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"Walk with Your Head Up": Karen Clark Cole talks to Patricia Kathleen About Opportunity, Mentors, and Leading Blink

On August 7, 2019, our CEO and co-founder Karen Clark Cole was interviewed by Patricia Kathleen on her podcast.



By [Karen Clark Cole](#)

In this podcast series, host Patricia Kathleen interviews female and female-identified entrepreneurs, founders, business owners, and gurus across all industries to investigate women (and women identified individuals) in business today. This series is designed to further the conversation of the changing climate of female (and female-identified individuals) in entrepreneurial roles worldwide. Karen Clark Coles talked to Patricia Kathleen in our San Diego studio this summer.

Image Above: (L to R) Nickelle Sletteland (General Manager, San Diego), Karen Clark Cole (CEO and co-founder), Kelly Franznick (CIO and co-founder) at our studio opening in San Diego.

*"The goal is to be the world's leading UX firm, and I think, well, nobody else is doing that, so why not us? Somebody's got to do it, and we're perfectly positioned, we've been doing this for a long time, and we're really good at it. That's where we're headed." - **Karen Clark Cole***

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Transcript

Patricia Kathleen

Hi, my name is Patricia Kathleen. This podcast series will contain interviews I conduct with female and female-identified entrepreneurs, founders, co-founders, business owners, and industry gurus. This podcast speaks with women and women-identified individuals across all industries in order to shed light for those just getting into the entrepreneurial game as well as those deeply embedded within it. Histories, current companies, and lessons learned are explored in the conversations I have with these insightful, and talented powerhouses.

This series is designed to investigate a female and female identified perspective in what has largely been a male dominated industry in the USA to date. I look forward to contributing to the national dialogue about the long overdue change of women in American business arenas, and in particular entrepreneurial roles.

You can contact me via my media company website, wilde.agency that's W-I-L-D-E.agency, or my personal website, patriciakathleen.com. Thanks for listening. Now, let's start the conversation.

Hi, everyone and welcome back. This is Patricia Kathleen. I am gobsmacked today to be sitting down Karen Clark Cole. She is the CEO and co-founder of Blink. Welcome, Karen.

Karen Clark Cole

Thank you.

Patricia Kathleen

Thank you. There's not a brief bio on Karen. If I was going to glaze over it quickly, it wouldn't do it justice, so I'm going to get into, I think the briefest bio I could absolutely handle describing Karen before we launch into our podcast today.

Karen is the CEO and co-founder of Blink UX. Karen is primarily focused on Blink's culture, employees, communicating the company vision, and setting the company's growth strategy. She's also the chief operations officer at Blink. Karen began her career studying fine arts in Vancouver BC at the Emily Carr College of Art and Design. She holds a degree in art history and visual arts from the University of Victoria and is a graduate of the information technology in multimedia program from Capilano University Vancouver.

Karen also started a PHD program in values driven leadership at the Benedictine University in 2015. Through her work at Blink, Karen was a winner of the 2016 Enterprising Women of the Year Award, and she was a finalist for Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award in 2015.

In 2016, Blink was listed in Forbes Magazine's best 25 small companies in America list and has won the Puget Sound Business Journal Washington's fastest growing private companies award in 2015 and 2012. Seattle's Business Magazine Tech Impact Silver Award in 2015, the Women President's Organization's 50 Fastest Growing Women Led Companies Worldwide Award in 2014

and was listed on Inc. Magazine's top 5000 fastest growing companies in America's list in 2015, 2014, 2013 and 2012.

Patricia Kathleen

Karen is an active member and speaker for the International Leadership Association. An active member in the Small Giants Community and a board member for the World Trade Center. Karen is currently the executive director and president of the board for the non-profit organization she founded in early 2014 Girls Can Do. Girls Can Do is an event series for girls with the mission to inspire a generation of possibility thinkers and ignite a vision for equal opportunity.

Karen currently writes a column for forbes.com on the Entrepreneurs Channel and has been written about in Inc. Magazine, Puget Sound Business Journal, Geekwire Magazine, Seattle Business Magazine, Center for Values Driven Leadership, Saint Margaret School, Chapter Be, LTD Daily, and the Pacific Institute. Karen was born and raised in Victoria, Canada and loves to ski, run, garden, kiteboard and hang out with her amazing daughter.

That is such an amazing bio. I love it. I don't think I touched on ... We were talking earlier what is your most favorite, or a key piece that I think I missed with a Small Giants Community. What was left off there?

Karen Clark Cole

The Forbes Award was connected with the Small Giants Community.

Patricia Kathleen

Okay.

Karen Clark Cole

When we got the top 25 Companies in the country, that was connected with Small Giants.

Patricia Kathleen

Okay. That's an honor.

Karen Clark Cole

They're a great organization.

Patricia Kathleen

That's a litany. I think I might just hold that up anytime I talk to anyone read this, [inaudible 00:05:04]. For all of you listening really quickly, I'm going to follow the roadmap that I do with a lot of these series, and we're going to first touch on, I'm going to let Karen kind of expand on her academic history and professional life following that. Then we're going to jump straight into Blink, and some of the really interesting aspects happening with the company culture, and exciting things on the horizon goals for the next three to five years. Expansion always.

Patricia Kathleen

Then we're going to get into the Girls Can Do non-profit. Then we will wrap up the conversation with advice Karen has for those of you out there and listening. So, will you drop us straight into your academic background?

Karen Clark Cole

Sure. From high school I graduated and then went straight into art school. At art school I was focused on photography, mostly print making. I studied lithography and other forms of printmaking. The most important thing though about that particular bit of education that I had is the critical thinking classes that we took.

In art school, a big part of what you do in art school is you put your work on the wall. You learn to give feedback. You learn to get feedback in this critique forum. A part of that is the many classes that we all had to take in support of that around critical thinking. Essentially, what they were doing is training us how to think outside the box, which I always say every CEO should go to art school for that very reason. It really set me up for life.

Then after that, at the time Emily Carr didn't have a degree program and I wanted to get a degree, they do now, but I switched over and finished up in Victoria where I was raised at UVIC there with an art history degree, with a minor in visual arts. So, love of art. I thought I was going to be an artist. Then I decided at some point in that time that I didn't really want to be a starving artist and I wasn't that good, so I should probably do something else.

In between finishing at UVIC, I did a lot of traveling around Europe during school. Then when I was done, I spent a year traveling around Europe and worked in Spain for a year. Then I eventually came back and went to, what I call Multimedia School, it was called Information Technology in Vancouver. At the time, this was really when CD-ROMs were quite popular, but the internet was not. This was before the web, which is sort of hard to imagine. It was in the early, mid 90s.

