

Intro ([00:01](#)):

Welcome to the Workplace Forward podcast with your host, executive coach Tegan Trovato, founder and CEO of Bright Arrow Coaching. Are you a perpetually busy, always-overstretched leader or executive who feels there's never time to keep up with leadership trends in an always-changing landscape, much less self-care? Workplace Forward will help you overcome both challenges and gain peace of mind.

Intro ([00:26](#)):

Through Tegan's conversations with executives, experts, authors and innovators about their leadership journeys, you'll get quick hits of two things you need the most, essential insights to help navigate the future workplace and best practices on the more human side of leadership so you're empowered to take care of yourself while leading others. Enjoy some well-deserved time for yourself to learn and recharge. Let's get started with today's guest. Tegan, take it away.

Tegan Trovato ([00:57](#)):

Hey, listeners, very excited to have Michelle Tillis Lederman on the podcast today. She wrote a book recently that I read, and that's very much what attracted me to having her on the podcast, called The Connector's Advantage. I personally got a lot out of the book. I'm already a connector, it's my nature. But there were definitely a couple of things in there that hadn't occurred to me and also one big thing that helped me just level up on how I make connections in my own life and business. It's not often I feel that excited and moved by some thought leadership, and certainly I was by her book.

Tegan Trovato ([01:36](#)):

So, I also talk a lot with our executives that we coach at Bright Arrow about the importance of, well, I would call it networking, Michelle would not, and you'll learn about that here in the podcast, but I talk a lot with our leaders about why we need to be connected with other leaders and giving back as frequently as possible and being comfortable making asks of the people we know and are connected with, so we'll talk about that a little more.

Tegan Trovato ([02:03](#)):

It's very important for our leaders to identify with this work that she's bringing forward and apply it. Frankly, I think, now more than ever, it's important that we're thinking about connection. We talk a lot about it in our private coaching sessions with leaders that we're not feeling as connected as we used to in many ways. We'll talk a bit about that on the podcast today as well. A little bit more about Michelle, she's been recognized by Forbes as one of the 25 professional networking experts to watch. She has written four books, including the one I referenced and another you may have heard of, her more recent one before this one that she just wrote, The 11 Laws of Likability.

Tegan Trovato ([02:45](#)):

She's a former NYU professor, financial executive. She refers to herself as a recovering CPA, and she now works with individuals and organizations through her executive coaching firm called Executive Essentials, and through that firm, she has worked with some of the world's best-known brands, some of them, of course, you will have heard of such as Citi, Johnson & Johnson, Ernst & Young, just to name a couple. You've probably seen her online even if you didn't realize it. She's been featured on CBS, MSNBC, and in The New York Times, and Forbes, and Working Mother magazine. I'm sure you are going to enjoy our conversation today. Michelle, welcome to the podcast.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([03:26](#)):

Thanks for having me on.

Tegan Trovato ([03:27](#)):

Yeah. I could not wait to get you in front of our listeners. For those listening, I read the book, I had so many aha moments for myself. I couldn't wait to talk with you about some of them, but also I knew I needed you on this podcast because when I found your book, I immediately sent it to several clients, and that's when I know it is so right for our executive audience.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([03:48](#)):

Okay. That just made my day, and I'm just going to put this out there for you and for anyone else listening. I do a little thing where I personalize it with a message from you to really create a connection and what I call bumpy mail, because bumpy mail always gets opened. If anybody wants to do something where they want to really get noticed, I'll work with you and do it for you.

Tegan Trovato ([04:11](#)):

Oh, that's amazing. You'll sign the book and put a special message. Okay.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([04:14](#)):

I'll sign the book, I'll put a bookmark in. Sometimes, I even throw a little pen with the blue hair.

Tegan Trovato ([04:20](#)):

It's your signature thing.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([04:22](#)):

They can't see me, but you can see my hair is a little curly, curly.

Tegan Trovato ([04:26](#)):

Beautiful curls is what I would say. Okay. Good. I'm sure that we have the link for that option, so I'll be sure we include that in the show notes. I think, for you to know, Michelle, what stood out for me about this work is that, we both coach executives, it is astounding to me how busy they get into the work heads down and they neglect to network outside of the business. I pretty regularly check in with my clients a couple times a year, "How are you doing with your networking? Are you staying connected?" Because they feel so awful when they need something from their network that no one's heard from them for years until they pop out and need something.

Tegan Trovato ([05:03](#)):

So, I'm encouraging they always create the reciprocity right away. Be giving to your network in advance so, when you need something back, they're ready to help, and it feels good. Right? What I appreciate about your book is that you just made this easy for people. You gave this great roadmap. There's a lot of good science packed in there and research. It was just beautifully done. So, it's really ripe for the executive audience to understand why we do it and how we do it at that level. So, thank you so much.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([05:34](#)):

There's so many things in my head that started going into so many different directions as I listen to you, and one of the places I get stuck, and it might be where a lot of people who are listening get stuck is, is at the word networking.

