



Empowering Change: Women and Girls in STEM Podcast Transcript

Episode 5: Women in the STEM Workforce: Stories and Learnings from Corporate Leaders

We explore the realities and opportunities for women in the STEM workforce. We will hear from leaders sharing insights, experiences, and strategies for creating an inclusive work environment. We discuss the challenges faced by women in STEM careers, balancing careers and family, steps to overcome workplace biases, and the importance of championing equal opportunities and career advancement for women. This episode offers valuable perspectives and inspiration for both aspiring and current professionals in the STEM field.

Guests: Mary Murrin, Corporate Affairs Digital Strategy, Chevron
Abi Olukeye, Founder & CEO Smart Girls HQ

Host: Nancy Scales-Coddington, NGCP Director of Strategic Partnerships

[OPEN] music playing

Abi Olukeye 0:08

It's very little things, but they're very human things that allow people to feel like they belong in a space

Nancy Scales-Coddington 0:21

Welcome to Empowering Change: Women and Girls in STEM Podcast series hosted by the National Girls Collaborative Project. I'm your host Nancy Scales Coddington, Director of Strategic Partnerships at NGCP. In this episode, we explore the realities and opportunities for women in the STEM workforce. We will hear from two leaders sharing their insights, experiences, and strategies for creating an inclusive work environment. We will explore balancing careers and family and what are some useful tips to overcome workplace biases. Our guests are Mary Murrin Corporate Affairs Digital Strategy at Chevron and National Girls Collaborative Project Board member. Welcome, Mary.

Mary Murrin 1:00

Thank you for having me, Nancy. It's nice to be here.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 1:03

And Abi, Olukeye, founder and CEO of Smart Girls HQ. Welcome, Abi.

Abi Olukeye 1:09

Hi, Nancy. Hi, Mary. Very nice to be here. And looking forward to our conversation today.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 1:12

Mary, as a woman in the STEM field, can you share your personal journey and experiences and talk about some pivotal moments that helped shape your career?

Mary Murrin 1:23

Absolutely. I love this question or this perspective, from a stem context because I'm a liberal arts major. And I think it's very important and this has been validated through my 25-30 year career that the STEM field needs both the technical minds and the liberal arts backgrounds of many people. So my experience was unexpected. It was not intentional. I was an English literature major, graduated from Brown University. And I thought maybe someday I'd go to law school. My father was an attorney. My mother was an education. We didn't have stem stem family members with careers. So but I got an internship with Alcoa Aluminum Company of America. And it was a public relations internship, a graduate of my college was on the staff and asked me if I'd be interested. And what I learned was some two gating moments for me was superpowers was curiosity and asking a lot of questions. Sometimes, my friends call me Lois Lane, who, if you don't know, is the journalist and Superman. This case she's Superwoman. But I learned that asking questions, is vital to being able to translate technology into consumable language for the greater population of people who benefit from the technology. And it's got to be translated in a way that feels compelling. And we shouldn't be afraid to ask those questions. That's how you get the information. But the other thing that was a lovely finding in my pathway is that a lot of technically minded people eventually worked for Westinghouse, and then moved on to startups out of Carnegie Mellon University, and then went back to corporate America with Chevron about 10 years ago. But what I learned was back in the day, when there were mostly men with pocket protectors and pens, if you ask some genuinely authentic curiosity, curious questions, they were excited and surprised to have the opportunity to tell you what nuclear fission was, and why it took so long to build a nuclear power plant. And why it was concerned from offsets and safety. And I love that pun intended energy of talking to one another and learning that there was interesting and value to both sides having those conversations.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 3:43

I love the Lois Lane reference. Yes, asking questions is, is key, right? Because how are you going to find out information if you don't start asking things? And I love that connection between you asking those questions and then being able to translate scientific language over to the general public, right. That's so incredibly important. Abi, how did you find yourself in the girls in STEM space? And what was your inspiration for creating Smart Girls HQ?