The focus there was on taking my art school training and turning into digital. Graphic design was really my emphasis there, and I thought if I can learn computer graphics, then that might have better future for a job. The real inspiration there was, I'll never forget it, there was a moment ... I had an uncle in Vancouver who was a well-established graphic designer, and he showed me on his computer, this big old Mac computer and stick a disc in. He showed me this CD-ROM that Peter Gabriel had made for his album. I could not believe it. It was the coolest thing I had ever seen.

There were rooms and you click something, and sound would play, and people would move. It was an interactive CD-ROM. That was the first time I'd ever seen anything like it. It combined sort of everything I loved. It was the music, and the movement, and the visuals, and the storytelling. Then at that moment I knew that's what I'm going to do.

That's when I went back to the Multimedia School in Vancouver. At that school, they taught us everything. We had to take apart computers, learn how to code, learn how to do lots of heavy-duty computer graphics and write stories. At the end of that we each had our own story CD-ROM that we built everything on it.

Patricia Kathleen

How did that sit well with your artistic history? I like this because there's an argument that you have artists and then you have scientists and computer programmers, and I don't believe that. I think those personalities are [crosstalk 00:09:13].

Karen Clark Cole

Programming is very creative. I love it. This is in the days when we were ... Well, for this program, we were working in Director, which is long gone now, but it was a fun thing, and HTML. It was before WYSIWYG, so I was actually coding HTML, and it's very creative because you do something and then you see it, you see your art move. It was so fun for me. Director in particular is a program that's really meant for moving visualization, so it was motion graphics, a lot of that kind of stuff.

Patricia Kathleen

Nice. So, you found no difficulty, [crosstalk 00:09:43].

Karen Clark Cole

Oh, I loved it. It was super fun.

Patricia Kathleen

Excellent.

Karen Clark Cole

Yeah, super fun. Then from that program, that sort of launched my career into the digital world that I'm in now. I should say before that there were ... It was in my late 20s at the time, I guess. I had been messing around quite a bit before I went back to this Multimedia School. I had, oh God, every job known to man. My favorite jobs that I tell people about are I was a flagger at a construction site, I was a security guard. I life guarded a lot. I worked in a lot of restaurants.

So, I started all of these jobs, which I think have built appreciation for just sort of understanding people around me, particularly in a restaurant, you got to work really hard. Then I also just appreciated hard work. Anyways, so I went back to Multimedia School, and then I got a job right after that working for a company that developed cultural CD-ROMs. At the time they were educational. This was again instead of the internet, because it really was just getting going then and still the mainstream. We worked on a big project for the National Archives of Canada, and it would go into schools, and people would buy this to learn about all the history of Canada.

Obviously, it's really kind of irrelevant now, but it was super fun, and very intensely creative environment, this company that I worked for. Then from there I went and worked for another company where we were more web focused because I thought this is sort of where it's all going. I worked for them for a while, and this is at the time where the graphic designer would typically be doing the interaction side of it on websites, because it wasn't a separate career at that point to be designing the information movement, and sort of the interactivity of a website.

I found that that was the part that I liked most, because I liked the logical side of it, and I liked the organizing of the information, and the content, and the interactivity. When you clicked on something, where would you go and what would that thing be called and how do you make it intuitive? I really naturally enjoyed that.

I'm an organizer like you, so in the early days of Blink when we were interviewing people, I would always ask them this weird question, which is, "What does your sock drawer look like?" If they were like, "Well, it's organized by small socks blue socks, ankle socks, high socks, and it's all nice. You could open the drawer and know exactly which was what," then they would get the job. This is how I am, like you go through my house, you go through the linen drawer, and like all the little ones are combined, and separate from the big ones. The spices are all nicely organized. I've sort of naturally loved organizers.

Patricia Kathleen

User interface, the entire house.

Karen Clark Cole

Exactly. I was sort of born for this thing. I wanted to do more of that, and in Vancouver you couldn't get a job just focused on the information architecture, really in all of Canada. However, the industry was really picking up more quickly in the States. I managed to get a job in Seattle, and so I moved down and started working for a pretty big web development company in Seattle where I could do this job full-time.

That's sort of how the early stages of education mapped into those early jobs. Then I had a couple jobs in between there, actually. I went back to Victoria for a while and worked on some educational CD-ROMs. So, really digital right from the beginning.

Patricia Kathleen

What about the birth for Blink? What tells that story?

Karen Clark Cole

Yeah, so I came down and worked for this full-service development company. What was happening is this thing that we had, that was still new, called information architecture at the time. This company was one of the few in the country that really had it as a separate discipline within the organization. Clients were coming to us, and we were largely working for big software companies at the time, and they were building ... This was when the dot-com burst was picking up. It was in full swing, and there was no side and end at this point. This was in the late 90s. Yeah, late '99, I believe.

This is when software was still being built by engineers. So, it wasn't designed, and there was no thinking about who was going to use this thing, how could it be easy for them? It was just built by what made sense to the engineers. This was totally common, and then it would be shipped with a giant manual. I mean, you look at the old days of Microsoft, your Word would be shipped with a huge manual, and good luck trying to figure it out, and that was the expectation.

Patricia Kathleen

I feel like searching the internet, Netscape in the beginning, every little word perfect. No misspellings. No human error. Humans not doing that network, right.

Karen Clark Cole

Yeah, so it was really very much like that. What was happening though is that there were a few companies, Apple is one of them for sure, where they started doing it a little bit differently. They were designing their software, and so then people sort of got a glimpse of, wow it doesn't have to be terrible and awful.

Imagine building a big building with no architect. The builders just got to come in one day and start hammering nails and putting up boards wherever they felt like. Whatever it made sense to them, and you hope that all of the construction people were in alignment at least, so they could be working together, but they may not be. Then somebody would have to move in and you're

like, “Well, why is the door on the side of the building, and the stairs on the other side?” It would be like that.

The complexity and the importance of these big software systems, it was really the same, but with no architects. So, we came in and this new field started developing of designing the software from every single instance. We would start with research understanding who was using it, understand their motivations, what's their context of use? Why are they coming to this? How can we help them? How can it make their lives better, easier, more meaningful? Then really going to work and taking that as input into our designs.

Then our designs would end up being complete blueprints of the system. We would design what we call wire frames, which are grade scale skeleton sketches of the system. A page would look like line drawings essentially of this is what the page needs to look like, these are exactly what the links need to be called, and this is exactly where they will go. Each page of where it would go would be mapped out, and we would start at the homepage, and we would go all the way down to the very end of a transaction, and make sure that it worked. Then we would do that for an entire system.

If you think about online banking, there's a lot of screens that come up before you get your money moved. We would design all of that and what's the whole experience like? What was happening though is that these big software companies, they wanted to hire this firm we worked for called Siteworks at the time to do just this piece that they didn't have and come in and work with their teams. They had strategists. They had developers. They had QA people. They had visual designers, but they didn't have this information architecture piece.