Tegan Trovato ([05:44](#)):

Yes.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([05:44](#)):

Networking, networking. People have a visceral response to this word, and I understand because I do as well. It has the word work in it. Well, why would I want to do that? It's work. So, I actually shifted the language. My first book on likability was definitely a networking book, but the book that we're talking about, The Connector's Advantage, my brother-in-law walks to my office and he is like, "Oh, you're writing another networking book?" I'm like, "No. No. No. This one's about being a connector." And he's like, "Well, what's the difference?" When those moments when you think you know something and then somebody asks you and you're like ...

Tegan Trovato ([06:19](#)):

Stumbling. Yeah. Yeah.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([06:21](#)):

I said to him. I'm like, "That's a really good question." And I said, "Well, networking is something that you do, but a connector is who you are." And then I'm like, oh, my God-

Tegan Trovato ([06:31](#)):

There it is.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([06:33](#)):

That's it. So, I want everyone out there listening, who is having that little bit shorter reaction, who's getting a little heart palpitation at the idea of I have to do this, I know I have to do this, I don't want to do this, to think of it differently, and to think of it as just going out and making friends, just going out and being social, just being curious about one other person, and prioritizing relationships in all of your interactions and whatever you're doing, personal or professional, when you prioritize relationships, you are being a connector.

Tegan Trovato ([07:04](#)):

Yes. There was a lot in the book that was mindset oriented, which I really appreciated, because I mean, I feel it in myself when I've got to go out and do something where you're just like, "Okay, I got to get pumped up." And it's like, "Nope, you don't really have to over pump. You just show up and have a conversation." And to your point being curious, what you talk about in the book as well. So, I really appreciate that. It isn't just the tactics of how to connect, it's the mindset with which to connect that you spend a lot of time on in the book, which is really resonant.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([07:32](#)):

Yeah. I actually think that the mindset drives the behavior. So, you mentioned that I have a lot of stats and research behind it. I love stats. I grew up in a left brain industry. And so, I like the proof of concept,

and it's not just a theory, it's, "Oh, wait, there's research behind this." And so, when I started doing the work, I had a vision in my head of what were the behaviors and the attributes of a connector? And the original title of the book was the Connector's Club, because I thought it was this elite, very specific group of qualities. And when we did the research, I was wrong. I was really very little differentiation in some of these behaviors between connectors and non connectors.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([08:19](#)):

And so, what I realized was beyond the one big differentiator, which is personal satisfaction just from making the connection was, I think, 60% higher in connectors. That was their motivation that drove them. Other than that, anybody can adopt these behaviors, and that opened my eyes and shifted the entire work of the book around, "Oh, okay. Well, if anybody could be a connector, well, how do I do it?" And it's starting to think a little bit differently, and then for me, I like to be pragmatic and a little prescriptive and give you some tactics. So you can say, "Okay, did that check?"

Tegan Trovato ([08:59](#)):

What made you want to move out of the word networking? Because you're known as one of the top 25 professionals in the networking experts to watch from Forbes. Right? So, that's been your jam. What made you shift and really take this view with this book at this time?

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([09:18](#)):

So, the Connections Advantage actually follows the 11 Laws of Likability. So, it is foundational. And the truth is, I didn't want the word networking in the first book, the publisher because of SEO and all of that stuff made me put it in. And I'm like, "But it's not, it's only half of it." And they're like, "What's the other half?" And I'm like, "Relationships." And so we actually coin the phrase, Relationship Networking. And that one doesn't make me cringe quite as much because when we feel differently about it, we have an easier time doing it.

Tegan Trovato ([09:48](#)):

Totally agree.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([09:50](#)):

I don't throw away this idea of networking, but I want you to think about not networking for now and not networking for need. Right? Which is what you're talking about. But if we are thinking about you're always networking or switch that word and say, you're always relationship networking, or you're always making friends, or you're always connecting. Right? Pick the word that works for you so that you can feel that you can embrace it and infuse it into everything that you do, and the rest will follow.

Tegan Trovato ([10:26](#)):

I know. And the word connection is so ... I know you wrote this book. If I'm not mistaken, you're working on it before the pandemic, I have to assume.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([10:34](#)):

Oh yeah. This book came out like ... and we were doing [inaudible 00:10:37] in March of 2020. Yeah.