Abi Olukeye 4:10

I think you know, now when I reflect back, I would say that I started in this space when I was in high school, and I didn't even realize that that was what was happening. But I had an opportunity to do a capstone project when I was in high school. And my advisor at the time I mentioned to her how curious I was about computers and technology. I grew up in an immigrant family. We emigrated to the United States when I was in ninth grade. And so prior to that, I didn't have a ton of exposure to computers. I had a computer lab in my in my school in Nigeria, and so it was once a week I would you know, play around with computers. So then I moved here and personal computers were a lot more advanced. So everyone had computers and there were computers in my home and you know, we were learning about Microsoft Word and doc and all that. And so I told her like, I'm really interested in this pathway. And she said, um, girls typically aren't interested in this. And so she gave me this research paper to read to convince me that, you know, make sure I knew that was doing. And so, I know, I came back to her. And I was like, Okay, I really feel like, it must be the way it's been taught. Because, coincidentally, I was starting my own personal exploration. I remember sitting in front of a computer doing homework one day, and for some reason, I got really excited about Microsoft Word like, I was thinking, who makes this who decided that we would have a white box in the middle. And when we click this button, you know, it just was fascinating to me that someone designed this. And because I kind of I had an artist brain, I used to draw a lot when I was younger, it felt like art with different brushes. It felt like art with like a different digital canvas. And so I was really curious about and so I started taking classes at a community college. And so when she told me that, I knew that I was excited about it. So I said, You know what, let me teach some girls, I want to try my way and see what happens. And so I had my project that year was a six week course that I created for our partner, middle school, and the girls loved it. And that was all I needed. That was my validation. So I went off, the girls want me to stay and do a summer camp about this, but I was like, oh, no, I'm good. I went off to college and completely forgot this experience, graduated with a computer science degree, and then started working. And I probably spent seven years in corporate before I thought about this again. So I was building technology within a diversified manufacturing company, I enjoyed my job. But then I grew blinders. And it may have been like survival tactics that started from college because I was one of very few women in that program. But I I literally would be in meetings with 30 men and not realize, until the last day, I was just one of the guys now, which is early with it, right. And then I started having children, I have two girls, and about age three and four, both of them would get to the point where they started the genderized and toys and things and saying, you know, that's a boy thing, Mommy, I don't want that. That's a girl thing. And I thought, Okay, I got to figure out how to get them more exposed. And that's how I got into this work was, I was already doing work in the innovation space at work. And so I started applying those tools to this problem that was not bubbling up at home and thinking, Well, why? Why is it that, you know, I left college several years ago, and we're still here, my daughters are still experiencing this research paper that I was given. And so that got me started. And I started reading a lot of the academic research around this work. And you really brought me to a key hypothesis, which was that we needed to support families and parents at the earliest side of the pipeline a lot more. And that's how Smart Girls HQ was born.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 8:13

That is a great story of how that evolution happened. I love connecting all of the dots from your early career to where you are now. Mary, what are some of the most common challenges that women encounter in STEM careers? And have you seen these challenges change over the years?

Mary Murrin 8:30

Great question. Following Abi's response, I love that term gender rising. That's the biggest blocker I found in the workforce. And a lot of STEM or tech industries tend to have more men historically than women. So the gender rising might be more common than in some other industries. But I would also say that we genderized ourselves sometimes those are the challenges, the challenges are being not heard, or being discouraged from bringing new ideas or saying what you think. But as I have made progress through the years, I really some of that is often on us, not not speaking up. And there are two quotes I keep in mind. One is right, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who said, You can disagree without being disagreeable. So I think it's very important to be clear about the intensive of the value you're adding, or the idea you're sharing, and not to be defensive. If you hit a blocker, you can push for it, and then take a break and then pull some folks aside and have a deeper conversation. And sometimes you're gonna meet that place where you feel like you can't accomplish what you want it to. And that's where the second quote I like comes in. It's a painful quote, but I actually got to hear Gloria Steinem several years ago speak in person. And she said, when women cry, in work contexts, they're angry.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 9:52

Very true.

Mary Murrin 9:53

And I love that and she put truth to that, which I had felt I was several ones that, you know, cry at the table, go into the restroom and cry or cry on my way home. And it wasn't from a woe is me, I'm a victim perspective. It was like, alright, so angry that I that this is the situation and how do we change it? So. So those are two things I keep in mind. But they're, they're helpful to me because we have to keep speaking up being comfortable with not being heard. And and in fairness, I think, as I said, we genderized ourselves sometime I think the culture is changing. Abi has two girls, I happen to have three grown sons, and they give me hope, you know, they set 10 Not to divide people into categories of all kinds that my generation did. So that gives me hope. And women need to keep sharing our thoughts and ideas, because I think they'll be heard, they certainly do.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 10:48

I want to follow up with something that you mentioned on how when you share an idea, and either the idea is either brushed aside or it's not heard, or maybe it shows up a few weeks later is somebody else's idea. Because no is not always a rejection. So can you give a strategy on when somebody is telling you those things? Or they're not listening to you? How can you step back from that, and we approach the situation in a way that is successful, that you have either felt heard, or, you know, you can move on from the situation without having that defense reaction?

