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Announcer: There are few things that make people successful. Taking a step forward to change their lives is one successful trait, but it takes some time to get there. How do you move forward to greet the success that awaits you? Welcome to *Next Steps Forward* with host Chris Meek. Each week, Chris brings on another guest who has successfully taken the next steps forward. Now, here is Chris Meek.

Chris Meek: Hello. I'm Chris Meek, and you're tuned into this week's episode of *Next Steps Forward*. As always, it's a pleasure to have you with us. Our guest today is Dr. Paola Cecchi-Dimeglio, author of *The Transformational Power* of *Small Changes* to Debias *Your Company*, *Attract Diverse Talent*, *Manage Everyone Better* and *Make More Money*.

A data scientist and lawyer, Paola holds double appointments at Harvard, at the Kennedy School of Government, and the Law School. Dr. Cecchi-Dimeglio is a prominent scholar and researcher known for her work in the fields of law, management, and organizational behavior, with a particular focus on promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. She has made significant contributions to understanding issues related to gender equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace.

Paola has also conducted research on the role of empathy and emotional intelligence in leadership effectiveness, as well as on the importance of inclusive leadership practices to foster innovation and productivity in organizations. Dr. Paola Cecchi-Dimeglio, welcome to *Next Steps Forward.*

Dr. Paola Cecchi-Dimeglio: Hi, Chris. Thank you for having me and happy to have all the listeners with us today.

Chris: No, we appreciate your time. Given that intro and that bio, you're clearly a very busy person, so I really am thankful for you being here today.

Paola, let's start. How did you become interested in diversity, equity, and inclusion, and why did you decide to make it the focus of your career?

Paola: Well, I'm a first-generation American, and I'm very proud of that. The notion of my career was, initially I was a lawyer and everyone will tell you my path was straightforward and I should just do that. I realized that our system may carry some inequality, and that is part of the reason why I switched, complement my degree, and went back to school to understand that the power is in the data. The power is the ability to argument, but also demonstrate your point of view. What a better job I have to show that our diversity is the strength of any country, including yours.

Chris: It's yours now too. You said you're first generation.

Paola: Yes, very proud of it.

Chris: [laughs] What are the most common types of bias that exist in workplace environments and how they manifest in day-to-day operations?

Paola: Biases are everywhere. We should not forget we made roughly more than 10,000 decisions a day. By just having a name or a perception of someone, high, gender, race, or ethnicity, we may have some assumption kicking in. I do think objectively people are not biased because they wake up in the morning and they say, "Oh, I want to be biased." I do think that everyone want to say, "I want to make smart decisions. Help me make better decision." The question become to equip people at every level to make decision while aligned with who they are on a daily basis, meaning individuals who like to make smart decisions.

How bias manifests, for example, just behind you, you have some frame of a map. I may think directly you love to go on the sea, you probably own a boat. You had a New York cup, I may think you're living in New York. All of that will bring assumption about me, oh, maybe he's going to Cape Cod in the summer. Maybe he like beer, maybe he doesn't like the Patriots. All of that will be brought into the conversation if I don't pay attention to it. Biases are just everywhere because they are cues that help us make faster decisions, and sometimes they are not aligned with what we want in the long term.

Chris: That's amazing. I wouldn't think of something as simple as looking at what's behind me or my beloved Yankees coffee mug here. For the record, my listeners know that I'm a huge sports fan and I do not like the Patriots. I'm actually also impressed that you know that we're going to Cape Cod on vacation. That was pretty funny. It's like you're reading my mind as well.

Paola: [laughs] You mean that I'm good at my job, maybe?

Chris: You're exceptionally good. We just started. Paola, how important is it for companies to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into their organizational policies and practices to address bias effectively?

Paola: I think if we look from an economic standpoint, we need to think where innovation comes from and what are the driver of an economy. Any economy will tell you we need to pour innovation, we need to create because we are living at a pace of technology that nothing has been seen in the past. Being able to solve problems mean that we need to bring people from different experiences, different backgrounds, different area of life to solve problem that one may not have encountered. I will give you a very simple example.