Tegan Trovato ([10:38](#)):

You thought you were? Right. Right, right. Yeah. What stands out for me is that, connection has become so important. It has become unpredictably robust as a concept. So I just think the timing, accidental but beautiful. Right? And that's part of what attracted me is the word connection. And I do appreciate the depth of the reframe around. It's not networking, it's not just because you need, it's also giving. And we're in a time where I know just from talking with folks personally at my work, people want to give, they really are hungry to give to the right causes, to the right people, but they're also hungry to receive in ways they've not been hungry before. So, I love this concept of wrapping it in the arms of connection as a theme.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([11:29](#)):

Bring me back to the whole idea of giving, right, because you just hit on two of the mindsets of a connector, there's seven and I'll list them for you, but you hit on the spirit of generosity and having a clear vision. So I want to come back to that. But before we do, when you talk about the need for connection, especially now, when most companies are not going back to work a 100% in person. So we have more isolation.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([11:54](#)):

I didn't call it social distancing, I called it physical distancing because we can still be social even if we are not in the same space. And when you think about some of the impacts of the isolation of the past two years on our mental health and on our physical health, social isolation has greater impact on your mortality than obesity and an equal impact as if you smoke 10 cigarettes a day for over a decade. So, we need those connections for our physical and our mental health.

Tegan Trovato ([12:30](#)):

Absolutely. Absolutely. And further to your point, even with the chosen separation that we had to create for physical safety, there's been so much polarization in terms of what science we believe and follow, what politics we believe and follow, what we associate with and don't, that even within the places we used to find connection, that connection dwindled. Right? So it's just blowing that up even more, just the need for connection has never been greater, I think.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([13:04](#)):

I actually think that if people could adopt some of these mindsets, it could change the dynamics of our country.

Tegan Trovato ([13:14](#)):

Yes.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([13:15](#)):

Lofty goal there, but-

Tegan Trovato ([13:17](#)):

Let's aim high.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([13:18](#)):

Let's aim high. Right?

Tegan Trovato ([13:19](#)):

I'm down with that. Yes.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([13:20](#)):

I actually changed the entire last section of the book to be, to expand and diversify our connections, to be an inclusive connector, to think about how do we connect with different groups of people, whether it be millennials or influencers or whoever it might be, because we tend to surround ourselves because of some of the theories and likability with people like us, is our comfort zone, it reinforces, it makes us feel part of a community, a tribe. Those are all great and wonderful things.

Tegan Trovato ([13:53](#)):

Never been truer. Yeah.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([13:56](#)):

But when we think about the Connection's Advantage, right, the title of the book is about faster, easier, better results. Whatever it is you're working on, whether it is health, happiness, new job, new client, new referral, whatever it is, you're going to get there faster, easier, and often with a better result through your connections. So, if we think about that advantage, when we expand, when we diversify, when we have access to people who think differently, who know different people, who bring different skills to the table, that's when we are going to exponentially amplify that advantage.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([14:34](#)):

So, we're motivated by what's in it for us, the natural law, it is in it for you to know and to build relationship with people who think differently, who are different, whether it is age, gender, orientation, ethnicity, demography, education level, functional, job, level in the hierarchy, industry. Like all of those things, we want to be the person who I know somebody.

Tegan Trovato ([15:03](#)):

Yes. Yes. And it feels great to do that. What about the seven mindsets? Do you care to go over those? We talked about two.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([15:12](#)):

So we didn't actually get to talk about two, I'm going to list all seven and then you get to pick.

Tegan Trovato ([15:16](#)):

Okay, love it.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([15:17](#)):

You started talking about something that made me think about the two.

Tegan Trovato ([15:19](#)):

We talked about generosity. Well, we touched on it. We didn't go deep. What was the other one that came out of that?

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([15:24](#)):

I have a clear vision. Okay. In the order of the book, let's see, actually I'll have my cheat sheet. I have a little bookmark.

Tegan Trovato ([15:32](#)):

Perfection.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([15:33](#)):

Yes. Connectors are open and accepting, they have a clear vision, they come from a place of abundance, they trust, they're social and curious, conscientious, and have a generous spirit. And so earlier, when you talked about connection being, not just receiving but giving, you really touched on two key mindsets, because for me, the spirit of generosity is the foundation of connection. It is not about reciprocity. And I know you used that word. And actually the law of giving in likability was originally that chapter was originally called the law of reciprocity, and it didn't sit right with me, because reciprocity is like the quid pro quo. And that's not what I want people [inaudible 00:16:15] thinking.

