

TOPcast Episode 53: Bonus Content

Kelvin Thompson: So, that's how the sausage is made, so they say.

Liz Ciabocchi: We don't get any redoes?

Kelvin: *(laughter)* We don't have time for redoes, Dr. Ciabocchi!

Liz: No redoes? Alright. Well...

Kelvin: That's it! It just is what it is.

Liz: Okay.

Kelvin: You did great! What are you worried about?

Tom Cavanagh: That's right!

Kelvin: It's only Tom and I who sound less than stellar.

Tom: We do this act without a net.

Kelvin: That's right!

Liz: I think we all did that. It's a good thing we like and trust each other, right?

Tom: Yeah.

Kelvin: That's true.

Tom: That's right. No, that was good. You came prepared.

Kelvin: I know!

Liz: I tried.

Kelvin: I was impressed!

Liz: I tried.

Tom: Way more prepared than we usually are.

Kelvin: That's true! That's it. So, we thought we'd launch into a few minutes of—if you have any—questions. Hard ones go to Liz! Questions about the podcast or the topics or—without stealing any thunder from tomorrow's...

Liz: Yeah, please don't do that.

Kelvin: No. Tomorrow's session. We'd love to get around to you with some microphones, and again, we'll try to record some of this so if there's enough of it, we'll put it out in the bonus content on the site. Anyone? Anyone? There's one.

Participant 1: This is for Liz. I'd like to know how you recommend being a woman in leadership, enduring and navigating the boys club.

Liz: Wow.

Kelvin: That's a big one.

Liz: Well, thank you for that question. I think that it's not an easy road. It's not an easy road, and I don't want to pretend to suggest that it is, but first of all, you can't go it alone. So, one of the strategies that I always suggest is mentoring, and it's really important to seek out folks who can help you to navigate, you know, those layers of leadership and encountering glass ceilings and boys clubs and all of that, but that mentoring experience would be most valuable in my opinion if it involved both male and female mentors.

Audience Member: *(applause)*

Kelvin: Wow.

Audience: *(laughter)*

Liz: That guy over there.

Kelvin: *(laughter)*

Liz: So, that would be one thing off the top of my head that I think is very valuable. Talk to people who have been through this and that can help you to navigate the terrain, because it can be very rocky. Go to events and sessions and find professional development opportunities where these things are explored, and I think one of the most powerful things we can do is tell our stories.

Kelvin: Mhmm. Do you mind if I springboard off of that? That made me think of something, and it happens so seldom that I think of something.

Tom: *(laughter)*

Liz: Well, then by all means!

Kelvin: Just to kind of extend that for a second, and maybe not just to the male/female thing but in general, what do you—across the whole topic of diversity and inclusivity—what do you think the roles of allies are?

Liz: They're everything. *(laughter)* That's what I'm talking about. I think that you have to find your allies. You have to seek them out because look what strength in numbers can do. Think about some of the movements that I just talked about.

Those kinds of coalitions are invaluable. I mean, so if that's where you're headed with this question, I would say you can't go alone. You've got to come together. Find your partners in this endeavor.

Kelvin: Yup. Thanks for that. Other questions or comments from the audience? There's one in the back. Thank you, Trudy.

Participant 2: So, I appreciate the idea of inclusion is about being asked to dance, but that also suggests that there's still a power dynamic, that there's somebody that has the power to do that asking and that inviting. So, from your perspective, what can we do as leaders and emerging leaders in online education to start dismantling some of those systems that perpetuate those power dynamics?

Liz: I think it starts with work on oneself, and one of the things that we're going to do tomorrow is have a little bit of self-reflection and exploration around that. What do you bring to this topic? What's your diversity story?

Kelvin: Yeah.

Liz: And start there, and really think about that very seriously, because dismantling structures, you know, that's the goal. That's where we want to get to, but we have to start here within ourselves. I didn't mention, by the way, the issue of accessibility, and I just don't want to lose track of it in case anybody's thinking about it.

Kelvin: Oh, good for you.

Liz: Don't know what made that pop up right now, so I think that's the launching point, in response to your question, Brian. It's Brian, right?

Participant 2 (Brian): Yeah. Thank you.

Tom: I think there's some recognition, too, though. Those power dynamics exist and before you can kind of address them or change them, you kind of have to work within those systems, and then you can kind of, you know, have some influence. Currently, you know, if there's a dance to be invited to, it's oftentimes somebody else's dance and so we're there making it our own.