Mary Murrin 11:24

Well, this is where digital comes in. I think it's important to document some of these things. And not in a way that's again, not defensive. But if you if I leave a meeting where I I really am passionate about an idea that I thought was swept aside, I'll often go back and send an email to

somebody and say, hey, look, you know, I feel like this was the beginning of a, you know, a good conversation, can we continue it because I really have this idea. I really like I want to see if maybe there's a way we can make it happen, adjusting it, revising it, maybe the timing isn't right, but we can revisit it later. So sort of setting it up, as you know, I'm not gonna let this go. But I know, it's my behind the scenes, it's my idea. And I'm giving you a chance to get to hear me, I think that's important to make note of and to have the history of part of the reason I do that, too is to, you know, put it in a category in my email and, and make a note that three months from now, I want to go back and see if that idea still makes sense to me sense to me. And sometimes it doesn't. I was like, Yeah, you know what? That's right. It wasn't viable. And other times will be Yeah, I still believe that. And then I can follow up.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 12:30

That is a great strategy and tip for us to try out. Abi, you mentioned that some of your inspiration to begin Smart Girls HQ was your daughter's. Balancing a demanding STEM career with family life can be quite challenging. Can you offer some strategies or insights for women aiming to strike that balance?

Abi Olukeye 12:49

Yes, you know, this is like the famous balanced question, right? We're always all working women are balancing a challenging career, whether it's, whether it's them or not, right? Like it, it's always a busy day, you're mentally busy, you're physically busy, and then you've got everything that has to do at home, what I've found that's worked for me is to get rid of the notion of balance and embrace, blend in instead. So I like to say that I try to achieve a work life blend, when you switch to that approach, what then becomes important is what you're doing for work. Because if you're going to blend work with life, then you really want to make sure that work is something that at least gives you some joy. So that's the first thing is really making sure when you're choosing what you spend most of your day doing that you're choosing wisely how you want to spend your time, because a lot of times what ends up happening is you're going to have to wrap that around your true life, your real life, right. And you don't want those things to be too far apart in terms of how they feed your energy. The second thing that I found is work for me over my career is figuring out how to build trust early with the people that I work for. I think one thing I learned a while ago is that my work doesn't actually matter, outcomes matter more, or nobody really cares what I'm doing, they care what I'm producing. And so the way to build trust, is to really hone in on what is the most important outcome of my job? What does this company require me to help the company move forward? Once you figure that out, and you start to deliver those outcomes, you're starting to build trust, if you can build that trust early, then you get to the point where you can cash in on that trust, which is when you can say, hey, you know, I need to leave early every Thursday and Friday because my child is in a program on Thursday and Friday and I like to be there. But you know that my outcomes are always going to be there, right? Like no one's caring about the work you're doing and when you're doing and how you're doing it. They are trusting that your outcomes are going to be there. But you can't cash in on that trust until you build it right. And so I, my advice is always to, in every role, you find yourself quickly figure out what are going to be those important outcomes that allow you to build trust with your leaders, so that you can now cash in on flexibility where you need it so that you can blend that work life a little bit better. And then honestly, sometimes you are in situations where it's not reciprocated, right, you do all the things, you built the trust, and you try to cash in and you're met with, you know, not the same energy. And in that case, I would say navigate away as quickly as possible. That's not that's not a good relationship, it's not healthy. A healthy work

environment should be a give and take, right. And so as long as you're doing your part, you should you should receive as well.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 15:56

You mentioned a healthy work environment. And that is incredibly important, because I think often we get in a situation, right, and it's your head down, and you just have to plow through to do what you're there to do, right. So I think that comment is incredibly powerful. And if this isn't working for you, it's not working for you. Mary, overcoming workplace biases is a significant hurdle for many women in STEM, what steps can organizations take to create more inclusive environments and reduce bias in hiring and promotions.

