. So if you're going to be an electrician, you're going to get maybe a two year degree from a technical college and study under somebody who is a master electrician until you get the skills so it doesn't necessarily mean a four year degree and it certainly doesn't mean getting a master's degree and a PhD like I did but those additional degrees opened doors for me and enabled me to be able to move into different aspects of my career that I would not have been able to move into had I not had that professional education. And still today, my education unlocks doors for me that it that would not be open to me had I not had the education that I have. So getting an education that is in alignment with where your passions are and what you want to do and how you want to contribute is so so important. So that's number one for me getting an education.

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Number two is finding mentors. Now, when you find somebody to mentor you, this could be in an official capacity where you are both very transparent about entering into a mentor relationship. And I'll give you an example of that. I have had mentors in multiple different professional roles that I have been in, and oftentimes that is through an organized program with the employer.

So when I was in a large corporate organization, they had a mentorship program where people had volunteered to be mentors in various capacities. I was coming from an academic background I knew nothing about corporate finance. So I signed up and requested a mentor in finance. And I got connected with somebody who was an amazing mentor to me when I was in that corporate job. She taught me how to read a profit and loss statement. She taught me EBITDA, she taught me all these things about corporate finance that I did not know that helped me not only then understand the way money moved around inside of the corporation. And that was really instrumental in my role because I was running basically an internal agency where there was a lot of internal transfer of money, so I needed to know how that worked. I also needed to know because we were a public company, I really needed to understand how our shareholders found value, or got value in the company as well. So I learned a lot from those aspects.

Now, there was a carryover from that that I didn't necessarily anticipate, and that is once I became an entrepreneur and had my own business, knowing how to read a balance sheet profit and loss statement, aging revenue statements, all that kind of stuff. Certainly certainly very helpful in my business today. So and it doesn't always have to be a formal mentor relationship like that. For example, right now, in my career, I don't have a formal mentor, like these days. I do have though, I would say about a half a dozen people who serve as informal mentors to me that I know I could reach out to them and say, Hey, can I go on a brain date with you?

In fact, I hate the term pick your brain just heads up. Don't use that term. That's gross. And it makes the person who you're seeking advice from feel a little bit taken advantage. But I like to go on brain dates with people where I'm going to you know, court somebody's brain for an hour or so. I do have about a half a dozen people that I could easily reach out to and within the next three to four weeks have a brain date on my calendar with them, where I could get some informal mentoring from them. I also have some of those same people who are in my professional network that I see at conferences, trade shows are sometimes we're even speaking at the same event, and I might just catch them for a hallway conversation, but I think of them as my informal mentors. So I cannot say enough about having a mentor.

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Now one other thing I'm going to tag on to this idea of having a mentor is that when you are the person being mentored, it is your relationship to draw. It is your responsibility to drive that relationship. You're the one who sets the meetings, you're the one who asks the questions. You're the one who has the reins, and so don't forget that when you're in a mentor relationship and you are the person being mentored, it is your responsibility to drive that relationship to get the results that you want.

Okay, number three, mentoring others. Yes. Being on the other side of that mentorship equation is so valuable. Not only is it valuable for me in terms of reinforcing what I know and what I've learned along the way, and that's certainly a piece of it. But even more importantly, is what I learn from the people I am mentoring. I learned things about my own professional development like when I was in their shoes, in fact, because right now, I have I would say two and a half to three people that I am mentoring who are speakers who are early in the stages of building their speaking career. I say two and a half because one of them I've been working with for a while off and on and I think I've now moved into that role of just more of a casual mentor for her. We haven't had a scheduled meeting in a good while, but we do see each other from time to time and she's always got a quick question for me a hallway conversation, those sorts of things. So I call her a half, two and a half people that I'm currently mentoring.

And again, it is such not only valuable for me to see how far I've come and what I know. But it's also just incredibly valuable for me to be giving back and to contribute to others professional development because people have done that for me. And so it's rewarding, as well as there's always something new and different that they're doing in their business that I hadn't thought of or I hadn't done the same way. And so I learned a lot just from how others are developing their business and conducting their business. And the types of questions they asked me are just fascinating and I learned so much so mentoring others is the third thing and these are presented in no particular order. Well, maybe a little bit of order, but not they're not necessarily rank ordered. I put them in order that I thought they sort of made the most sense to tell a story.