You may not think that the difference between gender matter, but the way, for example, a kitchen is set up, the height matter tremendously. As such, if you don't have someone who may be from a different height, you may not think that we need a stool to do that, to be able to reach the top shelf.

From every angle, you will need to have problem being solved by various people. That's where I think the core is. From an economic standpoint, we need to solve

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more problem that we know exist, and that's where the premises of my work is at the core of it.

Chris: You've talked about when you do invest. We've talked about data. We're going to get into AI later. It's like you read my script in advance, so I love this. In your research, have you found, either empirically or anecdotally, that American businesses tend to gravitate more to one type of diversity or another, say for example, gender or racial or LGBTQ, and does it vary by geographic region, industry, or other factors?

Paola: That's a fair question because the answer is not the same depending on how you're looking at it. We are a very large country, and every state also have, I will say we have the federal rule behind it of moving the social movement behind it. Overall, every state are taking some advancement more further than others towards certain type of diversity as we like to call it.

I will say that overall, what has been the most advanced in the last decade is the conversation around gender. Ethnicity and race and religion have been brought more recently into the table over, I will say, the large audience and public. LGBTQ+, minus as well, also have been on the cover since decision of the Supreme Court have been landing there. I will say overall, there is a movement of the conversation. Depending on where you're sitting, you don't have the same noise, I will say, about the topic.

However, I should say that not every industry, also depending on the economic sector in which we are looking at in the United States, are having the same type of conversation. For example, in New York, a law just passed about the need of non-discrimination related to height and weight, something that other states have not included.

Chris: In a slightly different question. Do most American businesses do better at racial diversity, gender diversity, or other types of diversity? Again, does it vary by sector or region?

Paola: Definitely vary by sector and region. I think you know my answer here. If you look, for example, the gig economy, here you may look at-- When I say gig economy, let me just make sure that we are talking about the same thing. No promotion for any company, but any type of Uber, Lyft, any delivering company are part of the gig economy, among others.

Here, we see a larger proportion of diverse employees who are coming from different economic backgrounds compared to just a profession that I'm part of. The legal profession is still very White, Caucasian, male-oriented despite having tried over the last 40 years to bring more women and more underrepresented individuals into this profession. There is a big difference also that we can observe by sector and by region.

Chris: I'll say, maybe in the last 10 years, we've seen major corporations create what are called employee resource groups. There could be one veteran-focused,

one Hispanic-focused, one LGBTQ+, et cetera. Do you think that they're doing it just as a knee-jerk reaction? Do they think their heart and their interests are in the right place? Is it because the employees are asking for it? Do they need more than just to create the resource groups?

Paola: Do we have more than an hour? [laughter]

Chris: We are happy to have you back too. [laughter]

Paola: I think any corporation have an-- I never met any CEO telling me, "I don't want to be innovative. I don't want to be competitive." The opposite is, how can I make my company more competitive and make more revenue to make sure that my shareholders are happy? As such, one of the key elements that has been around was the creation of those resource group.

Those resource group are, I will say, at the core of any organization, but there are no more than group of interests altogether being brought to discuss sometimes topic who may be difficult. I do think you know, resource group have been part of corporation, especially in Europe for a very long time, longer than they have been in the United States.

This is something that we have found from a research-wise have demonstrated that is actually helpful to organizations. Are they sufficient? I will tell you, no. More have to be done because all processes in organization are not optimized to help us as a humankind make the best decision for ourselves and for the organization.

Chris: Based on your experience, what are the primary challenges the organizations face when attempting to address bias?

Paola: The first one is to tell people you are biased. I don't know anyone, as I said earlier on, who wake up and say, "I'm proud to be biased." I do know everyone who say, "I'm happy. Tell me how I can make a better decision today. Empower me. Help me be a better person." That, I do know. I think you need to change the conversation and where you are bringing people onto the conversation to make sure that they are **[unintelligible 00:12:06]**.