Tegan Trovato ([16:16](#)):

Good. Okay.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([16:17](#)):

I would rather you think about having a generous spirit, giving because you can and you want to without expectation. And what that does for you is it gives you permission and a willingness to receive, even if it's not from the person you gave to, because you infuse that mindset into your being, because you know you give, you almost feel like you've earned the receipt, even if it's from somebody else.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([16:39](#)):

So, in order to get the advantage, right, you can't get results if you don't know what results you're looking for. And that's why having a clear vision is so critical, and not just knowing what you want, but being willing to ask for it, because we all need help.

Tegan Trovato ([16:56](#)):

Can you say more about that particular one? So as you said, the seven, I wrote them down. That's one that I circled. Tell listeners more about what it even means to have a clear vision when it comes to connection.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([17:07](#)):

So, having a clear vision is not necessarily about anybody else, but you, it's what I'm working on, what I'm working towards, my vision for me. And that vision could be three months from now or three years from now. And there's no, when I say have a clear vision, it doesn't have to be your five to 10 year plan, because I don't have one. I can't think that far, I have never thought really beyond a 12 month frame, and my vision could be something small. So when the connectors bench came out, my first vision was, I want to get to a 100 reviews, and I would tell everybody, 100 reviews are appreciated. Right? And I'm over a 100 reviews now. And so then I might shift to a different goal.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([17:47](#)):

And so it could be, here's the one clear specific thing I'm working on because when you have that thing, that's clear, people then can help you or advise you or connect you or contribute to advancing that goal. But if you don't have clarity on it, if you don't know what you're working on, it could be, I want to make partner, it could be, I want a new job. It could be, I'm trying to learn about this industry. It could be, I'm building a business and looking for this type of client. The more clear you are, the more likely you are to achieve it, because when you know it, you should be talking about it. Right?

Tegan Trovato ([18:25](#)):

That's right.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([18:26](#)):

So, I really focus there on how do you ask without putting a relationship at risk?

Tegan Trovato ([18:31](#)):

Take us down a little [inaudible 00:18:32]

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([18:32](#)):

[inaudible 00:18:32]

Tegan Trovato ([18:32](#)):

I know, I know. I know listeners can't see it, but I'll put my hands on my hips and my chair, because what comes up for me is you talk about that, and forgive me, I don't recall if you spoke to this in the book, women tend to not stake their claims as clearly about what they want as men do. In my experience in leadership, they're wonderful leaders, they are great connectors, and I think that women tend to put themselves last in terms of stating what it is they want and then being very open to receiving it. This is my personal take, and I am speaking very generally. I will own that. So I'm curious-

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([19:12](#)):

There's definitely research behind it, you're not pulling it out of nowhere. Sally Helgesen, who wrote *How Women Rise*, and yeah, that's a fabulous book. She's one of the leaders in the research around female leadership. She talks about some habits that hold women back. And one of them is assuming people are going to notice the good work you're doing. So, there's a hesitancy to self promote. So, in terms of asking for what you want, I will share with you two clients, finance clients, one male, one female. So what happens is I'm hearing about bonus season, and the male client went in before bonuses were out and said, "This is what I expect."

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([19:58](#)):

And I had to coach the female client because she was venting about last year. And I said, "Well, what did you do to set expectations and to ask for what you thought you deserved?" And she hadn't. So we had to have her go in ahead of time. Because here's what happens. And I'm using random numbers. I think I should get a \$50,000 bonus, and my bonus comes in and it's 10, and I'm livid. Now, if I in advance said, "I think I should get a \$50,000 bonus, and they're planning to give me 10." They're going to be like, "Oh, I can't give her 10, that's too far away from what she thinks she should get. I'm going to give her 30. Still not all the way there, but a hell of a lot better than where she was."



Michelle Tillis Lederman ([20:51](#)):

So, with that clarity, we have to put forth what we want. And there's a lot of ways to do it. I talk about different ways to make an ask that can alleviate the fear that we have around it. And so, for the women and the men out there who are thinking, it's sometimes difficult to ask, I want you to ask yourself what it is that you're worried about. Are you worried about coming off too aggressive or pushy? Are you worried about offending them? Are you worried about if they want to say no, you make them uncomfortable? Are you worried about just being rejected and then feeling stupid? What are you worried about? Because that can drive what type of ask you make. And then I'll give you one ask that everybody can walk out of this podcast using because it's my favorite.

Tegan Trovato ([21:39](#)):

Great.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([21:39](#)):

Which is the non ask. When you have a goal, you can share it. And what you're doing is, you are being vulnerable with somebody else and you'll say something like, "So I have a goal of hitting a 100 reviews on my book?" And not ask you to make a review. I just shared a goal. And what that does is most people want to be valuable, most people want to help. And so, they're in their mind going, "Well, how could I help this person achieve that goal?" And if they don't come up with something, you might just say, "Do you have any advice for me?" Because just asking that, and again, they want to feel valuable and helpful and they might say, "I don't know. Let's think about it. Let me collaborate with you."