This company couldn't do that, because in order for them to stay in business and keep everyone busy, they needed big million-dollar contracts that had the whole shebang, and they couldn't farm out these little pieces. I just saw that, and we were being pulled into all of the sales calls to talk about what we were doing, and how it was different. It sort of became the big thing that everybody wanted, so I thought, well what if we just went and did that on our own and only did that, then we could perhaps help these companies.

I convinced my co-worker who became my co-founder to leave, and we did this together. We always describe it as he had a lot more experienced at doing this than I did at the time. I always describe it as he was the brains and I was the guts, which was the perfect combination really.

Patricia Kathleen

Yeah, it is. How long did it take you to convince yourself, do you recall? I like moments when we think-

Karen Clark Cole

Six months.

Patricia Kathleen

It took you that long to convince your co-founder, or yourself?

Karen Clark Cole

No, it six months before I saw the opportunity. Then immediately I thought we should do this in about 10 seconds.

Patricia Kathleen

That's it, just let's go.

Karen Clark Cole

Yeah, there was one moment, after a sales call and I actually do remember the moment, I was sitting on the ... There's a two-story building, and I was in the bottom story sitting at the desk of this sales guy and I was saying, "We should just go do that." He's like, "You should just go do that." It was total validation at that moment. I'm like, "That's it."

Patricia Kathleen

Johnny said so, let's go.

Karen Clark Cole

Right, because he's just validated that he was seeing this across the board, not just in the opportunities that I had seen. So, right away I went to work trying to figure out how to do this.

Patricia Kathleen

How did you know your co-founder? Did you scope out a series of people at that job, or did you know exactly who you were going to take?

Karen Clark Cole

There were only three and four of us at one point on the team. He was the senior person in the group who had hired me, and we got along really well, so we were friends. He was the only obvious one. For me at the time I had no risk. I was renting a house at the time. I had my cat, and I had my old '77 pickup.

Patricia Kathleen

Which I want with a description of a dent in the side.

Karen Clark Cole

Green with a dent in the side. My grandpa gave it to me, and it had got a lot of miles. It was sort of why not for me and for Kelly, my co-founder it was ... He had to think about it a little bit longer. He had a wife and they were about to start a family. All of a sudden going from a nice salary to nothing was not as easy for him to do. We finally decided let's give it a try, and we're very employable, so if it doesn't work out, we'll go get a job somewhere else.

We did that, and I managed to get space for us just down the street. Literally a block away, there was an ad agency that had some free space, and they wanted to learn more about the digital world. They subleased the space to us. I think we paid nothing actually at first. It was important to us that we had a real presence, that we weren't doing this in our garage. We wanted to look legitimate from the beginning, because we had been working in this business and saw, as consultants, we had to look ... If we were going to be selling these expensive services, which they were quite expensive, then we had to look like we had our act together.

Clients generally for some reason, I don't really know why, they always wanted to come ... At least when we were working at this other company together, the clients always wanted to come to us. We wanted to make sure that that was still possible. We had a great place right in Post Alley, which is very iconic in Seattle. Right away we had a receptionist. We had a conference room, and a photocopier, and a fridge, and desks, and all the things that you needed to be legitimate. It was really great, and somebody even answering the phone. That worked out really well. That was eight months after I had got there.

Patricia Kathleen

Do you think that that pushed you, that immediate kind of like all these visual markers and slightly physical as well? Do you think that that helped legitimize it in your head, or were you legitimate from the moment you just started?

Karen Clark Cole

No, I think you're right. I think it really does help. For me, I don't work at home. Well occasionally I do, but it's important to me to get dressed and go to work. For example, the clothes I wear to work are not the clothes that I ever wear when I'm not at work, and vice versa. Because part of it is, I sort of put on work, and it also helps me decompress from work because the minute I get home at the end of the day, I take off my work clothes, I change, and I put on my sweats. I'm like, okay, great. That's the distinction for me.

Part of this too is I like to go into the office, and I like to see that I'm at work. Because I'm focused, it sort of helps me focus on the environment, that's correct at the time, which is work. Going to work is important for me, and I think it did. It helped us come in, and people expect you to be there, and ensuring you sort of see how the world sees you, which I think is also really important, because we can sort of exist in our own little basement, and not get a sense of is this meaningful or not?

Being in a physical space where we're interacting, even with the other people in the ad agency, sort of hearing them express how interesting and unique it was, the work that we were doing was, certainly great and validating, absolutely.

Patricia Kathleen

Do you think that that carried in? You've got the two of you. How much of that, like personal dialogue, or culture, your personal culture, do you think started to help build that, which became this huge titan of Blink?

Karen Clark Cole

Well, I can tell you Kelly and I are aligned to this day. Almost 20 years later you could ask each of us, in fact he's here, I'll introduce you to him, he's in the office here, we're in San Diego today, we will always give you the same answer, which is quality is number one. Taking care of our clients, treating them like friends, understanding what their problem is, and then helping them.

If they're coming to something from a, we have this new product or this new idea that we think is going to make a difference in the world and we don't really know how to design it, or interview our customers to get the right information out of them, can you help us? Like, yeah, that sounds fun. So, we basically just come together and help each other. They've got a cool idea. We know how to design it and help them in the way that's meaningful for their customers, not for us.

Then when we come together, it's a magic moment. There's no chucking it over the fence. There's no you hire us, we'll go away, and invent this great thing and give it back to you. We always tell clients when you hire us, you're going to spend twice as much time working with us, then half the time, so don't expect to have efficiencies in your schedule by hiring us. It's going to take you more effort, but the results will be outrageous. They really always are because we approach it like that. It's a very close relationship, and we are on team together, and so they're just part of our team.

We call them like that, you know, this is the team. They're representing their business. They're representing the genesis of the product idea, or the business model, you know, those aspects of it, and the domain for sure, and we're representing the design side. It's our job to get up to speed pretty quickly on the domain because we work across all industries, but with their help and understand ... We spend so much time deeply understanding their customers that it's just such a great melding of minds by the end of that.

Patricia Kathleen

That's the culture, the relationship between you and clients. Can you speak more to the culture at Blink within itself?

Karen Clark Cole

Sure. That though I think it's really important, because that's the basis of it. That's how Kelly and I started is like, "Hey." The most important thing at Blink is to understand that authentic is our one value. We boil it down to one word, because when you have more than that, I think it's too hard to remember. There's one basic thing, which is we aren't pulling the wool over anyone's eyes. We are authentic in our relationships with each other in the company, in that if you need help you should ask for it immediately.

No one has to pretend that they know something they don't, or that they don't have as much experience, or they could use some help figuring out an idea, my God, we hired you because you're smart, so let's all help each other. That is very prevalent in the company, and how Kelly and I always were, and still are. That feeds right to our clients. It's being authentic with our clients and saying, "Hey, I'm not sure about that," or, "We can't help you with that, but let me hook you up with someone who can," or like, "Let's figure this out together."