Mary Murrin 16:28

So I've been fascinated and impressed with a strategy that Chevron takes. So we're very focused on diversity, equity inclusion, most organizations are smart enough to know that that's got to be part of the culture of they're going to go into continue to attract and retain the brightest men, women, people from throughout their careers, but then you've got to act upon it. You can't put the signs all over the lobbies of the buildings, and then not have it activated. And something that Chevron does, which I think has been effective, is we have what are called employee networks, or affinity groups, and they're organized by like minded people, not everyone is part of how the group is defined. Some are advocates. So there's a Women's Network, and there are men involved. We have a s network, which is our Hispanic network, we have a black employee network veteran enabled lots of lots of different ones, which are really interesting. I am part of a group that started something several years ago called Chevron experienced. And the idea was, to your point, how do employees that join mid career or later in their career continued move up, because Chevron does an excellent job of recruiting from a lot of universities, specifically, Penn State University of Texas, Colorado School of Mines, a lot of really long term, exceptional institutions. And we get a lot of young people right out of school, but then there are people like like myself that come later. So these ploy networks and affinity groups give voice to groups who care about something, you know, an issue or an opportunity or a challenge for the company. And they don't have to be a singular voice. They can gather people around them. And then you also engage the advocates and what these groups generally do they sponsor speakers, they share successes, they take issues that are rising to the top regularly to leadership to say, you know that this is important, and what can we do to change this? And I think that's a great strategy.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 18:29

Those are great strategies. Thank you for sharing that. Building on what Mary shared Abi, what are some best practices for creating a workplace culture that not only embraces diversity, but actively promote it ensuring that all voices are heard and valued in the community?

Abi Olukeye 18:46

Yes, I agree with Mary that, um, resource groups are fantastic. I came out of a large organization. So I led many of those initiatives. And they were such a great way to make a big company small, and really start to make human connections. And now that I run my own little company, one of the things I'm super excited about doing is having a chance to build culture

differently. And I have some unique advantages by not being a large company, certain things that we can do, and what are the things that we've employed that I would want to see more happen in all kinds of corporations, it's really helped us there are obvious differences, right? Whether we're racially different, or we're different in height or size, but then there are intellectual differences. There are differences in personalities, there are differences in how we approach work. And I think the differences we can see are the most they're very powerful in in how we all come together and work together. And those we tend to leave as a scavenger hunt for some reason. Like it's I was like, Oh, well, I think Mary is, you know, she likes to work early in the morning or she's the kind of person as a team player, but I'm not really sure it seems. And honestly, there are very simple time tested ways to know that upfront, right. And so what we do on our on my team is every new team member goes through a set of assessments. And and they first, you know, they spend time with a leadership coach to process it themselves first. So this is how I work. This is how I approach work. This is what gets me excited. These are things that drain my energy. And then once they've processed it by themselves in terms of how am I going to apply this, me to this work? How can I get the best out of it? Then we bring it together into our full team. And we show what everyone is and say, well, so we have this, we have this strategic person, and we have this person. That's our influencer? And how do we all come together and do our work? Well, and that has been such a game changer for us, because one is the quickest icebreaker you can have. All of a sudden, we know each other. We know each other. So well, there's no awkwardness, because if Mary does something that makes me feel awkward, I know it's her, I don't have to worry, because I know how she actually processes, I don't have to question that. And that by itself just opens up the team to being accepting of the diversity of how we all behave, which is just natural. Like we're all diversity is so natural, right? We're all different. And yeah, allows us to all celebrate it. The other thing that we do that I think, you know, I would love to see practice more is just balancing heart and self to lines. So you know, the work day, typically, the conversation is always around, like, are we remote working or not remote working? Right? When we're thinking about how do we make a work environment welcoming to people with different sorts of demands. And for us, because we're a small team, it really helps for us to all be in the office and be collaborative. So what we decided to do instead is we have a middle of the date time, that's hard, it's like, let's all get here by 10. And that's, you know, we can end you can leave after four, but we know between 10 and four, we can schedule meetings, if you if you're the kind of person that likes to sleep in good for you, if you would work later good for you, right, but we have that middle line where we're like, okay, we're all be here, and we can do some work. And then the rest of the hours are kind of flexible for you to figure out what works for you. And we still have team members that come in at eight o'clock because they drop off kids and they just come right in. Right. So just having that flexibility between like the hard and soft, allows people to be who they are, whether they're early people or late people without feeling judged, without feeling like why hate to be the one that comes in at 10 o'clock nurse perfectly fine, or the one that stays late or the one that leaves at four. So it's, it's very little things, but they're very human things that allow people to feel like they belong in a space. And that's what we have to keep testing and trying out as corporations and companies and buddies of people in general.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 23:11

Indeed, I would love how you were talking about engaging employees, but then also how you are growing that trust within the team right within the few days of being hired. You are doing that welcome, and everyone's learning about that person. That's a great way to get started in a corporation.