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([22:29](#)):

And just the collaboration, just the conversation might give you an idea, might spark something. And so, engaging them in helping you achieve that goal in whatever direct or indirect way is so, so powerful and creates connection because you then have another point to contact that person, to let them know how that conversation landed, impacted and resulted in something.

Tegan Trovato ([22:53](#)):

Yes. Oh my gosh. Look, that was worth its weight in gold. I hope everyone out there caught that. Not just the women, but also the men, because I do think generationally, there's a big difference too, with the thinking of keep your head down, do good work, you'll get paid, you'll get noticed. And that's just not true folks, that hasn't been true for a long time. But I think that there are whole generations, that is the core belief about how we show up at work. And so, what you just shared is super valuable for many, many folks. Thank you for that.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([23:21](#)):

We call it advertising. Right? So, people don't like self-promotion.

Tegan Trovato ([23:24](#)):

That's right.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([23:25](#)):

But self-promotion makes this twingy connotation in our own minds of, if I'm not being humble, I'm not being modest, especially for the women out there. Men can get away with it a little bit easier. Right? But

if we call it advertising, if we call it marketing, that feels a little different to us. And in the Stakeholder Centered Coaching approach that was designed by Marshall Goldsmith of, what got you here, won't get you there. One of the things he talks about is, advertise what you're working on, right, so people will then more likely see it because they don't see it unless it's put in front of them.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([24:04](#)):

And the more frequency that you share it, the more likely they're going to see whatever behavioral change or assist with whatever goal you have. So, if you want to call it advertising, I actually like calling it sharing.

Tegan Trovato ([24:18](#)):

Well done, well done. All the reframes.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([24:21](#)):

Yeah.

Tegan Trovato ([24:21](#)):

All the mindset shifts. Beautiful. Speaking of mindset shifts, here's another one, help our listeners with this one. When someone comes to the table thinking they're not good at connecting, how can they adopt a different mindset and also come to that understanding you've spoken to in the book about the spectrum of connectors?

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([24:42](#)):

Yes. Okay. So, this is key, because anyone who's probably even listening to this podcast is not a non connector. Right? You see the value in relationships and that's how we start moving our way up the spectrum. It is not a black or white A or B thing. It is A to Z, so to speak, but I make it only seven because that's just too complicated. So, there's two ways that we move up. An emerging connector, which I would venture to say that there is nobody who is less than emerging connector, it's somebody who values relationships and is testing out some of these mindsets and trying here and there, but just hasn't built the confidence, or the security in implementing these on a regular basis.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([25:22](#)):

So, as we move the spectrum, we are pulling the first level, which is responsiveness versus initiation. When we get requests for help, when we get requests for introductions, we are responding to them, and then you're responsive connector, and that's great. People know that you're somebody they can reach out to. But you're not yet initiating, you're not yet in the mindset where you're thinking, "Oh, I know somebody I should introduce you to, or oh, do you know this person? And can I invite you to that group?"

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([25:48](#)):

And by the way, Tegan and I, before this already had like, "Oh, I could introduce you to this if you're doing that." Because that's the mindset of initiation. Once you're initiating as well as responding, you're an acting connector, and that could be enough. When you pull the other lever, which is breadth and depth, that's when you go the upper echelons. So when you go deep, and deep could be in an industry, a geography, a function, you're going deep in something. That was like the chime of, yes, this is magic.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([26:24](#)):

When we go deep, we become a niche connector. Everybody in the legal field in New York or something like that. When you go broad, and that was the diversification that we talked about earlier, all those different ways that we could diversify, that's when you become a super connector, and if you cross your country's borders, then you're a global super connector. So, we have all these levels that we can go up and down. But one of the things that you said to me was, people who think they're not good at this. First of all, there is a three minute free quiz that you can take to see where you are to, first of all, give yourself a little credit for the things that you are already doing. You're on the spectrum. Right? And that has a different connotation in my world than doesn't some but-

Tegan Trovato ([27:06](#)):

Yes. Right, right, right.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([27:07](#)):

You're on the connector spectrum. And so you'll then get ideas of how do you move up. But the other people that often say I'm not good at this is the introverted community. Of which most of my clients are part of. And I will tell you some of the best connectors I know are introverts. And so when you say I'm not good at this, what are the things I want? And by the way, extroverts, I want you to do this too. I want you to think about what strengths you bring to the table naturally and what are your stretches?