Not being afraid to be like that is really an important part of our culture. That takes people who have a certain amount of confidence, and willingness to be vulnerable in some ways, who are employees. They're willing ... It's okay. You don't have to make something up just so you don't know. It's fine. Then the other side of it is it's a massive amount of care, and attention, and hard work.

For example, right now, Kelly is here and he's gluing something. I asked him what he's doing, and he said, because we have a big open house in our San Diego office tomorrow night. I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "Oh, I'm fixing the doorbell. It's awful." I said, "Oh my God, I just ... I sent you a text." I didn't know he was here, and I was saying, "Can you fix the doorbell?" Even after 20 years we're doing stuff like that. Not because it's anyone's job, or not anyone's job, because it needs to get done.

Patricia Kathleen

Both founders thought of it.

Karen Clark Cole

Right. No, one was surprised we [crosstalk 00:26:02] this level of detail. That's why we have had such a great partnership over the years. These are the things that the company is seated on, and this is what we care about. So, when we interview people, we talk about these kinds of things. If the coffee is not made, then just go make it. You don't not do it because it's not in your job description, we all chip in here. We try to keep that culture of close family even as we're getting bigger.

It's definitely harder and you need more people sort of helping to move that ball, to keep that culture, and hold it. It's totally possible, and you just have to pay close attention.

Patricia Kathleen

Well yeah, and I'm curious about that as well, because there is a dialogue, it seems like a little of delicate dancing every now and again. You have several different offices across the country, and it seems like there's a bit of choreography that happens. You develop this kind of culture within one office, and then you have a completely separate location and you want to keep the culture similar, but still allow for this kind of unique geographically based culture to happen within it, but also have this fluid translation if you will, between the two. Can you speak to that?

Patricia Kathleen

Also first, will you mention all the different places you have offices.

Karen Clark Cole

Sure. We're in Austin, Boston, San Diego, San Francisco, and Seattle. Seattle is the headquarters. That's where we started. That's our largest office. Headquarters sits there. Then we also have Seattle delivery team. I separate them, because delivery is unique in each office, whereas headquarters obviously there's just one. Seattle is our biggest office, and then San Diego, and San Francisco.

San Francisco is next biggest in terms of the number of people. We're about 25 people there. Then in San Diego it's our next biggest space, which we're actively trying to fill. We're really excited about hiring locally in San Diego. We're excited about working with local clients in San Diego, and then we also serve clients from around the country, and the world from this office, from all offices.

While each office has people that live there, and the teams that work there, we still have interdisciplinary teams across the company. It kind of depends on ... There's a bunch of sort of ifs/ands of how we put teams together. We try to be as close to the client as possible, which is why we have multiple offices to try to be closer to our clients. Our clients are spread all over the country. They always have been. We used to just fly to them. We would fly for a kick-off meeting, do work back in Seattle, and then meet them however often we need to in person, which is generally probably three or four times in the course of a project, and that was fine.

Now, there is more volume. There is more people, and we're doing lots more work with specific clients. So, like USAA for example, it's better if we're there because there's more opportunities to start ... It's the, if I see you, I remember you kind of idea. So, the more we're there, the better opportunity we have to grow that account into something really big and interesting, which part of our growth strategy is to grow our big clients, to be able to help them, and do more.

In order to do that, it's better if we're closer to them, hence the Austin office. Also, part of the growth strategy as well in order to serve these big clients, they want to have multiple projects and multiple teams going on at once, and we can't scale that quickly with our current staff, so we need more people. That's why we need to hire. We've done some acquisitions in order to get

a group of really smart people quickly, and they also come with revenue so it's less ... In terms of the business, we don't want people sitting on the bench, we call it. We're consultants. We get paid by the hour, so we really need all of our people billing to clients. That's how we stay in business.

It's very straight forward on one hand, and the other hand it's really complicated, because it's hard to get all the pieces aligned so that people are on a project together, and then they come off that project, they go onto another one, and making sure there's no sort of downtime in between. As we add more offices, it gives us more opportunity to pull great teams together because we have talent from all over the place. Then we also have opportunities to not, if they're busy in San Francisco and they need an extra body and we have someone in San Diego, then that person will work on their team and they'll just work remotely. They'll go there a few times, but same thing, they'll work remotely.

It really helps us keep the whole company utilized. We have more options, but at the same time we have more options, so it's more complicated in terms of resourcing.

Patricia Kathleen

Do you think that there's a fluidity between the culture in let's say Seattle and San Diego where we are right now? Do you think it comes through? It sounds like obviously the calibre and the personality profile of the people that work with you, but also is there architecture, or do you have like an ethos of the company that you kind of stand behind? Is there a monthly Zoom meet up where everyone is just hanging out? How do you do that?

Karen Clark Cole

Yeah, there is actually. In fact, it's a weekly staff meeting. Every Monday morning the whole company dials in, and the staff meeting is currently hosted in Seattle. Then each office comes in, and it's very choreographed, and it took us some time to get the kinks out of how do you make this a good experience for people in other offices so it doesn't look like the Seattle show. We're still working on that, because certainly the other offices want to feel equally represented. We're really working on that.

I'm so excited, we just newly, in this last month, have general managers in three of our big offices. Seattle, San Francisco, and San Diego all have general managers now. They are responsible for representing their office at the highest levels of the company, but also in both directions. Making sure that there is a voice for that community, that office, but also being part of the bigger company. Soon we'll have that in Austin and Boston as well. We need a little more critical mass in those places.

That's really helped, and it's helped with our ... We have that weekly stand up, but then the GMs are also ... The hourly, the daily stand-ups to sort of make sure they have ... They're really making sure we're taking care of each office in a way that's part of the bigger company, but that's unique to them. Like, what do we need that's different in San Diego? It's Nicole's job to know that and make sure it happens. That really helps.

Also, with your earlier question about the culture, so we have some basic foundations. We have a cultural framework that we developed a few years ago when we were growing really quickly all of a sudden, I wanted to make sure that we had a way to not only preserve our culture, which had a great feeling. You could come into the office when we were 20 or 30 people, and you could feel the energy, but you couldn't really describe it. It's like what is it about this place? I don't know. People like to work together, and they're helping each other, and they're supportive, and they're happy. Like what is that?

It was all true, and I was really interested in, okay so how do we preserve that? In order to

preserve it, we need to be able to talk about it. In order to talk about it, we need to have a language around it. I started working with an outside consultant who helped me understand from a cognitive psychology background, what causes people to thrive, and how do you cause people to feel happy at work? What is it? Is it the beer in the fridge, or is it the ping pong table? It turns out no, those are outcomes of a great culture, but they are not what create a great culture.