Mary Murrin 23:29

I want to work for you someday, Abi.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 23:31

Abi, mentorship and sponsorship play a big role in career development and advancement. Can you share your thoughts on how women in STEM can find supportive mentors and sponsors? And why is that so important?

Abi Olukeye 23:45

It is so important to have both mentors and sponsors. I think a lot of people now over the last couple of years understand the difference between both but very quickly, I'll just say, right, a sponsor is someone that behind closed doors is advocating for you is pushing for you is helping putting you in positions to lead in is helping to promote you, a mentor or someone that you can lean on an ask questions on the spot. I need this. I have question about this. Can you connect me to this right? So two very different people, but you need them both. They're very important because at the end of the day, it matters who sees what your outcomes are, and matters, who knows what your outcomes are. And at the end of the day, corporations are made up of people making bets on each other, right? We're all trying to accomplish one thing which is to move this particular company forward and every day we met make bets on each other because we have to work as a team. And so mentorship and sponsorships are just basically people actually making a bet on you and choosing to help you grow choosing to help you lead and so you need that how do you, find these people. So I think there are a number of ways my style is authentic relationship. I, you know, I have a busy life I have kids, I'm not typically the happy hour person. And I'm not like out and about schmoozing, you know, just every night. So like I'm very judicious with my time. But I invest in relationships, every few minutes I spend with people. I'm genuinely curious and interested. And so if you figure out how you like to relate to people, do it your way. If you're a schmoozer smooch, if you're, you know, if you're not there, you know, do it your way. But the most important thing is make connections that are authentic with people start there. And once you do, when you ask for people, when you ask for their time, make sure that you're being wise about how you're using that time. Right? I would say for mentors, it's useful to think about people in terms of their expertise, right. So Mary is an expert in strategic affairs. So if that's something that I have a question about, I'm working on a project that really needs Mary's expertise, then I can lean on Mary and say, Mary, I have this very specific question, have you come across this before? Very specific to her area of expertise? Because Mary can very easily respond and say, yep, I've done that before, just do blah. Versus if I go to Mary and say, Mary, I'm really thinking about changing my career to being a nuclear engineer. And I'm just curious about how you feel about that. I mean, that already is like, yes, she can give you advice on it, probably just based on her previous experiences, but it's not a quick answer. Now we have to have a conversation about Okay, tell me more about why you're interested in this versus that, right? Like, so you have to really think about your relationships in the best possible way to tap into them. And when you do, right, and the more you're asking me for things that I feel like I can uniquely bring value to you, the more excited I am the next time I see an email from you, right? Because I want to follow up and say, Well, how did they work out with that thing that you were working on, and guess what we're now building a relationship, step by step that's actually authentic. In terms of sponsors, I would advise, especially women to actually consider men, as sponsors, I find that a lot of women seek out other women, which is great, but honestly, I've had some fabulous male sponsors, I still do even in an entrepreneurial space. And the difference I

find between men and women is like my female sponsors, we could sit down and I could just be like, Oh, it's so exhausting, this died. And I can't believe this and that, and we can, you know, we can chat about work. But we can also chat about like, the emotional side of things. When my male sponsors is all business there, they get excited about my outcomes. And as long as they're hooked on the outcomes, they want to help you because they know that you're a rock star, they know that if I put spend my equity on you, it's not going to be wasted, you know, you're going to reflect back positively on me. And so it's a different approach. But both male and females make wonderful sponsors, you just have to approach them differently.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 28:22

That is great advice. Thank you very much. So Mary, can you talk a little bit about your experiences with mentorship? And why is that so important?