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([27:36](#)):

So where the introverts natural strengths are listening, connecting in the one-on-one, which is really where connection forms and not putting people off, like not coming on too strong. So, the extrovert, their natural strength is putting people at ease, bringing people into conversation, keeping a conversation going, and a willingness to share information. So you can see the opposite is where the stretch is. Whereas extroverts need to focus a little bit more on listening, right, and giving the floor to somebody else, and not oversharing, perhaps. I might have been accused of that, once or twice.

Tegan Trovato ([28:15](#)):

Ditto Kiddo. I'm with you on that one. Yes.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([28:18](#)):

TMI should be my tagline.

Tegan Trovato ([28:22](#)):

That's awesome.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([28:23](#)):

The introverts, their stretch is really about not trying to force it. They don't have to be the life of the party. They're already putting people at ease, focusing on those environments. But what I want them to stretch is their willingness to share. A lot of times they are great at inquiry and listening and pulling information and making somebody feel heard and listened to, but then they walk away and they heard nothing about you.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([28:49](#)):

And so being a little bit of vulnerable when we think about that conversation, think about a topic that you're willing to contribute to as well, and sprinkle in, here's a little bit about me, and then go back to them. So, I always think of it a little bit like a dance.

Tegan Trovato ([29:04](#)):

Well done. Very digestible, and hopefully put people at ease, because I think it can really just seem so daunting to even kick off and get started. And I always appreciate the shout out to introverts because many of them are leaders, many more of them should be recognized for leadership roles. That's a whole other conversation we could probably have. I'm also married to an introvert, so with you. And most of the people I love are introverts. I don't know how that happened, but it's true.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([29:34](#)):

Because it's a great balance.

Tegan Trovato ([29:36](#)):

It is.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([29:38](#)):

As long as we are not over leveraging our [inaudible 00:29:41] and so, as coaches-

Tegan Trovato ([29:45](#)):

Well said.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([29:45](#)):

When we think about our clients, I'm writing a 360 right now, what happens with these reports are that, we see all these great things about somebody. I have somebody who's highly analytical and extremely intelligent and very direct communicator. And those are all fabulous, really great qualities. But when over leveraged, what's the result? Makes people feel stupid.

Tegan Trovato ([30:10](#)):

Shuts down the room.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([30:11](#)):

Yep. Can rebuff people's ideas. All those things. So, when it comes to introversion and extroversion, we can over leverage. And it was something that I had to learn and I'll share, I'll be vulnerable, which is easy for the extrovert. Right? But not really. Vulnerability is not easy for anybody. My now husband told me that we might have been dating a lot earlier if I shut up long enough for him to ask me out.

Tegan Trovato ([30:37](#)):

He had to have already gotten married by then, because I know that's not an early admission to have. Right.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([30:42](#)):

It was early on. He said I was a little intense, and that literally ... Once him and his best friend asked me for some advice and I came on really strong and they both literally physically backed away from me at the table. And I was like, "Oh."

Tegan Trovato ([30:59](#)):

Is that too much guys? Sorry. Yeah.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([31:02](#)):

I'm like, "Well, but you asked."

Tegan Trovato ([31:05](#)):

I get it. This is really great for our execs listening because we often can come across that way and aren't aware anymore, because we're often paid to show up magnanimously or in the room in a big way. So I think that's a really great reminder that it's often, we have to just have our sensors up for how it's being received. It's important when we're creating connection that we're being self aware about that.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([31:29](#)):

This actually brings us to one of the other mindsets, which is to be open and accepting. An open and accepting mindset, we often think about it as open and accepting to somebody else, but we also need to be open and accepting of ourselves. And that's somewhat harder because we all have what I call unique charms. I just shared one of mine. I can be intense. And I talk a lot. Silence, I admit makes me little uncomfortable and I feel it up. Do, a unique charm is a quality about ourself that is core to who we are, it is part of our authenticity. And at the same time, doesn't always work for us. My husband's a humor. I love the fact that after 17 years he still makes me laugh, but sometimes he goes for the joke at the wrong time.

Tegan Trovato ([32:18](#)):

She is not in the moment.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([32:19](#)):

Unique charm. So, understanding when we need to flex and adapt really thinking about in this moment, what is the best use of my strength? How can I serve in this moment? And sometimes that is under leveraging our strengths. So, it is being very thoughtful and not ... Authenticity is obviously, chapter one of my first book, but authenticity doesn't give us permission to not think about the other person in the interaction.

Tegan Trovato ([32:49](#)):

Thank you for saying that so crisply. I think I have seen a lot of leaders use their authenticity as an excuse for flattening out folks around them sometimes. So, that is very well said, Michelle, thank you.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([33:05](#)):

It's funny. I was once doing a talk at my old university and I'm somebody who wants to welcome everybody, make them feel great in the room. And so I'm at the door, as people are coming in, shaking hands, talking to people, walking them over to their tables and things like that. And this one woman held me later. And by the way, the talk I was doing was called You The Brand.