That's the reason why I don't like to talk about D&I. I like to talk about decision intelligence. How can we make better decisions together, be smart as a group to outperform the rest, and be a good team? Everyone want to win. Patriots, Yankee, we all love each other, but we all are playing a hard game at the end of the season, right? The question is, if you look simply at the NFL, every player want to play a better game the day after. That's pretty much what every individual want to do every day.

Chris: Decision intelligence, I've never heard that before. I love that phrase. I love that. What data supports the idea that having more people from underrepresented groups in organization creates financial benefits?

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Paola: Here, I want to pause because I think it's easy to go and make a very shortcut of more diverse will bring you automatically more money. There is no causation. From a science perspective, I think it's very important to pause here. What we observe is a correlation, meaning that in organization who are more diverse, we observe that those company generate more revenue. There is a link here similar than if you're drinking more milk, you may be taller than if you don't drink milk. That's where the conversation is about causation and correlation.

If you think about a very simple principle, happy people make more money for themself and their company. When you are happy at work, you are going to perform well. You are going to give 100% of yourself to play every day with your coworker, to make sure that your task is done. You're going to go above and beyond. As such, your quality of what you will bring to work will increase the revenue. That's where the secret lie. That's where the core of the recipe of success is, making people happy at work.

Chris: Noble idea, being happy at work. Who would've thought?

Paola: [laughs] We are spending way too much time at work. Why not being happy there? [laughs]

Chris: Paola, what can and should companies do to attract more diverse applicants and the things the company should not do?

Paola: Very simple things to think is what can I do outside of my comfort zone? As such, the ability, for example, to meet where candidate employee, potential employee, maybe. For example, thinking outside of the boundary of one state, thinking about way of reaching to those individual who may not know that those type of job are able for them to access. I'm thinking here in particular with a company, a tech company that I have worked and we have worked together in raising the number of engineer coming in that company.

Initially, a lot of people didn't think when they were joining that company that one day they could become engineer and that the company could help them to become engineer and as such, increase revenue for themselves, but also for their future generation and children and helping everybody around. One element was to be able to do an outreach via different zip code where those individuals will see that it was possible for them.

I will say here, it's tangled with something that everyone knows. If you don't see it, you can't believe it. We could never believe that the Patriots will win so many times, yet we did.

Chris: I may have to kick you off the show for that one.

Paola: [laughs]

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Chris: Do you have some tips for removing implicit bias during the interviewing process?

Paola: The first one I will say is knowing when do you do those interviews. You have to think that when we are making decision about a candidate, for example before lunch, we may see that candidate with different type of skill than if we see it after lunch. Knowing and being aware when those decisions are made, I think are extremely important and what is environment around us.

In term of candidate, what can they do to help the person see them in the right way? One very simple element is to send a thank you note after the interview. I promise you that nudge will bring you a long way. Why? Because you may see many candidates, but you will always remember someone who says thank you, even if you do not hire them. Along the way, maybe six months, one year down the road you say, "Hey, I remember this person. He was not the right fit for that role, yet he was meeting the culture that I want to instill in my team. Let's call him back. Let's call her back."

Chris: You have an entire chapter about onboarding. Why is onboarding so crucial to increasing diversity, and how can we do it better?

Paola: Chris, I'm going to ask you, do you know any good company who onboard people and that around you tell you, "Oh, I had an amazing experience of joining this company"? Generally speaking, what you're going to hear is excitement the first few weeks, and then, "Oh my God, I'm left alone. What do I need to do? Who do I need to reach? What is happening? Nobody's helping me to succeed in this job?"

The onboarding is essential. It's the ability to set up the right element for you to be successful in the short term and in the long term. Despite thinking that just four weeks or even a day is enough, that's a mistake. A good onboarding take up to 18 months.

Chris: 18 months?

Paola: Yes.

Chris: Wow. I would've never thought that. I think of onboarding is--

Paola: That's onboarding.