Mary Murrin 28:32

So I am completely aligned with much of what Abi said, my experience has been organic, natural mentorships are much more useful. You know, I think sometimes when you're assigned a mentor, or you know, a big sister, little sister situation in college, or, you know, that can feel a little too formal. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. But if you feel a connection, and an authentic interest in somebody who wants to help you male or female run with it, I will say as guidance to young people coming along, I don't think I was particularly good at finding advocates and sponsors. I think it's kind of my personality. I'm, I feel like I figured out on my own, I'm a fixer, and I want to, you know, impose on anybody or being inconvenienced by taking their time. And it's, it's just silly, looking back, but that's, you know, that's the way so I, you know, I think knowing what I would now I would change that up a bit and not be afraid to ask for help. But I also want to say here, that it's really, really, really important for women to be more open and at lifting other women up I think, and I'm speaking not about Chevron specifically, but about big corporations of STEM products and leaders. They tend to be more men at the top. I think that's absolutely changing. As there are more women joining the workforce who are, you know, highly capable of being leaders, but they're still sometimes a little bit of that Scrum, like, there's only a certain amount of room for women at the top. So as much as I'd love to help you out, I got to take care of myself. And that's got to change over time. I think it naturally will. But I think we're sort of at that margin where that still happening in any company, maybe not so much the startups but any big company I've ever worked for that it's an technical company, and it's, you know, we're working with women doesn't mean they're mean girls are not night. I mean, it's just a mindset that I gotta keep, you know, Scrum, Scrum me my way to the top. And I hope that changes. So I guess to wrap up that thought it would be don't be, you know, be more open to getting help. If you're somebody like me, that's feels like you're supposed to know it all out of the box and be a fixer. And not in a position, but also look back and make sure you're you're helping others to.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 30:57

Well, this leads really nicely into the next question I want to ask you is, if you could go back in time and offer advice to your younger self, when you were first starting out your career? What piece of wisdom, you know, knowing what you know, now, would you share with your younger self?

Mary Murrin 31:13

I touched on it just a bit. Don't assume everybody knows more than you do. And I think that was a little bit of a, you know, a trigger for me coming in being a liberal arts person that I thought, well, of course, these people are smarter than I am. I mean, they are scientists, and they're and people are smart in different ways. Abi touched on that. So I think something I would do different is, you know, early on, listen, a lot, observe. But once you're sort of getting a vibe, step forward. And don't be afraid to say, I don't really understand this, can you tell me? Or hey, I don't know what that means? What's that acronym? Or, you know, just sort of start with small questions to clarify, and then you'll gain the confidence to ask big question questions, and then also share those ideas that we talked about earlier, I would be not quite as differential to people and clear on my value and asking a question.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 32:05

Well, and your value is incredibly important. Absolutely. That was great advice for your younger self and for everybody. Abi, in your experience, what initiatives or programs have been particularly successful in encouraging young girls and women to pursue STEM careers, and stay committed to them?

Abi Olukeye 32:22

I don't think it's one program or programs or initiative. Honestly, I think it's consistent positive exposure, it's a string of multiple things over a period of time, especially when you're looking for persistence on on that pipeline, I think lots of girls get, you know, little sprinkles here and there, they'll get one experience that summer, and then two years later, and maybe they happen to you know, someone sends him a gift, right? But what really is powerful is consistent, positive experiences with them. And a positive part is important. Because sometimes we have young girls in like a STEM school, for example. So they're actually exposed to stem consistently, but they experienced this negative, right, so whether they're the only girl in there, and they don't like that, or the subject matter is not at the level where they're at. And so it's too hard. And so they don't feel like they have a good on ramp into it, and everybody else, all the other boys seem to get it right, like so even those even though it's even if it's consistent and negative, it doesn't work. So ntcp Of course has, you know, a wonderful library of resources, if you're looking for what's local to you, that you can do. And there are lots of national experiences. Obviously, our products are designed for young girls and available retail, our dear smart girl kits or courier connecting them activity kits. But really my advice in my experience is that the more you build a world around your your young girls that show them what's possible in terms of representation. So what they can see but also allows them to do things so that they can represent to themselves that they can do it, the more powerful it is. I'll share just a full circle my girls who started my journey, because you know, they were saying things stem things were boy things this summer, I had them trying different sports camps because we're trying to figure out what sport was stick and my older daughter was in golf camp and she I picked her up the first day and she said, Oh, like that camp. I'm the only girl there was like, doesn't that feel just like how STEM is like a lot of STEM programs. That's how girls feel. And she goes, she goes, what what do you mean? She was like, I thought stem was a girl thing. And I was like what it just blew my mind because I didn't realize how much her world had been filled with representation of what's possible that it didn't even occur to her like her old world view was that girls are totally stem before and there is no deficit. Girls in STEM and it just shows you how powerful the exposure is. It's not one thing, it's multiple things. It's multiple small things. It's the camps. It's, it's the books,

it's the women, it's you know, it's the mentors. It's, it's your friends, it's sharing what you do at work. It's all of the above. Keep doing it.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 35:20

