Steven Karan:

Hello, and welcome to the *How Data Should Work* podcast, a podcast series from Capgemini Canada that seeks to bring a practical business-focused lens on the often complicated world of data and analytics. I am your host Steven Karan, Vice President and Head of Insights and Data at Capgemini Canada.

And I have to tell you folks, I have been looking forward to this conversation for a couple weeks now. We are recording this podcast in the middle of Women's History Month, and this year's theme being embracing equity. And one topic that my guest and I are equally passionate about is the topic of diversity in data. Today we're going to discuss the importance of ensuring this field is inclusive and ultimately representative of groups that have not traditionally seen a lot of representation in the field of data and analytics.

So today I'm delighted to welcome Cindy Kelly, Senior Director of Business Intelligence and Sales at Four Seasons Hotel Group. Cindy, welcome to the *How Data Should Work* podcast. And please, share a little bit about yourself, and I'd love to get a sense of why are you passionate about data and why have you decided to make a career in data for yourself?

Cindy Kelly:

Sure. Thank you, Steven. I am so glad to be here. My partner and I have six children in the teens and early twenties. I've got five daughters in that group so this is near and dear to me. It's great to be here to talk about it.

A little bit about me. I'm a senior director in IT at Four Seasons. I've got two pillars, or two teams if you will. I've got one of them pointed at global sales platforms, so we do all their projects and all their support of that portfolio. That of course crosses into the data space. And then I lead enterprise BI. So I've got both build and run on that side, everything from financial program management and vendor management to building our capabilities and our teams, and then of course dealing with our stakeholders to make their dreams come true.

So it's an exciting time at Four Seasons right now, I don't know if anyone's noticed, and that goes beyond *White Lotus*. Everybody's super excited about *White Lotus* and showcasing some of the properties there, but it's extraordinary with some of what's going on internally.

Steven Karan:

I know there's a lot of *White Lotus* fans that we have at Capgemini. And I know a couple of them will be tapping me on the shoulder if I don't ask you, Cindy, which one of your hotel properties is that actually filmed out of or based out of?

Cindy Kelly:

The first season was filmed out of Hawaii; we've got several properties there. And then the second season is filmed out of our hotel in Taormina in Italy.

Steven Karan:

And thank you for joining me on this conversation around diversity in data. This is something that you and I had a chance to previously chat about a little bit and I know we share this mutual affinity and mutual affection for it. And one of the things that, to set the stage, that I recently discovered that just completely blew me away, Cindy, I had our recruiting team here at Capgemini go in and do a little bit of research around helping me understand what the makeup in terms of the gender diversity of data

professionals look like today. And we had some global statistics originally around global studies that have been done and said, typically in the field of, for example, data, data science – women typically make up somewhere in the neighborhood of 15, 20, maybe 22 percent.

And so I wanted to get a sense of: no, it can't be that low in Canada, is it that low? And so they've gone back, they did some research, they looked at certainly some of the Stats Can data, they looked at just some data that we extracted across media platforms like social media platforms like LinkedIn. It came out to roughly around 25 percent of data professionals in this country are women. And I was astonished; I didn't realize it was that low. I thought it was 35, 40 percent, or something of that nature. And to see that number very stark in front of my face just absolutely blew me away, and it crystallized for me that there's a lot of work left here for us to do and there's a lot of barriers that perhaps haven't been tackled in a meaningful way that we need to look at, coming up with some tangible, some new sort of thinking and new solutions for.

And I wanted to get a sense of what's your reflection on that number, on that number of 25 percent: is it reflective of your own experience? And what are maybe some of the things that you've seen over your career in terms of those roadblocks that maybe aren't getting the media attention, the headlines if you will, but some things that fundamentally impact where we are today in terms of the representation of women in this field?

Cindy Kelly:

Sure, sure. I mean, I think this is one of those things that we all talk about, and it's a mile wide and it's hard for us to find a piece of it that we can affect in a meaningful way.

The first thing I think we all have to acknowledge is that, I mean, we all, as human beings, go out and try to find our shortcuts and we're always patterning and that sort of thing. So as we look to what has worked for us in the past, if we've got lots of non-diversity in the tech space, as we try to replicate success, without even thinking, in its nicest form, we're going to go hire more people that look like the ones who have done well for us. And that's everywhere. If I've had a rockstar that followed a certain template, I'm going to go look for more of those. And maybe even as nice as I am, that has created a bias.

So as I go out to my hiring ... There's some great books around this too, but I try to be very intentional about my hiring. I try to hire against myself, if you will. I try to make sure my candidates meet a diversity of people in my team so that they feel that they can see someone who might look like them and they can identify with. And so we're attractive, frankly, as an employer. Some candidates won't go if they don't feel they're going to fit in there or if they can succeed there.

Steven Karan:

Absolutely.

Cindy Kelly:

And I also avoid panels, if you will. I personally don't like a panel. Some people love panel interviews. They think as an employer it gives you a best chance. I think those create a little bit of bias as well because someone's typing to the other person, going, "Oh, they're not smiling very much," or, "Seems bossy to me," or whatever the case.

So I think it's really important to get independent perspective and then challenge yourself to hire differently than everything that you've hired before in other people's mindsets about that.

Steven Karan:

Yes, yeah. Absolutely.