Tegan Trovato ([33:28](#)):

Okay.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([33:30](#)):

And I was being authentic and I was being my brand. And one of the things I allow people to do in that talk is to tell me what they think of me. And they don't have to be nice. I do it towards the end, but I ask them early on. I say, I want you to think right now about the opinion you formed, what are the adjectives that you'd use to describe me? And then I'm going to ask you later.

Tegan Trovato ([33:47](#)):

Are you serving alcohol at this event?

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([33:49](#)):

No.

Tegan Trovato ([33:50](#)):

I'm kidding. I'm kidding.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([33:50](#)):

I might need it, but no. I have gotten used to, and I'm aware of all the bad things people will say now. I say [inaudible 00:33:58] they don't. Sometimes they don't want to be mean. So literally the slide says, you don't have to be nice. I can take ... I ask them if it's changed. Right? Because we tend to make our decisions very quickly. So this woman, when I was walking in, I could tell I was coming on a little strong. So I tried to back off and she told me later in front of everybody because I bring the audience into it. And she said, "I almost turned around and left."

Tegan Trovato ([34:21](#)):

Wow.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([34:22](#)):

[inaudible 00:34:22] was so much to her, that she almost turned around left. Yet she sat almost in the front and she said, "I realize now what it was and what your intention was. But in that moment, it was too much." She goes, "But I also saw that you saw it." And so, even though we teach these things, we might be great at something and know it, it's still hard to sometimes implement.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([34:51](#)):

And that constant feedback loop that we can create for ourselves and as leaders, I strongly recommend that constant feedback loop of asking a simple question like, "Hey, what's one idea you have for me to improve my leadership?" And asking it monthly, or, "Hey, what's one thing you think I should stop or start doing?" Quick little light questions and ask for observable, measurable, tangible, actionable ideas. That's what we call feed forward, not feed backward, because I can't change the past.

Tegan Trovato ([35:26](#)):

That's right.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([35:26](#)):

So give me something I can do.

Tegan Trovato ([35:28](#)):

That's right. Leaders and execs are so stretched as you know, maybe more than ever. So I imagine that many of them, as we're talking about, get out there, connect, give, there's part of them that's like, "Oh, I want it so bad." And there's got to be another part for most of them that are like, "And when will I do this?" So, what's your advice for leaders on how they maintain that network without making it yet another part-time job that they need to adopt?

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([35:56](#)):

Absolutely. And really what you're talking about is the mindset of abundance. And one of the things that none of us have is an abundance of time.

Tegan Trovato ([36:06](#)):

That's right.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([36:07](#)):

So, I do actually have some very tactical things in the book around how to find underutilized time, and I don't mean our downtime because I think that is, downtime is utilized in terms of resharping the saw and all of that stuff. But there's underutilized time. So for example, I like to do my exercise every morning, I walk, whether it's on the Peloton or outside, and I've now taken to doing walk and talks, and I let whoever it is know, and I'll be like, "I'm on a hill."

Tegan Trovato ([36:36](#)):

Right.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([36:38](#)):

And I'm now basically getting a call done while I'm doing my morning exercise and I'm more efficient. So, I have had meetings at [inaudible 00:36:48] I have had breakfasts after the gym and all sweaty, and these are professional meetings. I hired somebody I met at the dog park. So, understand that when you are a connector, you are infusing the mindsets and the behaviors into everything that you're already doing. It's not that you have to make time for it, it's that you're already talking to people, you're already online at the supermarket. You're already on the soccer fields for the game, you're already wherever it might be.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([37:19](#)):

And in those moments you are being social and curious, in those moments, you're being conscientious, in those moments, you're being open and accepting, in those moments, you're building trust. So that's one piece of it. Right? One piece is finding underutilized time. And the other piece of it is, having a system, and I cringe a little bit with this, I don't have a CRM, I don't have any crazy like. "I'm going to talk to this people." I don't go crazy. Here's my system. If you come into my head, I write your name in my calendar.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([37:52](#)):

And so, I really try, sometimes I don't catch it on the first time, but then something happens and they come into your head more than once, 1, 2, 3 times. And when I put the name in my calendar, their name will pop up, and then I'll be like, "Oh, let me send them a quick note, let me put a little note on LinkedIn, let me go look at their post and comment on something." Let me do something to connect in some way with this person that came into my mind. And sometimes it simply is an email saying, "You keep coming into my mind, I've been thinking about you, give me an update. What's going on in your life?"