Chris: -is the first week where you fill out your benefits and you get your laptop and your photo for your ID. Okay, that's good to know. Even after a person in an underrepresented group has been with a company for a while, they still need support and encouragement. Explain the importance of things like mentorship and sponsorship.

Paola: Well, here I will reframe it, if you may accept that as a lawyer.

Chris: Of course.

Paola: It's not woman or underrepresented who may need help along the way. I think it's every type of employee who need help along the way to know what are the type of information they are looking and for them to be successful because within a week, within a month, within six months, within 12 months, your network within the organization is not the same. The type of information for you to be successful in achieving the outcome of, I will say the project for the organization is not the same and is not evaluated the same.

As such, being able to have, I will say, the right coach coming and giving you direction at the right moment for you to play the next game better, that's where good onboarding, good training of your employee has to come. I think the workplace is like a game. You need to play your chess, but you also need to know that you want to win the season.

Chris: In your book, you say, "Women and people of color have histories of being compelled to perform drudge work." You also say the grunt work, "Usually yields little currency when it comes to promotion. Yet, they're seen as not being a team player if they refuse to do it." What should someone do if they find themselves repeatedly expected or directed to do menial tasks?

Paola: Whatever is their gender or ethnicity, if you find yourself in position where you feel that all the work you are doing is not equal to somebody else in your team, the ability to bring into a team meeting and say, "Hey, I do think it will be great if around those activity, we could all roll over and have the opportunity to learn." If suddenly I know what a quarterback is doing, and as such someone who is doing always the same thing, I may learn how I may help it. That's number one.

Number two, you may also realize that maybe someone is in a position over and over despite them being useful, but there is a need here to pass the ball to other player. I'm using a lot of analogy with sport because I believe that this is a way to communicate on how we want to make sure that employee perform in a company.

Chris: We don't mind sports analogies here, just team references. [laughter] How should performance evaluations be conducted, and what measures should be put in place to prevent bias from influencing assessment outcomes? In other words, should every employee be measured by the exact same standards and metrics, or do diversity and inclusion mean we measure people differently?

Paola: Ooh, here, I will pose because I do think everybody has to be measuring the same way. Measure and metrics are extremely important. What is, for me, challenging is if you create a double standard, that's where the problem is. Making sure that everybody is going through the same hoops, yes, go for it. I will encourage everyone to score individual over seven list of criteria depending on the job level again, because when you are junior, we are not expecting you to do the same thing that when you are senior or a leader, or an aspiring leader.

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What is important is to have a framework that you apply consistently across every department to make sure that you are able to assess an individual I will say not just once a year, but on the regular basis. It should not become a surprise when you have a performance review with your supervisors that you have not been performing well. You should have received a hint along the way that something did not work out.

I think here it's two side of the equation. One is on the employee to make sure that he's able to look back on a regular basis with his manager telling, "Hey, well, I am on the right track, compared to where you're going to assess me on the quarterly or on the annual basis, and what are those reference criteria that you're going to be measuring with? Is it quality of the product?" As such, if quality of the product is a metric that is used to assess employee, then make sure that you look back at the end of every project, what do you think of the quality of my work? If you have to rate it right now, one to five, please give me a response.

As such, the employee can later on go back just prior to the annual performance review and say, "Hey, look, quality is one element where you're going to assess all the employee. Of the various projects you told me that my quality in this project was a three, in this one, it was a five, overall, we end up to have a four." You have done two things. You have helped your reviewer remember what you have worked along the way and what was the quality, and you have shown in the same time that you're caring about being measured in a fair way.

Chris: How did the COVID-19 pandemic make inclusivity even more of a challenge? Has it taught us anything about the importance of flexibility?

Paola: COVID-19, I think, is still in a rear. Everyone can still remember very vividly what it looks like. It brought suddenly overnight, the world being able to work remotely. A lot of people right now are expressing their disconcert about going back to the office.