Kelvin: And here's maybe a concrete example that's related to that. I appreciate the colleagues I've seen role modeling for me and for us things like—you'll see this on Twitter. It's still around. For those of you who are not Tweeting, you should be. Some of you are Tweeting! I've been reading your Tweets—like Kyle Johnson from Hawaii. I've seen "I will not speak on male-only panels." You know, I appreciate that.

Tom: "Manels."

Kelvin: "Manels." That's right.

Liz: “Manels.”

Audience: *(laughter)*

Kelvin: Yeah, that’s horrible. But I appreciate that because that’s a structural decision, right? And you can imagine a bunch of other concrete actions like that that maybe have impact.

Liz: I think they do. I mean, the fact that you picked up on it, I’ve picked up on a few other examples of that, you know, other colleagues that I know that have made similar declarations. This is 2019. Don’t ask me to speak on a panel that does not include women or some element of diversity. It shouldn’t be, and when somebody can step up and say, “I reject that. I’m not going to do that,” and there are enough of those folks getting involved in the way, people take notice.

Kelvin: Yeah. Other thoughts or comments or questions?

Participant 3: I really appreciate that we need to lead by example and Liz, your idea of self-reflection, I’m really intrigued now to see what’s going to happen tomorrow. Do you have any advice for us as leaders who besides leading ourselves lead people that we can do to help foster to either encourage more diversity and growth in leadership of our folks or things that we can do to try to suppress any of these natural stereotypes that keep perpetuating themselves?

Liz: Yeah, it’s a learning process. I think you have to develop. You’re educators, right? You’re educators, so you put on that education hat and you say, “Okay. How can I unpack these issues for this group of people, for this team? Where do we start?” You know, and my suggestion is start with them as individuals, who they are and what their issues are and what they bring. What biases do they bring? Explicit or implicit? What’s going on with them? What’s their diversity story? And tell them. Tell the stories. It’s not easy, you know, and there has to be a safe space in which to do that. So, you have to create a safe environment in which people are willing to do those kinds of things. There are tons of folks out there who are experts in this that can lead you through these kinds of exercises if you don’t feel that you have the skillset to do that personally. You know, and if you have the resources to do it, hire somebody to come in and help you do it. We did that recently at my institution as part of this initiative I was talking about, and it was amazing. It was terrific, and it was led by two people who have a lot of experience in bringing people through this process in a very safe and welcoming environment.

Kelvin: That’s good. Good questions.

Tom: Did you have your hand up?

Participant 4: The idea that we need to create safe spaces obviously is very important, but assuming maybe you don’t currently feel like you’re in a safe space where you can point out an issue you observe. An example is I recently participated in a United Way event for women who work, and they asked us to talk about situations like you’re in an interview panel, for example, and you’re noticing that

all of the female candidates are being brushed aside even they maybe are more qualified. You should speak up. That's really hard to do, and connected to your talk this morning about communication and knowing your audience, do you have any tips for productive ways to speak up so that you're not misinterpreted or you're not just brushed aside as being, you know, a troublemaker or too direct or something like that?

Liz: Oh, this is a challenge, right? If you don't feel as if you're being heard and you're trying to make some in-road, trying to find some way to insert your perspective into a conversation where you're being actively excluded. That's what you're talking about, right? It's kind of a leap of faith and courage to interrupt, you know? To sort of demand your place at the table and say, "Excuse me. I would like to complete my thought here. I would like to interject for a moment if I may," and that's not easy to do. Some of us are better at that than others. Some of us would never even dream of doing that. What can be helpful for you in a situation like that is if you have an ally in the room. So, let's assume that maybe you can identify somebody who's going to be a participant in that meeting or has the ear of other participants in that meeting that you can count on to recognize you. To say, "Wait a second. Mary had a thought that she wanted to complete. Let's let her do that." Right? So, you know, it doesn't sound like a lot, but it can be really everything when your voice is being silenced. If you can find somebody to help you create a space for you to speak, I think that's a strategy. I would imagine other people in the room have similar kinds of tips and advice that they would give, if they want to share that.

Tom: That goes to your point about the importance of allies.

Liz: Yeah.

Kelvin: Any stories? Any comments? Ooh, there's a couple.

Participant 5: One observation that I've made in top administrative meetings is the men being addressed as "Dr." and the women not.

Kelvin: Ahhh.

Participant 5: And so, several of the women have joined together and we are modeling that we call each other—even though we are friends outside of those meetings and it's very casual to come somebody by their first name—we are trying to model for each other to call our female colleagues "Dr." in hopes that that would be modeled for our male counterparts.

Kelvin: Wow.

Tom: I have one observation before you go, Susan. I have a colleague here who in meetings with senior leaders, she doesn't volunteer to take minutes because she has made a study of this here that when the time comes for somebody to take notes or minutes, it's always some woman at the table is turned to and she refuses to participate in that, and she sits and waits until somebody else volunteers for it. It's just a small little thing, but it has broad repercussions.