Tegan Trovato ([38:22](#)):

Right. Yeah. By this connection? It is.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([38:25](#)):

Yeah. And then I might just say something like, "Here's my quick update." By the way, I do this with the CEO of a company, a public company that I had met, I think we're going on 16 years ago, because I think I was pregnant with my first kid, and I remember him saying to me, "Life is a lot less fun with kids."

Tegan Trovato ([38:43](#)):

You're like, "Thanks for the blessing. Okay."

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([38:47](#)):

I know, and I'm like, "I'm eight months pregnant here." I'm like, "Why would you say that to me?" He's like, "It's a lot more meaningful, but a lot less fun." And I've never forgotten it. And I get it now, it's a different kind of fun. Right?

Tegan Trovato ([38:59](#)):

Exactly.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([39:01](#)):

Anyway, we won't go down that path. But my [inaudible 00:39:03] known for a really long time, I got introduced by somebody and we reconnect maybe once a year. And it's usually me sending him my annual email saying, "Hey, it's the holiday season, let's go for our walk or let's reconnect." And he almost always says yes or he'll be like, "Okay, here's some options." And we chat for hour, hour and a half and that's it for a year. But that's enough.

Tegan Trovato ([39:34](#)):

Was such quality time, it sounds like too. Yeah.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([39:38](#)):

We were in a bar once, because it used to be every holiday until COVID, and I had been to his house and I was invited to a party here and there, and his nephew needed some coaching. And so, he sent him to me and he ... So we've made introductions for each other, we've just stayed in each other's orbits and been a resource for each other. And obviously, he's far more successful and he's got a wiki page and all that stuff.

Tegan Trovato ([40:03](#)):

He's known.



Michelle Tillis Lederman ([40:04](#)):

He's known. And so, we're in a bar once during one of our get togethers and we're chatting, his kids are older than mine, and I said to him at one point, I'm like, "You know you're my mentor. Right?" And he just smiled and laughed. Because it didn't have to be formal or official, it was simply like, "You have been this person that influences me in my life-"

Tegan Trovato ([40:30](#)):

And you wanted to acknowledge it?

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([40:31](#)):

[inaudible 00:40:31] your advice.

Tegan Trovato ([40:33](#)):

Yeah. But all by keeping that annual check in alive.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([40:38](#)):

Yes, all by just-

Tegan Trovato ([40:38](#)):

That's really powerful.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([40:40](#)):

Once a year. So, you don't have to think about a weekly thing. Here's one more idea for you, because I like to be tactical. The least productive hour of the work week is 4:00 to 5:00 PM on Friday. So from 4:00 to 5:00 PM on Friday, nobody wants to do real work. So from 4:00 to 5:00 PM on Friday, there's an hour a week where you can send some notes, have a fun little phone call, do a coffee. Maybe you say every Friday, somewhere for five minutes from 4:00 to 5:00, I will do one thing to reach out to one person. That's enough.

Tegan Trovato ([41:16](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. That's a great challenge. I love that. Michelle, I feel like we could talk for hours. I just want listeners to know ... and I have one more question for you here in a second, but I want listeners to know, we're going to be sure to share your LinkedIn newsletter link, where they can find the book, that quiz you mentioned, as well as your websites and other places to find you on social. So we'll be sure that everybody can easily find you and your work.

Tegan Trovato ([41:40](#)):

And in closing, I want to ask you our signature question, and just reminding you and listeners that the podcast was created to discover the behaviors, practices, beliefs, and skills that all the future leaders need in order to keep leading our systems that are continuing to change at warp speed. So, to get your read, Michelle, on what's required of future leaders, just finish the sentence for me. Leaders of the future will ...

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([42:07](#)):

Leaders of the future will be connected. There will be connected leaders that create connected cultures, that create connected teams. And as a result, they will have higher engagement, retention, loyalty, productivity, and bottom lines.

Tegan Trovato ([42:27](#)):

And that's how you drop the mic. That is fantastic. Thank you so much. Michelle, again, thank you for your wonderful work that you're putting into the world and for the generosity of connecting with me and our listeners via this podcast, we have learned so much from you today. Thank you so much.

Michelle Tillis Lederman ([42:45](#)):

Thanks for having me on.

Outro ([42:48](#)):

Thanks for listening to this episode of the Workplace Forward podcast, where leaders and executives can stay ahead of the curve on emerging leadership ideas and self care best practices, guided by executive coach Tegan Trovato and her expert guests. Please take 60 seconds to help others discover the Workplace Forward podcast by going to iTunes to subscribe, give five stars and leave a comment. Want to learn more about Bright Arrow Coaching and leadership development? Visit the website at [www.brightarrowcoaching.com](http://www.brightarrowcoaching.com). See you next time. And while you're filling your team's cups, remember to take care of yourself too.