

EXCEPTIONAL WOMEN ALLIANCE

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Featuring:

*Jourdan Hathaway
Chief Business Officer
at General Assembly*

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Embracing Growth and Closing Gaps: Jourdan Hathaway's Journey of Professional Development

Jourdan Hathaway's path to becoming a Chief Business Officer demonstrates the power of embracing continuous growth. In a recent conversation, she shared how she transitioned from Vice President of Marketing to a C-suite executive by closing key skill gaps, particularly in finance, and how vulnerability, proactive learning, and building meaningful relationships played crucial roles in her development.

Identifying and Closing Skill Gaps

Jourdan's professional growth began with an important realization: to continue advancing in her career, she needed to identify and address areas where she lacked expertise. Despite her extensive experience in marketing, technology, and leadership, she recognized that financial literacy was essential for her role in the C-suite. This led her to create her own professional development plan that she coined as Project FLAT—Financial Literacy Advancement Training. Why FLAT? Jourdan self-identified the need to “flatten her own learning curve” and said it was a metaphor for “leveling the playing field”, giving her the same chance of succeeding in business settings where there's an established common language and laser focus on financial matters. Project FLAT was her way of dedicating time to mastering the fundamentals of finance, from reading books and taking courses to seeking mentorship and pouring over financial reports. This proactive approach to bridging knowledge gaps became a pivotal moment in her career. Initially, she created the Project FLAT document as a way to articulate her goals and rationale and to create an accountability tool for herself. She journaled her successes, challenges, and lessons all along the way – which eventually culminated in a reflective 7-step playbook with real-life examples

A key aspect of Hathaway's growth was embracing the qualities of a DRIVEN leader. DRIVEN stands for Determined, Resilient, Impactful, Vulnerable, Empathetic, and Nimble—traits she believes are vital for leadership and success. “Being DRIVEN is about being adaptable and open to change,” Hathaway explains. “This combination is about having an achievement mindset and a bias for action while also being profoundly self-reflective and tuned-in to others around you.”

The Power of Vulnerability and Building Relationships

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A central part of Jourdan's growth was her willingness to be vulnerable. She openly admitted what she didn't know and actively sought help from others. For Jourdan, the relationships she formed were instrumental in bringing her learning to life. Engaging with finance professionals and business leaders helped her translate theoretical knowledge into practical understanding. By asking questions and seeking clarification, Jourdan demonstrated how vulnerability and engagement can provide valuable insights and accelerate learning.

She also emphasized the importance of communities like the Exceptional Women Alliance (EWA), where mentorship, encouragement, and shared knowledge played a key role in her development. Her vulnerability was met with support and guidance, making her learning process not just about technical skills but also about connecting with others who could offer diverse perspectives.

Continuous Learning and Immediate Application

Jourdan's approach to professional development was not only about acquiring knowledge—it was about applying it immediately. She didn't wait for the perfect opportunity to use her new financial skills; instead, she integrated what she learned into her day-to-day tasks, such as analyzing financial statements, dissecting margin variables or discussing the impact of expense timing from vendors or people hiring with the finance team. Business decisions were no longer siloed to strategic and operational solutions, but through the lens of overall financial health as well. She highlighted the importance of learning in real-time and how sharing the experience with a colleague made the process more enjoyable and productive.

Jourdan's development was holistic, balancing both hard and soft skills. She understood that leadership success requires not just technical expertise but also an understanding of people. This dual focus on data-driven solutions and people-centered leadership became a hallmark of her executive style.

Paying It Forward

Jourdan realized that mastering technical skills wasn't enough to be an effective leader. To truly lead, one must communicate complex ideas clearly and concisely. With her deeper understanding of finance, Jourdan is committed to mentoring others and sharing her knowledge. Whether through one-on-one mentoring

sessions or speaking at events, she actively invests time in supporting the next generation of professionals. For her, leadership is about creating opportunities for others to learn, grow, and succeed. Her commitment to paying it forward enriches her own development and strengthens the collective success of those around her.

Conclusion

Jourdan Hathaway’s journey is a powerful reminder that professional development is about more than acquiring technical skills. It’s about recognizing knowledge gaps, embracing vulnerability, and building relationships that support growth. Her story highlights the importance of continuous learning, taking ownership of one’s development, and applying new knowledge in real time. Ultimately, her journey shows that professional development is not just a career strategy; it’s a path to personal growth and self-discovery.

Until next time,

Lorraine

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