Kelvin: She hear all the buzz? All the comments on that one? *(laughter)*

Tom: Yeah! That really resonated here, didn't it?

Liz: Can I jump in, Susan, for one second because I'll forget if I don't say it? So, forgive me, but there's an app that you can download. How many of you have heard of this? It's called Gender Tracker. Have you heard of it? You can actually time the amount of speaking time that someone is taking up in a conversation using this app. So, if you want to present hard data around this issue of women not having enough of a voice in a conversation, you could literally time it and say, "Look at that. So-and-so took up this much of the time in the conversation as compared to a female colleague who had this much time." Interesting little app. Sorry Susan. Thank you.

Susan: No, no problem! I just wanted to add to the conversation that at a former institution—and not here—

Kelvin: *(laughter)*

Susan: I have experienced the glass ceiling effect and definitely being silenced, but in a very gentle, kind way so that I didn't even realize it until I began verbalizing it with other female colleagues. I realized, you know, I didn't get that promotion or I didn't get that position that I was expecting and I should have, and these were male colleagues who expected me to get it, but I just wanted to add I had to practice finishing a thought because I would be interrupted so often. So, I'm really interested in that gender tracker. But things like finishing a thought or being assertive enough. Yes, I'm going to take a little bit more time like I'm doing now to tell the story because I just gave you the whole context, but that's my communication mode and you need to listen to me because I'm important and, you know, making those kind of things. So, being in my own way, bringing that to the table, that's who I am and by golly, you need to value me because that's who I am and understanding that about me, I think I'm old enough now to say that's important. So...

Kelvin: Well said. Microphone's coming to you. Thank you all for waiting for the microphone so everybody hears well. It's important.

Participant 6: I clapped loudly, Liz, because I loved what you said about the male role in lifting up diversity. You know, it's a personal thing for me, and so, I think it's so very important for the men in the room. I mean, there are some articles out there that are really good about small things we can do in meetings to create space for our female counterparts to finish and to arrest the behavior. I was very fortunate. A very close female colleague who considers me a mentor, who said, "Luke, read this." And so, there is an awareness. I'll tell you this, to my female counterparts: don't assume, for men, we agree with the behavior, but also don't assume that we have those skills to arrest it. Right? I mean, the mentoring is both ways. It was, "Hey, these are things you can do, because I know you care about these issues." And so, I would just encourage that, right? I would really encourage [that] because there are people that really don't want the boys club to exist.

Kelvin: Right.

Participant 6 (Luke): I don't want it, nor do I need it, and I don't benefit from it, right? Regardless of what America tells you, we benefit from having a whole room, and I just am so encouraged and inspired by you, Liz, and I want to affirm that, which is another thing we can do. We can affirm each other. So, I just wanted to say that. Thank you for having the courage, because you continually have this very important conversation.

Liz: Thank you, Luke. I'd just say one last thing on this subject, which is that we shouldn't assume, you know, to your point, that all of these behaviors are intentional. Sometimes they are very unintentional, and so, this education piece is really important and you know, having a male colleague who may be engaging in the behavior and not even realizing the impact that it could have on you and being able to have an honest conversation about that—a dialogue about that—can be very valuable. It's like, "Gee, I didn't realize," and I know we've all had those— Well, many of us probably have had those kinds of experiences, as well.

Kelvin: Mhmm. There's one in the back.

Participant 7: I would say it's not just men. Sometimes women accidentally perpetuate the same things. I was actually commenting to a colleague of mine because I have noticed sometimes I interrupt a female colleague of ours and it's not intentional and I've worked with her for twelve years and I do it all the time. There are other things that other women do that perpetuate things. So...

Kelvin: Yeah.

Liz: Absolutely.

Kelvin: I interrupt everybody.

Audience: *(laughter)*

Kelvin: Because I process verbally and I like to think that it's across the board equally but it might not be, so I need to reflect on that.

Liz: Gender tracker.

Kelvin: I need to do better. That's right.

Tom: We need a Kelvin Tracker.

Kelvin: That's true. People really do. There's a hand or two here.

Liz: It's right here and I have a mic so I'm going to go.