Things that create a great culture are ... We developed this framework around six pillars. One is clarity, so understanding what's expected of you. These are things when you hear them, you're just like, "Oh, that makes sense." Because if people know what their job is, then they're more likely to be able to accomplish it, and if they accomplish what was expected of them, they're going to feel good. They're going to feel productive and valued. Then if someone leaves at the end of the day feeling valued, they're going to be more happy.

My altruistic vision is if they're more happy when they leave, walk out the doors, then they're going to go home, and they're going to be better family members. They're going to be happier neighbors, friends, and hopefully they spread that goodwill around them in their neighborhoods. I think of the 10/10 effect of, so the 10 times of volume, the impact our company is having outside in the broader world. That's what gets me really excited about growing the company really, because if we can stay true to this culture, and provide this kind of environment for hundreds and hundreds of people instead of a few dozen, then we can have a really big impact just in being a great company.

This is totally aside from all the clients that we impact from being this way with them. They really love working with us. They'll tell you over and over again, "That team, wow they work together. They worked with us, and they were so lovely, and they're so smart, and they've changed our company." When I hear reports like that, I just think, "Oh, that's why we do this. It's really great."

Patricia Kathleen

Yeah. You've talked about several times over discussing these issues, this kind of big picture mentality that you're not just capable of maintaining what you really thrive in. It's your modus operandi, if you will. It's really where you go. I'm wondering, did you have that from the beginning of launching with Kelly, the two of you? Did you have this big picture? If so if you hadn't then, and you have it now, where are you headed next?

Karen Clark Cole

Well, no. I mean, I think ... Now, the goal is to be the world's leading UX firm, and I think, well nobody else is doing that, so why not us? Somebody's got to do it, and we're perfectly positioned, we've been doing this for a long time, and we're really good at it. That's where we're headed. I didn't always feel that way, because honestly when we first started, it's always been a big vision, but it's always just sort of been relative to what we're doing. When we started, the big vision was like, "Oh my God, let's go do this on our own."

That was sort of a big deal at the time. That was a giant leap. I'm never afraid of taking a giant leap, or having something, a big lofty thing in front of me. Right now, it's the same relativity in that starting a company, or just going out on a ... It wasn't even starting a company. We weren't even doing that. We were just the two of us going to go and work together. It wasn't even as big as ... We had a name for it. I mean we did start a company, but it wasn't like, "Let's start a company and what should it be?" It was like, "Let's go do this job we love, get some clients, and I guess we need a company in order to do that." It was more like that.

Everything was kind of one step at a time, but they were always big leaps. Even hiring our first

person was kind of a big deal. Now being the world's leading UX firm, it's kind of like, "Well yeah, of course, like what else are we going to do?" It sounds crazy, but it's really not that far away when you sort of look at the landscape. I've always been like that, but I didn't start out going, "Hey, let's be huge, because at the time we didn't think we would have more work than just the two of us could do. We didn't need any more work. We just needed one job to keep us both busy, and that was it.

Then we got two jobs, and all of a sudden, we were overwhelmed like, "We got to hire someone, we can't do it." We hired our first employee on contract. It was about six months after we started. He's here in the office too. He still works here. John Dirks, he's our chief of research.

Patricia Kathleen

Remarkable.

Karen Clark Cole

Yeah, and then eight months after that we hired our second employee, Heidi Adkisson, who is also still here. She's one of our principle designers.

Patricia Kathleen

That socks, our questions really working for you.

Karen Clark Cole

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, and we have a lot of long-term employees like that. Those two are definitely the first, and it's so exciting that they're still there. I love it.

Yeah, so I'm a big thinker for sure and visionary. I love coming up with ... For me the idea just sort of come out of what more can we do, what more can we do? Then I don't let anything in the side that could possibly get in the way of that vision, is the big part of it. The focus helps them. I have these blinders on me. It's like the horse going down the street with blinders on, I don't want to see the naysayers whizzing by because there's plenty of them.

Actually, one of the best pieces of advice I ever got was from a woman named Diane Tice. She's wonderful woman. And she said to me, be careful who you tell your dreams to. I looked at her, I'm like, "What do you mean?" She's like, "Most people will want to tell you it's not possible." So, she said, "Be very careful when you have big ideas who you share them with, only ever share them with people who you know will support you, because otherwise you don't need hear from anybody that something is not possible. Particularly, if you have a very big idea, most people can't get their head around it. There aren't too many people who are probably going there with you.

They're not thinking about this thing that you're thinking about day and night, and you haven't thought through the whole thing, and they maybe not have the courage, or the vision, or whatever it is. You have to expect when you have big ideas, you're going to be kind of out there on your own, but then you pull in people who will support you for various aspects of it. Like, "Oh, you're strong. You'll definitely be able to do it," or, "How about this part of your idea, and let me help you develop that." You want to just surround yourself by those kinds of people.

She even said, "Like I tell young girls, don't tell your brother if you have a great idea, because he's probably going to tell you that you're stupid." It's like, so what's the best way to not get that feedback? Don't tell them. I thought that's really interesting, because you kind of want to

go tell the world all your great ideas and you should be very careful.

Patricia Kathleen

Yeah. I think that we acquire other people's baggage more often than not. Especially, with the entrepreneurial spirit across all genders, I think there's something about [...] It's that gusto that we kind of want to quiet, and I think it comes from a place of individual baggage.

It actually doesn't come from an assessing them appropriately, and describing the probability of whether, or not successful outcome is going to happen. I think that it's just this baggage that we associate, and then we can take on with us and like you're saying, kind of kill that idea.

Karen Clark Cole

Well, and a lot of people are afraid of failure and they're just fearful, or low risk takers, for example. That's another thing that helps me is I love risk. I'm a high-risk taker, so that helps. People might take this big vision and imagine themselves doing it, and it's terrifying for them. Then they'll sort of put that back on you when really, it's their baggage.

Patricia Kathleen

Yeah. As a female, let's get into, I mean you are a pillar as a female co-founder in the design community, but the larger tech world at large ... Female founders and co-founders are kind of what spawned this podcast series. Getting into your personal history with that, you have a little bit of dialogue about how that's changed over the past 20 plus years, or whatever. Can you speak to some of, as a female co-founders starting off in the beginning of maybe five and now having joined a larger community and the dialogue in that, do you have a personal narrative in there?

Karen Clark Cole

Yeah. Sort of 10 years ago or so, when we were starting to become more well known, I would have people calling me and reporters, or different people trying to write about us, or talk about us. They would ask me, "What's it like being a woman CEO in a high-tech world?" Seattle at the time is pretty booming and still is. I would always answer, "Oh, it's great. Why are you asking?" I was very naïve, and I was living in this real bubble. With enough of those kinds of questions, because I would say, "Oh, it's great." "Well, you're the only one, isn't it sort of lonely." I'm like, "I'm not the only one. I mean, I just had lunch with 10 other women leaders, like you're crazy. I'm not the only one."