However, despite me saying it is important and demonstrating that flexibility is a plus, I also found in my work that it is important for worker to go back to the office. The flexibility is the ability, I will say not to be to work five days at work, but being able to have enough time to collaborate, to spark that innovation with co-worker, and also being able to be at home and work at a different pace.

We should not forget, working at home doesn't mean that you do not work. It mean that you work at a different pace and sometimes, oftentimes the quality of your work, because there is no disturbance, you are able to produce better quality than if you were going to the office. Finding the right balance in the flexibility of employer of corporate America is essential today, especially post-pandemic.

Chris: I'm thinking back to the COVID days when I was working remotely and I built a little, I call it my basement bunker, so it was my desk downstairs in the basement. Because there was nothing else to do after dinner, I go back to work. I can't tell you the number of times my wife came down and found me asleep at my desk at 11:30, midnight, one o'clock in the morning. It's totally changed, and like you said, it's not

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that far in the rearview mirror that we don't remember, unfortunately, every second of it.

Paola, is it up to leadership to increase diversity in the workplace, or do entry-level employees and folks in middle management also have a role?

Paola: I think everyone has a role. I think, leader, but also junior joining the company bring diverse talent, or foster diverse talent is the responsibility of everyone for the survival of the company.

Chris: Earlier on the show, you talked about data. How do you think artificial intelligence or AI will impact diversity, equity, inclusion in the workplace?

Paola: Here is my sweet spot, data, AI, gender, and race, and performance at work. I remember very vividly, one of my first article on AI was back 2011. I remember at that time people telling me, "You are crazy. This is something so far away." I said, "This is just around the corner. I promise you, this is a very powerful tool." One of the elements along the last 15 years that I have been working and using as a tool with company is AI. AI became more prominent into the everyday language, but AI is everywhere.

I'm thinking about one particular tool on annual performance review, which is called IDEA, inclusive decision and equitable assessment. This tool is fantastic. It's reducing biases, helping make better decision, assess talent in a fair way. All of that because it was built with the power of AI on behavioural science and with the help of several people coming all together from different disciplines to make sure that annual performance review could be debiased. Yes, I am 100% into the support of AI and how that will help the course.

Chris: You and I have mentioned the phrase "implicit bias" a few times throughout the show. Maybe none of our listeners know what that is. Would you mind giving a definition just so people know exactly what we're talking about?

Paola: There are many definition, and here is mine. The implicit bias is, think that without you realizing help or hinder a decision. For example, I have a very long last name. Every time I go to the airports, I will get stopped. Want it or not, I will get stopped because my name do not fit into the airplane ticket. That's a bias that the algorithm pick up. If the name is so long and doesn't fit, we are not sure it's you. That's an implicit bias marry into an algorithm that I am the one suffering on the regular basis at the airport.

Chris: I'm laughing because-- My first full name is Christopher. I remember my first credit card, I guess my name was too long at the time, and so they chopped the R off. I became Christophe. Everyone thought I was French or Italian or something. Luckily I had a very short last name, but I understand what you're going through.

Once you have a diverse workforce, obviously bias is going to arise. How can companies create a culture that identifies and actively mitigate bias from bottom to top?

Paola: Again, it's to talk about how we can make better decision together as a team, and what is the power in our differences to solve problem, to respond to our customer, and to deliver a product or services that we all set above. I think a team is always stronger when you talk to them about, how can we create a collaboration, a culture where together we can work, and I can understand you, rather than having a conversation about biases. Again, equipping individual to make better decision, and them being able to do better at their work, that's what they want. That's what an individual wants.

Chris: I've referenced your book a few times in our conversation. Who most needs to read your book? Is it human resources people? CEOs,? Everyone? Where can we find your book?

Paola: [laughs] Everyone need to read the book. That there is not even a question. The book was written for leader, aspiring leader, manager, employee, HR, every organization, big, small, listed, not listed where they can found MIT website, but also one, and again, no promotion because I like to have all type of ability to buy it from Amazon to Bar and Nobles and also to your local bookstore. If they don't, please email MIT and ask MIT to have a conversation with a local bookstore.