Participant 8: I think we're hinting at something here but a word I haven't heard yet is sponsorship. When I stepped into my role about three and a half years ago, I

learned the difference firsthand between mentoring and sponsorship, and if you haven't read the difference, I encourage you to look that up, because mentoring can sometimes be, "Yes, I experience that" or a little bit of commiserating or a little bit of "If I were you, I would do this." But sometimes it's a little bit far removed from actually helping you do it, and I was able to experience a sponsor and it happened to be a male, but I think to your point it could be a female just as easy, who literally just made the room at the table and said, "Jackie has a seat. We want Jackie's perspective here." And I experienced what room felt like. Like, literally taking space, making space, but it was someone that did that for me, and I don't think it had much to do with gender, necessarily. I think it had to do with diversity of thought and what I brought to that meeting, and I don't honestly even know if it was intentional by the person that did it as much as they just thought I really truly had something to bring. That concept and when you see it and when you feel it, it's transformational, and I think there's a gender implication when it is a male making that type of space for a female, but that word sponsorship has been really life-altering for me to both experience and to read more about.

Kelvin: I know there was another hand somewhere, too. There's one over here. Does somebody else have the mic? Trudy, you're a trooper.

Participant 9: Two quick thoughts. One was—and I can't see who was speaking on the other side of the room—but I had that same thought that for those of us, and I'll include me in this category, who have for whatever reason been able to be assertive about our place to recognize that that's not...I think there's a tendency to assume that everyone else can take that role, and I think being aware that not everyone feels comfortable claiming that space or taking that move and to your comment about it's hard to make those comments, that it's important for us to take that role as well. The other piece is recently have been mindful of not apologizing for claiming that space. Not starting the conversation with "I'm sorry, but I have something to say." I'm not sorry. I have something to say.

Liz: Yeah, that's a good point.

Participant 9: And I think we have gotten really comfortable as females trying to apologize for interrupting. Not that interrupting's necessarily the best move, but you know, it's just not starting with an "I'm sorry" and just starting with "If you have a moment, I'd like to share something." It doesn't have to be rude. It just doesn't have to be self-deprecating.

Kelvin: We might have time for one more.

Tom: We've got four more minutes.

Kelvin: Yup. Looks like no, right? A couple of logistical things and then I'll invite Liz and Tom for any final comments. If you are interested in a TOPcast sticker, catch us as we transition out and we'll make it worth your while, as long as you put it somewhere prominent. This will be the September episode of TOPcast. Go subscribe now.

Tom: Usually the first Monday of the month.

Kelvin: First Monday of the month. That's right. Show notes not to be missed. One of our listeners tweeted out once, "Hey! There's a lot of good stuff in there," and Liz is going to have all these resources in there, so that's going to be worth the—

Tom: Treasure trove!

Liz: Oh boy.

Kelvin: Treasure trove! That's right.

Tom: Of Ciabocchi goodness.

Liz: Oh my goodness. Pressure! Pressure!

Kelvin: Man, that could be the episode title.

Tom: Yeah!

Kelvin: Wouldn't that be something? But thank you all. I hope this has been a good thing for you. I hope if you haven't been a podcast listener—not just to TOPcast but in general—there's a lot of good stuff out in podcast land. I have way too many that I try to listen to.

Tom: Yeah.

Liz: Yeah.

Kelvin: I wonder if either Tom or Liz, you have anything as we kind of wrap this up that you'd like to put a button on?

Liz: I do! First of all, I'd like to thank you, Kelvin, and you, Tom, for creating this opportunity for us to explore this topic in TOPcast. That means a lot to me personally and I think it's really important for our field that you're taking the time and making the effort to shine a light on these issues, and I really appreciate that. And I'd also like to add that I'm grateful to the OLC organization as a whole because this organization's been very supportive of me personally and of the work that people are doing in this area and I think that that's a fairly unique position that they're taking in this space. They have created a diversity, equity, inclusion—it's actually called IDEA at the moment—but inclusivity, diversity, equity, and advocacy initiative that they have attached to their conference experience, so being mindful of these issues and really making sure that we're attending to the needs of all of our participants across the board in these conferences in various ways. You can read about it on the OLC website if you're interested in that, and if you'd like to participate in that, even better. OLC has been sponsoring for the last several years. It started as a women's leadership luncheon in which we invited guest speakers in to talk about these issues and put them in context for us. They've created a scholarship opportunity. It's called the IDEA Scholarship for folks who can apply and attend a conference using these scholarship moneys that they award. So, I just want to applaud the organization

as a whole. I'm proud to represent this organization on its board. I'm also proud of the fact that we've been able to increase the diversity of our board of directors for OLC over the last three years. Very proud of that. So, thanks to OLC and thanks to the two of you.

Kelvin: Awesome.

Tom: You're welcome. I will not add to that.

Audience: *(laughter)*

Tom: So, thank you all for being an awesome, attentive audience. Give yourselves a hand.

Audience: *(applause)*