I really believe at the time, and still now and it's all over the place, people look for evidence to support their beliefs. If the media is telling them, which it does constantly that women aren't running companies, women aren't doing this, they're not doing that. We have so far to go in the wage gap, which we do, but we're making progress, and in leadership, starting companies, all these things, we still have a long ways to go, but we're making great progress. There are many, many, many examples of companies and women who are doing great things.

I really believe that we should be focused on, let's look for evidence to support the belief that women are doing great things, period. If we start showcasing these examples, which your podcast does, which is so beautiful that, "Hey, it's out there. Let's talk to them." You don't have to be the first one. Yeah, we need more, so come on, let's go.

I would always point these people to examples of other women doing great things. This is sort of the genesis of my non-profit was, "Hey, girls there are lots of women doing cool things, and let's

talk about them. Let me show you what they look like.” It may not be a perfect mapping to them, because I know it is important for a lot of girls to see themselves.

I also always encourage girls to say, and women, okay so if you can't find the role model that looks just like you, then make sure that you're the one that looks just like you because it's you. So, if you cannot see the role model, then it's your job to be that role model. Use whatever you need to. Scrap your way to get there. There are plenty of amazing people out there who can be role models.

For me, it's Bill Gates, he's done some amazing things. There's some sorted past as well, but he doesn't look anything like me. It's okay. I'm like, “Wow. He had courage. He had drive. He had a big idea.” I'm looking for people like that, like who had big ideas and who made them happen? Those are my mentors, and I don't care what they look like. I'm looking at what does courage look like, and what does perseverance look like? What does failure look like?

Because in all of the cases, any single person who has been successful has more failures than they do successes to their record. Yet we tend to just look at the big bright, shiny objects, and forget all of the things that went wrong. If we realize that, that we're all human, and as long as you get back up then you're going to be a whole lot stronger from that giant failure than you were before then. The important thing is while you're down there in the darkest trenches to keep going and hang in there and know that it won't last forever. Then when you get back up, make sure you're learning from it. That's resilience.

They have study after study that shows resiliency is what helps people come out of hard places. It's what gets people out of poverty. It's what has people change their lives. It's what causes great companies. Even for Blink, we had plenty of tough times along the way, but if you just give up, then there's no chance because nothing is ever handed on a silver platter.

Patricia Kathleen

No. I feel like resiliency is a road to self-awareness, which furthers one's path.

Karen Clark Cole

Absolutely.

Patricia Kathleen

You know, this idea that resiliency allows you to continue on. A theme throughout this series, over the past year and a half, has been not the billionaire's club. I've interviewed some billionaires, but it's really about how we rise from the fall. I believe it's about that self-discovery, that you're saying, it comes I believe through what you're saying this resilience, is that self-discovery, and then skyrockets you, or has the potential to skyrocket you from that. It's those failures, I think, that we have the opportunity, as painful as it is, to get to know oneself, and really hang out, and then come back up from it stronger than we were before.

We kind of got into the Girls Can Do. I want you to tell the story of that. I think that the way that it started is just such a fantastically auspicious, I don't know, okay moments. Can you give us a little background on your nonprofit Girls Can do?

Karen Clark Cole

Sure. It sort of spun out of many of these phone calls of me saying, “Okay, let me give you 10 names. I want you to call them. These are great women that are out there.” At the same time

getting more and more frustrated with the news and the reporting on what women aren't doing. It makes me so mad. In fact, it made me so mad that I literally stopped reading the news. I don't watch the news. I don't listen to the radio. I drive in silence and sometimes I have loud music, or else nothing. Because I got so tired of hearing other people's view of the world and treating it like the truth.

The problem is you watch all these cars driving beside me and listen to the radio and whatever is being said on the radio, in particular NPR let's say in the morning, whatever they're saying becomes that person's truth for the day. If they happen to say on that radio, let's say they're talking about the US soccer team, and their recent court case, which I think is amazing.

What if they said they did a whole dialogue on the stats of where women are not being paid equally, and how they're not been treated equally and on and on and on. They could talk about the stats in the negative, or they could talk about them in the positive. They could say, "These are the progress we've made. These are the differences that have happened. This is where we're making progress. This is where we're going. Isn't it great? We're moving."

Instead they talk about it's still so bad. It's still this. It's still that. It just sort of makes me so mad, because then everyone is walking around particularly younger people, and they're hearing this, and it becomes their truth. They're not listening to it with a critical mind. They're not saying, "Are they thinking outside of the box here, or should I look around for my own eyes?"

I really say like make sure you're seeing with your own eyes, and you're feeling with your own heart. I read that someone, I'm just like, "Oh my God, that's it," because don't let someone else tell you what's true. Make sure you believe it. You know it for yourself. This is kind of the basis of the work we do at Blink too with our research, is that we're not designing software based on what we think our users want. It's based on what we know they want, because we interview them. It's all based on research. I encourage everyone, make sure you have your own research for how you think about the world.

For Girls Can Do, I had read this one article and oh my God it made me so mad. It was I'm a big skier. It was in a big skiing magazine, and a good friend of mine, she's a professional skier, or she's a good friend of mine now. At the time she was an acquaintance. She skis at our local hill in Seattle, Crystal Mountain. She's in all the ski movies. She's great. They had written this beautiful article about her in Powder Magazine, the big magazine and a beautiful five-page spread. She's so great.

They had this one paragraph in the middle that said, this is a tough act, and she's super unusual because for women to be in the film business, little on the sports ski film business, it's nearly impossible. The men have the racket. They get all the money. They don't support women. It just went on, and on, and on. Then they said, this was the kicker for me, and it mirrors corporate life. I just thought, why do you have to say ... Now all the girls-

Patricia Kathleen

All corporate life, that just poof, everything is gone.

Karen Clark Cole

Yeah, this is the corporate world, exactly. Sport business, just like corporate business. I thought any young girl that's reading that you just wrecked it. You just totally ... Like, why would I ever want to do that after reading that? It made me so mad that I saw her not long after, and I said, "Hey Ingrid, what was with that?" She said, "I don't know. I didn't say a word about it." She said, "I don't know where they got that. I don't know why they said it." I said, "Well you know, I'm really bummed out. I want all the girls to know that it really is a cool job that you're doing, and they can totally do that for a job if they wanted to."

It's great. It's supportive. Her husband is in the business. They all love each other. The women are all colleagues. Some of the women are producing movies as well. At the time in my office in Seattle, we have an art gallery as part of the office just for fun because I always wanted to have an art gallery. Being an art major and I thought, "Oh my God, we're going to have one in my office and then we can have an event a couple times a year, and we bring in artists and speakers, and it's super fun."