All right, number four. The fourth thing on my list is changing careers. I have changed careers a number of times and if you're not familiar with my career story, I highly encourage you to go back and listen to episode one of this podcast. Yes, the very very first episode, I tell my career story and if you listen to that episode, you'll hear a variety of different like left turns that I took in my career and how I weave them all together to tell a cohesive story and have a career narrative. But I was changing careers before it was cool or common to change careers. If you talk to millennials or Gen Z these days, absolutely. They are changing careers on a much more frequent basis than my Gen X generation did or certainly the baby boomers who came before us. Now. I was changing

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careers a lot before it was cool. But it was an incredibly important part of my career development. And each career that I had was a stepping stone for the successive choice that I made after it and the choice that I made after the one that came before it could never ever have happened. Had I not done the thing that came immediately before it. And I can't underscore this enough that in order to get where you want there may be some immediate there may be some intermediate steps you need to take to get from point A to point B, there might be point a and a half point A and three quarters and so forth that you that you need to take or just even some left turns like I did.

So changing careers, and having those careers all lead to where I am today is has been huge. And were they scary completely especially when I was doing something like you know, leaving an academic job with that high comes with a certain amount of security to move into a corporate job that comes with less security and then moving from a corporate job into entrepreneurship which comes with far less security and way way, way more risk.

So but each successive step I took was grounded on the one that became before it, and I could not have done what I did had I not made those choices along the way. So changing careers a number of times is one of the best things I could have ever done.

Number five, hiring excellent staff. Now over the years in my corporate roles, going way back to when I was like I mean my first job out of well technically my second job out of college again go listen to episode one and you'll know what I'm talking about. But I was a trainer for a company and I got promoted into a training manager position and I got to hire at the ripe old age of like 22 or 23. I was hiring staff. I made excellent hires back then. I made excellent hires all the way up until the staff I have today and right now I have like five people who work for me, and they're all amazing. And certainly when I was in my corporate roles, man, in fact, I got tagged by people who were my peers in the Oregon in a corporate in a large corporation, I got tagged by some of my peers and pulled aside to say, how do you make such great hiring decisions? Because I want to hire people like you hire people.

So I have always made and like I can't even think of a single person where I would say Ooh, that was a mistake. I have not made mistakes in hiring. And some of the people that I have hired over the years are still people who are close in my network and people that I see regularly, even if they don't work for me now. I have just made some amazing hires. Now, you might be thinking to yourself, but you know, I'm not a hiring manager. I don't have staff report to me. How does this relate to me? Well, I promised at the top of this podcast that I would make all of my career moves, my best career moves relevant to anyone.

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So what I would say from hiring excellent staff if you're not in a hiring position, or you don't have staff reporting to you, my translation of this is surround yourself with amazing people. Now, to a certain extent you don't have a choice in that at work. Unfortunately, in terms of the people who are on your team, you might say well, a couple of them are amazing and a couple of them aren't too amazing. Well, seek out those amazing ones and seek out other people in your organization who are amazing, even if you don't work with them on a day to day basis. Even if you don't work with them directly. Find those amazing people connect with them and just surround yourself with amazing people. It doesn't even have to end at work as well. You can think about who in your civic organization or if you're involved in a religious organization or any other parts neighborhood association or the board of directors that you might be on in someplace where you volunteer, but find the amazing people and surround yourself with those amazing people because that is going to just really enrich your life. enrich your life in ways that you could not even anticipate. So surround yourself with amazing people or if you're in a position to hire, hire great talent.

Alright, number six, the sixth best thing I've ever done and again, not necessarily in any rank order, but hiring coaches. Over the years I have had business coaches, especially when I was early in my business and I didn't know what the heck I was doing. I hired an amazing business coach who is again still somebody who is in my network today and somebody that I could reach out to for an ad hoc coaching session if I needed to, or even just call to say hello and have a warm conversation with this person. I've had other business coaches as well. And I've also had life coaches. So there is just a vast array. Everything from business coaches or the corporate equivalent of that is executive coaching to life coaching which helps you with your personal relationships and keeping all the plates spinning in your life. Lord knows I have a lot of plates spinning in my life.

I've got two teenagers 120 something year old, I run a business I run a busy household and have lots of different organizations and other things outside of my career that I'm involved with. And it just takes a lot to keep celibate keep all the plates spinning and that's where a life coach can come in handy to give you some strategies to keep it all keep it all moving and have fewer things drop and fall. So hiring my own coaches over the years has just been game changing.

Number seven is similar to number six, but I want to distinguish it differently. And this is investing in myself. So this has more to do with my professional education. And early on when I was starting my business I got a coaching certificate and one of my very first offerings as a business owner was executive coaching. So investing in myself enabled me to have the skills and tools to do that. Now since then, I have invested regularly in professional conferences that I attend for my own career development, and most

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specifically and most notably I got my certified speaking professional CSP certification five years ago.