Chris: Again, the title of the book is *Diversity Dividend: The Transformational Power of Small Changes to Debias Your Company, Attract Diverse Talent, manage Everyone Better and Make More Money*. I always have to give you the plug on that, Paola. That's what we're here for.

Paola: [laughs]

Chris: We've been talking about workplace bias. How can companies measure the effectiveness of their efforts to remove bias, and what key performance indicators should they track?

Paola: Here again, there is no one size fit all, but I will say the ability to measure how the team afterward perform in term of time, in term of quality and in term of collaboration. I think those three measure about the success of debiasing or improving their decision-making is key.

Is there one size fit all? I will say again, it depend on the industry, and also depend on the region in which we're looking at. East Coast, West Coast, we don't measure in the same way. We have a tendency, I will say, to found measure that may balance or not balance a team to make the right decision. Having a consensus about those metrics is also very important.

Chris: What training or educational programs do you recommend for employees and managers to raise awareness about bias and promote inclusive behaviors?

Paola: There is a substantial amount of work who have been carried by a number of colleague of mine. I'm thinking in particular one by Frank Dobbin, who is also at Harvard University, the chair of sociology, who have actually demonstrated that a lot of those training are actually counterproductive to what one company will like to do. Either a specific one that I will recommend, unfortunately not because science tell me that this is not the case.

One element that I have seen working very well is a helping organization via training and role play about what is entitled of their job and what is or what can they expect to do in their next job. Creating a training about what is the best way for them to equip themselves in term of decision, in term of process, in term of how they talk to individual to achieve that. That are, I will say, the most powerful training that I have seen, helping individual making better decision and remove the biases that they may have.

Chris: Do you have a favorite or most illustrative case study or success story about a company that has successfully moved bias from its operations?

Paola: Do I have a magic wand?

Chris: [laughs]

Paola: I will say that there is no wand in particular. I do say that there are some worktop contender that there is no question over it. One that I'm thinking and is on the top of my mind is Patagonia. They are absolutely an amazing company at all level in term of their process, the way in which they handle employee, and overall, the mission and the purpose of how they communicate that to their employee for serving customer. They are among others.

There are also big brand who used to make big stride. We are not seeing them doing as much as they used to I should say, but there are a number of good company and others have learned from them. One that I'm also thinking of on the top of my head is Microsoft. The CEO have been bringing a new culture in the last 10 years that are striving for diversity internally at all level.

Chris: What lessons can other organizations learn from them?

Paola: A good leader spoke about it and have the ability to bring that conversation not about diversity, but about a competitive advantage for the company and for everyone. That's where the key of the success is for any leader wanting to replicate what those leader have done.

Chris: How should a company measure employee satisfaction and engagement, particularly among underrepresented groups? Are there notable trends in that respect?

Paola: I think, again, measuring everybody is very important and not just one group. I think that's the key of success. I think where a lot of our organization fell short is

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trying to measure once in a while. Generally speaking, I will say what is the best is to measure along the way on a regular basis and various topic. If I make an analogy here, you will understand right away why it's important. If you look at the stock market today, you will think, "Oh my God, this is a beautiful day." You look three weeks ago, you are crying because you have just lost so many points.

Depending on when you are looking at it, the perspective is not the same. If you take a 10 years, wow, suddenly you have an 8% gross minimum. The reason why I'm saying that the ability to measure at different time different type of question also is important to know what your employer are going through. Also understand that you are able to see the seasonal impact of work, of life event around those individual, and being able to make a better assessment to help them engage your workforce in the way in which you want them to be.

Chris: You mentioned earlier Microsoft and Patagonia building a culture. We'd love to have those sponsors on the show, but what role does diversity play in attracting, retaining top talent, especially among underrepresented groups?

Paola: I think you cannot create an economy-- I think if you look at the USPTO, which is the agency for patent and innovation, you realize that there is a big encouragement to create more diversity, because if we want to be competitive on the world market, we need to make sure that we're providing the best solution to every program around the world.