I love that. Well, bravo to you, Abi, you're doing a really good job. If your daughter's think STEM is a girl thing, it for sure is. Mary, what words of advice or encouragement would you share with young women who are just starting their journey in in their STEM careers,

Mary Murrin 35:39

The most exciting time ever to be in STEM and we say that about the energy industry, too, I mean, technology, transitions, to cleaner, more effective tools of all kinds across all kinds of industries are speeding up. I mean, they're we're delivering them faster and exponential ways. So it's exciting. My recommendation would be for young women as to something I do is to follow podcasts, and subscribe through magazines and online resources that cover things you care about. Because often, I'll learn about really objective view of our industry by listening to Ezra Klein from the Nero, his New York Times opinion columnist, he has a great podcast for a whole interview all kinds of people on the future of energy on global economics on general AI, the whole artificial intelligence movement, and I am fascinated by it. And it informs me about my work, but also gives me ideas about you know, exciting opportunities going forward. So I would use opportunities, learning on your spare time, or you're taking a walk or driving somewhere, working out at the gym to listen to podcasts, it sparked your interest in make you smarter about what you care about.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 36:55

And we will have some links in the show notes to Mary's favorite podcasts. Abi, are there any key lessons or strategies that have worked in your own career that you would like to share with others?

Abi Olukeye 37:05

Honestly, when I think about when I reflect back on what's been helpful to me, it all boils down to one really key strategy. Honestly, when I was early in my career, I found this quote, and I put it up in my little cubicle. It was my first year out of college. And when I think about that, this quote, now it's it's guided me all the way through my career. And it's by GUI through is a German poet. It's pretty popular, you might know it also. But it says, Whatever you can do a dream, begin it Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. And I just love that quote, I put it up in front of my, in front of my computer. And when I think about all the pivotal moments I've had in my career, Boldness has been at the forefront, and Marissa was alluding to it earlier, you don't step in and you're not bold right away. But as soon as you feel comfortable, you really have to find those moments to put your foot forward. I think about taking the leap to start my own business and it was all you know, take the first step. What I like about this quote is where it says Begin it right. It's like just start right. The act of starting is where the genius is, the act of starting is where the magic and the power is. And that's been my Gaiden pieces through my career and happy to pass that on to anyone that that resonates with.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 38:30

That is great advice, because oftentimes, I think we worry about making sure that everything is perfect or though it's going to come off the right way. And that causes stagnation, you don't actually move forward with the project. Right,

Abi Olukeye 38:42

Exactly right.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 38:44

We've gained invaluable insights into the realities and opportunities for women in STEM careers. I want to thank Mary Murrin Corporate Affairs Digital Strategy at Chevron, and Abi Olukeye, founder and CEO of Smart Girls HQ, for sharing your experiences, strategies for success and the upgrade in an inclusive and supportive workplace.

Mary Murrin 39:04

I just want to acknowledge that this was a great learning experience for me even a long time into my career. I love these opportunities to learn from other women's experiences and personalities and, and strategies. So thank you, Abi and Nancy, for sharing great questions and perspectives and for helping me learn more.

Abi Olukeye 39:26

I agree. This is a wonderful conversation. Thank you so much for inviting me to it.

Nancy Scales-Coddington 39:31

This is where you can make a difference in empowering women in STEM by sharing this podcast and the valuable insights, advice and strategies that you heard here today. Whether you are a woman navigating the STEM workforce, an ally champion, gender equity, or someone aspiring to pursue a career in STEM, remember that change begins with all of us. Take the lessons and inspiration you've gained from today's episode and put them into action. Seek out mentorship, challenge biases, advocate for diversity and above all, let's work together to create a more inclusive and equal STEM community. Your efforts both big and small can make a meaningful difference. If you're passionate about supporting women and girls in STEM, please support this work with a donation. The link is in the show notes. And we want to hear from you. What challenges have you faced in your stem careers and how did you overcome them? What tips do you have for balancing career and family life? Share your thoughts and feedback on social. You can find the National Girls Collaborative Project on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. At NGC project and on YouTube at National Girls Collaborative. You can find and NGCPs podcast Empowering Change: Women and Girls in STEM wherever you listen to your favorite podcasts. Thank you for joining us on this journey towards a brighter and more equitable future in STEM.

[CLOSE] music playing

###