That is the industry gold standard in the speaking profession. It is like the good housekeeping seal of approval. I had to get reviews from past clients and, and those were all adjudicated by an independent third party, the certification team. And so none of that really came through me I don't know what they said about me but no, they said things about me that said they would hire me again and that I did a good job for them. But that was a very, very rigorous process. And again, that has opened doors for me that would not be open to me if I did not have my certified speaking professional certifications, my CSP, I get to go to conferences that some of my other peers don't get to go to because they don't have that certification. And it also gives my clients a certain level of confidence when they hire me because they know that I am worth my stuff because I've been through this rigorous certification process and that was really investing in myself. Now it didn't cost a lot of money.

I mean, there was a small certification fee I had to pay to the organization, the National Speakers Association that does the certification. That's not the investment. The investment was all of the time and energy that both led up to me being good enough at what I do to get that certification, as well as very rigorous paperwork, video review process, client review process and so forth that went into it. So that's where the big investment came is putting all that time and effort into getting that certification. But so investing myself and that's something that any of us can do.

What's your industry certification? If you're a meeting planner, do you have your certified meeting planners certificate? If you're a project manager, are you PMP certified and on and on the list goes of all the different types of certifications. Now some of them you are required to do in order to keep your license as an accountant or to keep your license as whatever it is you do. So some of that comes naturally in your profession. But I would encourage you to push yourself to see what are the extra certifications you can get? What are the extra ways in which you can invest in yourself and maybe they're not certifications, maybe it's just spending that extra money or time or both to go to an industry conference or a trade show or something where you know, you really stand to learn enough to up your game and be way better at it, whatever it is you do. And I go to those industry events myself at least three of them per year. And it's totally game changing not only in terms of the professional education I get, but the networking in terms of staying connected with other people who I can lean on and I can learn from. So number seven, invest in yourself.

Number eight, having a group of trusted advisors. Now I call this a mastermind group

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and this can be done formally or informally. I am right now and for the most part for the last 10 to 12 to 15 years have been in some sort of a mastermind group or other and this would be a group of people who are sometimes they might be in your same field like right now I am in a mastermind with three other CSPs we all have our certified speaking professional certification. So we're all kind of playing at the same level and we can give each other great business advice. We're all a little bit different. We're not necessarily direct competitors with one another. Although our clients would probably interchangeably hire any one of the four of us depending on what their need was for the conference they were putting on that year in terms of keynote speaker whose specialty or area of expertise do they need?

So we're in the same space but we're not like head to head competitors with each other losing business to each other on a regular basis. So we're in a great position to be able to understand each other's business and be that trusted advisor where we can give each other really sound advice or call each other out on our BS or whatever it is.

Now, I have been part of mastermind groups again over the last like 10 to 15 years, sometimes not with other speakers. In fact, one of my most fascinating mastermind groups was there were four of us and we were all in very different fields. We were all entrepreneurs, but one provided food product one provided a consumer product and one was a coach but not anywhere in the same kind of coach that I was and not an executive coach. She was coaching high school teachers. So we were not competing with each other. We all came at our businesses from such different angles. And it was just super helpful to get like the mind of a consumer products person thinking about my business and how I marketed my business. So that was a fascinating group that we and we stayed together for a couple few years.

If you aren't going to put together a mastermind group, I would say Google it. There's a lot of research out there. There's a lot of best practices out there. You want to make sure you're all going into it with the ground rules the same and that you have a certain cadence about when you're going to meet and how you're going to be accountable to each other and to yourself. There really is an art to it. And I encourage everybody to be in a mastermind of one sort or another. I mean, you would just be in a mastermind of like let's say you're a working mother who is juggling, you know, like either little kids or teenagers like I am or whatever you could find other working mothers to be in mastermind with and maybe it has nothing to do with your work per se, but has everything to do with how you're juggling all the different roles that you're playing in your lives, and you're just learning from each other learning best practices and being a support system for one another and meeting on a regular basis. There might be wine involved with that one just saying all right, but so mastermind groups have been an

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instrumental role in my success and they don't cost anything you just, you know, it takes the investment of time and it also the investment of finding like minded people who could really support you in what you're doing and that you can like call each other out on your BS in respectful ways while maintaining the relationship and being professional and all of that.