What a beautiful country are we in. Look, so many people with different backgrounds coming, bringing that wealth of knowledge and experience to be able to solve the toughest program in this country. I think that's where the power is. The power of making sure that everybody bring what we have to bring when we came to this country, first generation or the oldest one coming to the Mayflower, all of them have something to provide into further building this economy.

Chris: What are other benefits organizations can expect to experience from fostering diversity in their workforce?

Paola: Happy people make more money for themselves and their company. I will remain with this mantra until I die. The ability to understand and be with friends from different perspective will always make you happy to go to work, wanting to have a coffee, wanting to make sure that you're staying and you're finishing up the work you have to do so you can help your co-worker if in need be, or you can make sure that somebody cover your back if something happened. All of that matter tremendously. Happy people at work is important.

Chris: Can you share a couple of examples of how diversity has positively influenced organizational performance, innovation and competitiveness?

Paola: Look around you. Look, the stock market, all of that is innovation. All of that is brought by people that you may not set up. One event that I'm currently involve in is I'm sharing the committee for the UN on accessibility and inclusion on the

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metaverse. There are so many things that, for example, female engineers sought of because of their gender, or people from a different ethnicity or different experience have sought and are bringing to this new technology. That's where we going to create a future that will be more inclusive to everyone because everyone will find a solution to a program that they may have encounter.

Chris: Maybe as a follow-up to that, how do diverse perspectives and backgrounds lead to more creative problem-solving and decision-making within teams and organizations?

Paola: There are several research . One of them is by someone that I deeply respect which is Amy Edmondson, who is on the cover of my book, who just published the *Right Kind of Wrong* and has been named top thinker in the world. One element is we need to fail to make sure that we will be successful and you need to fail with different perspective because the more diversity you will bring to your thought, the more successful you will be in providing an outcome that is responding to the right question. I think there is a lot of success in the failure. That's one element.

Another element that Amy's work has been laying down is the psychology safety of a team. There are several experiments and one of them who is one of the most famous is at Google. They're trying to assimilate what was making the best team. What they found is the diversity of individual who are feeling safe to fail together. That's where the recipe is.

Chris: You wouldn't think of people being happy to fail together at a place like Google.

Paola: [laughs] Some of them were even paid to fail. How great it is.

Chris: You have to break it first to see if it really works. Paola, on the other side of that coin, dramatically different backgrounds, perspectives, opinions, and cultural styles have been known to create friction and contentious relationships. How do we make sure that DEI efforts don't create such problems?

Paola: I think that's a fair point. I think the D&I is a point, especially nowadays, of the conversation that may lead to friction at work, but also at home. Being able to, I will say, have a different of perspective over where the other person is coming from is essential. Being able to hear the argument, even if you do not agree, that's where the building of a culture of somebody else having a different opinion will help create and foster inclusivity and diversity in our world.

Chris: It's no secret that older employees often have the most difficulty adjusting to changes in the workplace. What challenges or barriers might organizations face with older workers when striving to create a more diverse workforce, and how can leaders effectively address them?

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Paola: Having the ability to- again, there is no one size fits all, but the ability to bring to the conversation what employees feel and how they feel and what do they think are the solution and that they can build that solution together is quintessential. One element that works very well is in the pro-bono world, the ability for a company to bring employee together to do something who is not benefiting them but benefiting others, help them to understand that together they can achieve something bigger.

I like to say that TEAM of a role is an acronym for together everyone achieve more. That's where the notion of diversity and maybe pro-bono helping others bring team together,

Chris: What's the team acronym again?

Paola: [laughs] Together everyone achieve more.

Chris: I've never heard that. This is a show of first, which we pride us on, and so I love that. I'm going to use that from now on. Thank you.

Paola: [laughs] You see sometimes the Patriats team may bring things novel to the show.

Chris: We'll put that aside. Every now and then they add some value. In what ways is inclusivity different from diversity?