I thought, "Well, maybe for one of those events I would have Ingrid come and talk and we would fill the house with girls. Wouldn't that be fun?" I had this crazy idea and I said to her I'm like, "What if we did this? Like, would you be willing to come to my office and give a talk to girls and tell them how great it is?" I totally expected her to say, "I'm very busy. I fly around the world. I don't really have time, maybe next year." She said, "Oh, that sounds great. I'd love to."

I was waiting for the "but," and there was no but. She said, "How about May when I'm back from tour?" I thought, "Oh, okay." This was in late January, so I had a few months. I'm like, "Oh, okay, okay great." I went off and then I started thinking, "Well, she's quite famous." I bet you we could hold about 200 people in our office at the time max. I thought, "Oh God, we're going to fill the house. Maybe I'll rent a little place one time just for fun." I thought, "Well, if I rent a place then maybe I should get someone else and we'll have two women speakers, and I'll get someone that's totally different and they can see the contrast, and we'll invite lots of girls."

God, before you know it, within four months I had rented the Seattle Symphony Hall, the Benaroya Hall, which hold today holds 2000 people. I had invited 10 speakers who I had just called up. This is a perfect example, and you should always ask, because you'll be shocked at how often people say yes. I would call these random people who I liked, who I thought had great stories. I really wanted them to talk about failure.

At this point it had become obvious to me that that was an important discussion point that people understood success is never handed on a silver platter, and we should be talking about failure, and how do you get through that. Who helped you? What were your strategies, or coping mechanisms and how did you get yourself back on your feet? I think that's really important, particularly if you look at girls who are underserved in any kind of way. They don't have parents who are supporting them. They don't have enough money. They don't have enough education. How do we help them think differently about their lives?

I never wanted to take lightly their circumstances and assume that, "Oh yeah, if you have a mentor, you can do anything." Because there are some real hard times that people live in. Still, the research has proven that resiliency is what gets people in a new situation. So, right away I became ... Because, when I started going down this path, I did a lot of research and I talked to a lot of people on how can I have an event that's not lip service, and that's really helping girls? This was what came out of that.

Anyway, I called up all these random people, including Hillary Clinton who was Secretary of State at the time and I thought, "Oh, maybe she'll keynote." This is after I had been in it for a couple of months and I had gotten all these yeses and I was like, "Whoa, what's going on here?" So, they did not say no. In the end she couldn't do it, but I talked to one of her senior advisors three times, and they were very interested and there was a slight chance she was going to come.

In the end she couldn't, but I just thought, "Oh, who cares? I've got all I needed from that, the confidence that this is important." What came out of all that was, for me, it was just an event. I had no idea the impact that it would have. I was absolutely astounded by the number of girls who came, who said, "That was the best day of my life." It was a four hour event. I just thought, "Oh my God, like there's work to be done here."

Then the speakers said the same thing. They said ... We talk. These are high profile women. We talk to the Corporate Law Association, I talked to all these young lawyers all the time. This was

Zabrina Jenkins, the head of corporate counsel for Starbucks who I called and I'm like, "Hey, what'd you do this?" Yet she never had the opportunity to share her story with girls. She got kicked out of law school, right? Look at her now. She wanted to really connect with them.

They all hung around. They stay for the whole day. They chatted with girls afterwards. They were so happy that ... This was a one and done event for me, and then I was going to get some sleep because I was doing this in the evenings and the weekends. They sort of ganged up on me and they said, "Great, where are we going now? You know, this is too important. We can't stop." Long story short, we've done ... It's still pretty early in its stages, but we've done three events now with thousands and thousands of girls.

Again, the impact of one day, it's just phenomenal to me how it's not that hard to make a difference. Honestly.

Patricia Kathleen

No, it's huge. Did you do all three events in Seattle?

Karen Clark Cole

Two in Seattle and one in DC. The idea now, the plan, is to go across the whole country and have events in every major city.

Patricia Kathleen

It needs it yes.

Karen Clark Cole

Then continue to repeat them so that depending on our bandwidth, it will be maybe Seattle once every three years, or whatever, but we'll continue to go back to the same cities.

Patricia Kathleen

Yeah. I think, partnering and liaisons, I agree. I think, people think one day, what's the? I think, the impact that it can have on a young life and old life is surmountable. We don't string together millions of different memories when we think, why did we choose to do something major? It's usually one moment. It's one day. It's one movement. So, I think it's an incredible platform, and I want it to continue for you.

Karen Clark Cole

So, that the girls have something each day to carry them forward, we partner with local organizations in that city, so in DC or Seattle at the time, who have your year-over-year, afterschool programming for girls in all kinds of ways. In DC we had 20 organizations that came, and they get to have like a little expo in the lobby. They have a booth and the girls can go learn about them. There was coding. There was welding. There was running, writing, you name it, the whole thing.

The idea is that a girl gets inspired by at least one of the speakers, and then she gets excited about at least one of the organizations that she can sign up for. They all had to be willing to take signups that day. Then the girls can really get involved in a community, so we can hook them

up.

Patricia Kathleen

That's awesome. Yeah, it's exactly young networking, right? It's community based. I like that.

Well, kind of moving on with that zeitgeist of Girls Can Do, you personally are a wealth of knowledge. I could spend about five hours just asking you questions, because I love your response. You have a very tenacious attitude and career that reflects that attitude. I wanted to ask you if you were advising a young entrepreneur who'd just come down in a pickup truck from her father's house into the States and she was like, "Yeah, I'm going to get involved and do some design, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that. The world's my oyster." What would be the top three pieces of advice you would offer her right now?

Karen Clark Cole

Top three. Well I think the one thing is ... I suggest to people make sure you walk with your head up. What I mean by that is be open to what's coming. I'm not talking about looking for opportunities, or knocking on doors necessarily. I'm just saying in every moment of everyday be open to what's presented to you.

I think if you'd continue to do things that you love, which is really important ... In all my studies, I loved every class I ever took period, every class. I think that's really important. If you just focus on doing what you love, walking around with your head up, and being open to what's presented to you, and really evaluating everything with a why not attitude. That is absolutely how my entire life has gone. I could never have predicted anything. Nothing, not even ... I never had any plans to move to the States.

Even the job I got when I lived in Spain, I mean I worked at the world's fair at the EC pavilion. It was the coolest job you could ever get. That was from a guy that I met in the bar. It's just being open and saying why not, and having courage. Courage is something that you can actually develop it in yourself. You're not born with courage.

Courage is something you can develop, and it really comes from self-talk. It's what you say to yourself. You can convince yourself that anything is possible, and you have to be very careful about ... This is when to be careful who you tell your dreams to. Be careful who you hang around with. Don't hang around with people who are negative. Just stop, including family members. There are family members who are negative. Spend less time with them. Be careful of what you talk to them about. Don't open yourself up to negative feedback or negative criticism, and you can absolutely be in control of that.