Alright, number nine following my dream, total game changer for me, being a professional speaker in my case, but I want you to think about what's yours. What's your big professional dream because like I'm doing it now this will carry me to the end of my career. No more career changes for me. I landed here 1314 years ago and I'm not going anywhere. This is my deal. And it took a lot of risk. It took a lot of bold moves. It took all those career changes I was talking about earlier, but I didn't give up. I followed the dream all the way through to fruition.

Now my undergraduate college advisor who was also my communication professor, she and I are still in touch. And she knew back when I was 19 that this is what I wanted to do. She knew it and she encouraged me to continue to pursue it but also to think differently about it. And in fact, you know one of the things that she said to me back then says Dr. Root, Dr. Marilyn Root, she is a dear, dear friend still, she said to me, "Do not really have every reason to believe that you can make it as a professional speaker on the public speaking circuit nationwide international even."

What's your message? That was her challenge to me? What's your message? Now as a 19 year old, I did not have, you know, a traumatic childhood I had not survived fire I had not beaten cancer. I had not died and I still haven't done any of those things. But it took me a while though to find my message. But I hung in there and followed the dream. So for you, if you have a dream a career dream that has maybe gathered some dust, I encourage you to dust it off, to re examine it and to really go after it. And maybe that means you're gonna have to do some things differently.

You might need to do any of the things that I've talked about so far in this podcast, you might need to hire a coach, you might need to surround yourself with amazing people. You might need to find a mentor there, you probably need to invest in yourself. There's so many different things that I've talked about so far. That can really really be super helpful in you following your dream but I want you to go for it. I don't want you to ever let up I want you to be tenacious hold on to that dream, no matter what and just incrementally keep working towards it.

And number 10 the probably the best thing that I have done in my career is to be an example of what's possible. To be an example of what's possible. I think back to some

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of the people that I've hired over the years, who are in the role that I was in when I hired them. So I was at the director level a senior manager in a large corporation, and I hired some people, some of them I was taking a risk on because I knew they had transferrable skills. I knew they were coming from a different industry and they were going and they had what it took to survive in that culture. And I knew I could see the talent that they had. Several of them now are in the position that I was in when I hired them. So I think that for them I was an example of what's possible.

I know that I'm an example of what's possible for people that I have mentored in the speaking and training industry. And the ones I am mentoring now. And I have countless other examples of maybe it's me juggling parenthood and family life and career and hope managing a busy household and all of that, that I have been an example of what's possible for somebody else who's doing that as well. So for me, just knowing that I have been an example of what's possible, continues to inspire me to be more and grow more and develop myself and to continue to be that example of what's possible.

However, that's going to look and even though I'm not going anywhere, this is my career until I retire. I'm sure that there will be some shifts and changes along the way where I will continue to uncover new ways in which I can be an example of what's possible, both for people who are in my same career and people who are not in my career at all, but just see something about what I'm doing that lights them up or as an example for them.

So those are the 10 best things I have done in my career. So let me just quickly recap them for you. Number one, getting an education, whatever that looks like for you. For me, it was an undergraduate degree, then eventually a masters and a PhD. Number two, finding mentors that could be formal mentoring relationships, or informal people that you reach out to who serve as mentors for you. Number three, mentoring others find your ways to give back to people who are coming in your footsteps behind you. Number four, changing careers even when it wasn't cool or common. To change careers. Number five, hiring excellent staff and surrounding myself with amazing people. Number six, hiring my own coaches to push me to hold me accountable to help me grow. Number seven, investing in myself whether that be paid professional education, getting a certificate, getting my CSP, whatever your industry certification is or however you might invest in yourself. Number eight, being a part of and developing different mastermind groups to hold myself accountable to my own professional growth. To have a sounding board of other people that I trust. Number nine, following my dream, in my case, being a speaker, but I challenge you what is your professional dream and number 10 Being an example of what's possible.

Alright, my friends, always remember that the future of work is not only about technology, and if nothing else, this episode will say that for you. It is about the values

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we uphold the communities we build and the sustainable growth that we strive for. We need to keep exploring, keeping innovating. And keep envisioning the remarkable possibilities that lie ahead.

As always, stay curious, stay informed and stay ahead of the curve.

Tune in next week for another insightful exploration of the trends shaping our professional world. And if you found this episode to be particularly helpful or inspirational for you, please please please share it with somebody else who it might light up or spark a fire under them and bookmark it. Save it for yourself for one of those days when you're just not feeling it. And you need to have a little extra spark and a little extra kick in your step. Go back and listen to this episode. Again. Alright my friends until next week, be well.