Paola: Well, if we make an analogy, everybody can come to the party. Now who come and be invited to dance and to make sure that everybody is honing the mic and have the moment of spotlight, that's a different story. That's where the difference exists between inclusivity and diversity. Making sure that everybody is brought in but also have the ability to be on the spotlight together.

Chris: We were talking earlier about the impact of COVID. Have you observed any trends or best practices in promoting inclusivity in remote or distributed work environments?

Paola: Yes. One that I will say works extremely well across sector is ability to have blind coffee date online with coworker from other part, other department, because you may not know them, but just having 15 minutes encounter of a tea or a coffee and recreate what you have in the office where randomly you were stumbling onto people, is a system that I have seen during COVID and that we have implemented during COVID, and then now we are implementing with the use of virtual world, works extremely well.

Chris: Let's talk about leadership and your research into empathy and emotional intelligence. How does empathy differ from sympathy, and why is it important for leaders to cultivate empathy?

Paola: You are asking me tough question. I'm going back to school today.

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Chris: Because you're a Patriots fan. [laughter]

Paola: The difference between empathy and sympathy is I think on the definition level they are different. One is I can really relate to what you're telling me and the other one is I can relate and I can feel and I can put myself into your shoes. That make a difference in how able I am to understand how the situation may affect you without me feeling sorry for you. Just being able to absorb that feeling and that's where the difference are.

Chris: What are the key components of emotional intelligence, and how they contribute to effective leadership?

Paola: First, emotional intelligence was a beautiful term coined by a colleague of us, Danielle Goman. He came with the premises that there are several characteristics. One is self-awareness. The other one is self-regulation. The other one is motivation and expertise. Paired with social skill, that create emotional intelligence. Without that, you are unable to understand where other people come from. What is great about emotional intelligence, it is a skill that can be learned. Everything can be learned. You are not born with it. You can learn it.

Chris: Paola, we have just a few minutes left. I always like to have our guests take us to the end of our conversation with advice or personal story that helps our audience become less stressed, more resilient, and more empowered. I'll turn the mic over to you and have you take it from here.

Paola: Thank you, first, for having me. That's number one. Number two, I will advise everyone, one colleague of mine at Stanford is **[unintelligible 00:48:17]**, who is providing beautiful backed by science advice for anyone to make, I will say, a better life for themself informed by science. I will advise to follow that.

The second thing that I will advise an individual to do to be more happy at work is defining their goal. What do they want of the employer that they're working with? What are their expectation? What can they change, or what they cannot change and within their control, and letting go if it's not the right employer. You don't have to be working for an employer that every day you are fear of. When you go into work, you should be happy. That's where we spend most of our life.

I will say next to that, the ability to balance working out. When I say working out is even the ability to take a break, to walk out of the desk in which you are in, and the ability to say thank you to the people who are around you forming your team, or I will say the essential way of making happy people.

Chris: Dr. Paola Cecchi-Dimegio, even though you're a Boston fan, thank you so much for being here today. It was a real pleasure and honor and I appreciate your good-naturedness on this. Thank you.

Paola: Thank you so much for having me. I love New York as well.

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Chris: All right. We'll send you a coffee mug to Harvard. I promise to put them in the mail. Thank you to our audience, which now includes people in over 50 countries for joining us for another episode of *Next Steps Forward*. I'm Chris Meek. For more details and upcoming shows and guests, please follow me on Facebook at facebook.com/chrismeekpublicfigure and on X @chrismeek_usa. We'll be back next Tuesday same time same place with another leader from the world of business politics public policy sports or entertainment. Until then, stay safe and keep taking your next steps forward.

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Announcer: Thanks for tuning in to *Next Steps Forward*. Be sure to join Chris Meek for another great show next Tuesday at 10:00 AM Pacific Time and 1:00 PM Eastern Time on the Voice America Empowerment channel. This week make things happen in your life.

[music]

[00:51:00] [END OF AUDIO]

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