It's being in control of who you hang around with, and listening for opportunities from the lady at the checkout of the grocery store, like they're everywhere. There are people all around you at every moment who can just sort of give you a new idea. If you take that idea, and just entertain it, then great things will happen. I mean, I absolutely guarantee it. Every little thing, even just having a chat with your Lyft driver, or the waitress, they've always got something interesting about life that is just worth hearing, I think.

I think inspiration comes from all kinds of strange little places, and you have to really be open to engaging in ways that you couldn't plan. You never know what's going to happen today. It's sort of how I wake up every day. I'm like, "I don't know what's going to happen today. I mean, I've got some meetings. I got to go to." What we talk about in between the meetings, that's the magic.

Patricia Kathleen

Yeah, 1000%. So, staying open.

Karen Clark Cole

Staying open, and then developing your own courage to take risks. That comes from telling yourself, "I can do this. Why not. Somebody has got to do it? Why not me?" If you just say that to yourself all day long, you're going to get all this power to go do something that you didn't think you were going to do, and all of a sudden you'll find yourself doing it, you'll be like, "Well, it's not so bad after all." Then once you start doing it, then you get the momentum and the flywheel starts going of being courageous, and then you'll do more and more things.

I think you can also practice in little ways. I practice being courageous and pushing myself out of my comfort zone, which is largely how I operate. Basically, my job is to be out of my comfort zone, because everything I'm doing is something new. No matter what I'm doing, my job is to push us forward into areas we've never been in before. That can feel very uneasy at times. "Is this the right thing to do? Is this the right thing to do?" I'm always asking that.

When I have to learn how to decipher in my own mind and body is the feeling of this is just out of my comfort zone, because I've never done it before versus this is a bad feeling. Knowing the difference between the two is really important. What I try to do is nurture this feeling of out of my comfort zone in sports, like for skiing I like to backcountry ski, so I'll like go off a steep cliff that scares the hell out of me because it's good practice because I know that feeling. This is a feeling because I've never done it before. I kitesurf and every time I do that I'm scared, because there's a lot going on. It's really high focus, high energy, high risk in a lot of ways.

That helps me know ... I get really comfortable with that feeling of I'm doing something new, I'm doing something new, and it's okay. It's just doing something new versus something that's really not good, and you have to trust your instincts.

Patricia Kathleen

Yeah. I think what you said is right. You alluded to courage, and I think bravery as well. There's a small distinction within that, but I think they both have their own momentum that they gain, and people who haven't started off on that journey maybe can't see that.

Patricia Kathleen

Being brave after one has been brave or courageous is much easier the millionth time it starts. You develop, as you're talking about, these very finely tuned relationships between what it is to be a little uneasy because you're new at something, or in new circumstances versus a bad situation. I liked that conversation that as it matriculates, it becomes more mature within itself as well.

Karen Clark Cole

There is a great song that I love, and even if you have a little song for yourself to get your guts up-

Patricia Kathleen

What song?

Karen Clark Cole

It's from The Sound of Music. When Maria comes out of the convent, she's going to the home for the first time. She's scared. She's terrified of what's in front of her, and then she starts singing a song that she has confidence in her, and that everyone will believe it because they'll see that she's confident, and all of a sudden you get the momentum there. I think you can absolutely convince yourself of anything.

Patricia Kathleen

Yeah. I think the final line of that song is I have confidence in me, or something. Me is the last note. I like that. That's cool. I always end the conversation with a bird's eye view into where Karen Clark Cole is at. What are you most looking forward to doing? Let's see, today is a Wednesday. Anytime from beginning last Monday through next Wednesday, what are you most looking forward to doing, and what have you done so far in the past week that you're most proud of?

Karen Clark Cole

Well, I can tell you having these kinds of conversations is something that I really look forward to. I think there is ... I get really excited when I see young people not just women, but just young people on the verge of something big, and exciting. I think for me it's really fun to be back in that space in the event that we had last night, the Startup Grind here in Seattle. It's so fun for me to go back there, because it's easy to forget where we've come from and where I've come from, because I'm so busy working on the next thing.

I really try to find ways to sort of go back in time to sit and be proud for a minute, because I don't get a lot of time for that, honestly. I'm really very focused on making sure the company is ... It's a big company now, and I have a lot of responsibility to a lot of individuals to pay the bills. It's a serious pressure, and so it's nice for me to sort of take a break from that occasionally, and just sort of reflect in a bigger way.

I really look for opportunities to do that. Oddly enough, flying allows me to do that. I love getting on planes. It's time alone. Just being up in the air, with the big picture view of the earth, kind of helps-

Patricia Kathleen

I was just going to say it's a big picture, physical moment.

Karen Clark Cole

It really is important to me. There's some various other elements, but it really allows me time to sort of sit and reflect, which I don't do enough of truthfully, and so I look for ways to do that.

I have a 10 and a half year old daughter, and I look forward to being with her whenever I'm not working. That really gives me a break from it all, and it reminds me of what's important in life beyond running a company, and making sure that every little bit and piece is going well. I guess, what I'm saying is any opportunity I get in the next week, or I look at my calendar, I'm like, "Oh, there's an hour I'm going to block it before somebody else does," so I can just sort of take a break, and just sort of live life.

I love vacations and going on trips. I have a running ritual that I run. That's really, sort of, my

meditation time where I don't listen to music, and I really just try to listen to my breathing, and that always helps me reset. I kind of look forward to ... Truthfully, what I'm looking forward to is I don't have any meetings tomorrow morning, and I'm going to block it off, and I'm going to go to the pool at the hotel. I'm going to go for a run and I might get a massage.

Patricia Kathleen

Yes, that's perfect. I love that you love vacations. This is, I think, the second or third time I've heard you say that. I don't think that we have a proper work-life balance model in front of us. Sometimes as Americans we've got this like I work 80, I work 90...how many hours a week are you working? You unabashedly said I love vacations two, three, four days. It's great if I can truly vacation like that. It's true. It's sleep and your marriage with sleep. You have another kind of-

Karen Clark Cole

It's really important. The eight-hour sleep is what makes you smart. Your brain can't function without it. My job is largely to make decisions and preferably good ones. I take it as my job responsibility to take care of myself, so that I can operate the company in a way that's smart.

Patricia Kathleen

That's wonderful. Well, thank you so much. I hope you enjoy your morning.

Karen Clark Cole

Thank you.

Patricia Kathleen

You me and all the listeners, absolutely. I want to thank you so much for sitting down with me today. I don't believe I've met with a woman that I don't consider to be vibrant and amazing in her own right, but today was special. I want to thank you so much. You're so busy. We all are, but I think you just a touch more. Thank you for sitting down with me.

Karen Clark Cole

Thank you, it was super fun.

Patricia Kathleen

I really appreciate it. To everyone listening until I chat with you again next time, thank you so much for spending the hour with me and remember to always bet on yourself.