Cindy Kelly:

Those are a couple of examples. But I think another thing that happens too is, I mean, everybody talks about lack of role models, but even if you're fixing your hiring situation at the intake, lots of organizations say they're hiring with more diversity. This isn't just women, it's other underrepresented groups as well. You tend to see that fall off higher up in the range. We need role models for success so that people can see that they can get there and achieve. And so that our lenses have different views of what success looks like.

Steven Karan:

Absolutely.

Cindy Kelly:

Power and success can move and walk and talk and solve in different ways.

Steven Karan:

Yes, yes. The piece around role modeling is so important, and one of the things that I always describe because, one, I'm meeting with new grads coming out of school or talking to individuals that are young professionals in their career, the one thing I always highlight is, the person that I am today is really reflective of this, what I call, my personal Mount Rushmore of leaders that I've had a chance to work with throughout my career. And they really have shaped and guided me to where I am today.

The interesting thing when I reflected on it one day, is of those people in that personal Mount Rushmore, those four individuals, three of them are women.

Cindy Kelly:

Oh, interesting.

Steven Karan:

Yeah, three of them are women. And I had the opportunity at ... Their name are like Bev and Katie and Patricia, and these are individuals that really shaped what I thought about in terms of not only technology, but the applicability of technology and data to business to drive value, how to humanize data, how to humanize technology. A lot of that thinking that I have today is shaped by those individuals, and being able to work very closely with them (was very formative in my career). And I absolutely attribute much of my own personal success and who I am as a leader in this field of technology and data to those individuals that guided me along the way.

When you think about the people that have impacted your career, which has been a very successful career as well, is there that diversity of role modeling? Were you fortunate enough to find somebody that you found to be an aspirational leader early on in your career that really was able to guide…you to the level of success that you've had? Really wanted to get a sense of how has that shaped for yourself?

Cindy Kelly:

I completely agree with you. And if you think about pivot points in your life, there was a time early in my career where…we used to intentionally develop people in those days and you'd pick them out and move them through different roles. I got the opportunity to work with a senior female leader. And we were dealing with a very emotional situation where we were about to change a sales coverage model, really radically change the way an entire organization did their jobs.

And it was through this individual, she role modeled how we use data and frameworks in very unemotional ways to solve these problems and have people stare at the facts, that I think that was very empowering to me. It showed me new ways of doing things and solving things and places to put where my interests were.

Steven Karan:

Yes, absolutely.

Cindy Kelly:

And I still lean on things that she showed me today. So I completely agree with that.

Steven Karan:

That's fantastic.

Cindy Kelly:

We need to do more of that.

Steven Karan:

That's fantastic. Diversity of role modeling is so important in terms of how it shapes our own thinking. And one of the things I just picked up from you, and when you've talked about what's happening at Four Seasons today, there is an intention to really make sure that we're inclusive and you're looking at a diversity of experiences, diversity of backgrounds, of the talent that you're bringing into the organization.

We are very much on parallel tracks here in terms of Capgemini, and I had a question from one of my young professionals one day around: why are we making this a priority, why are we making this an important pillar for ourselves and our business? And I said to them, it was very, very simple to me. In my own experiences, the teams that I've been part of, that have been diverse and that have had a broader range of experiences and professionals in those teams, they come up with solutions to problems that are, to me, tangibly better, tangibly better. It's not the same tried-and-tested way of approaching a problem, but there is a new perspective, a new solution that can be brought forward.

And I always thought about that in terms of what I saw in my career coming up in this field and what we are looking to instill in our business is, I absolutely want our teams to have a diversity of thought and diversity of thinking through challenges when they come. And the more inclusive our teams are, the more diverse they are in terms of gender as well, the better problem solving that we do. And I'm curious as to see if that resonates with you and is that reflective of what you've seen at Four Seasons as well?

Cindy Kelly:

One hundred percent. I mean, homogeneous teams are going to come up with homogeneous solutions. That's what you're going to get. There's a burning platform for all of us. Of course, we want to be

inclusive for its purist sense, from a competitive sense as well. To get to the best innovations and the best solutions we need diversity of thinking and membership.

So, couldn't agree with you more. And then to be able to advance ideas and people who are a little disruptive in that way, we will otherwise miss massive market opportunities.

Steven Karan:

Yes, absolutely. I 100 percent agree with you. So now we've set the stage a little bit around where we are today and some of those gaps that we need to cross, let's look at what are the key gaps to bridge and how potentially we can potentially do that. Give some ideas for folks listening to this conversation around steps that they can take in the organization, ideas they can try.

I know, for your example, you have five daughters, and you mentioned to me in the past that we're trying to get a couple of those individuals at least into the field of engineering and data. I have an eight-year-old daughter myself, and she's been learning how to program her own video game since she was four or five years old. And she's told me already, "Dad, when I become a grownup, I'm going to have my own games studio and I'm going to run it." She's already fixated on what she wants to do.

Cindy Kelly:

That's great.

Steven Karan:

And so this is very personal for us, and I wanted to get a sense from you around, does the fact that it's personal change your perspective around the gaps that exist today and the thinking around what we can do to address those gaps?

Cindy Kelly:

Of course it's personal. At the same token, I very much enjoy what I do. I'm very passionate and excited about it. So it's at work and it's personal too, so to speak. For as much time as we spend at work every week, it needs to feed you in all those ways.

But in terms of what we can do, I tell you, my girls have been very informative to me and I'll get to that in a second. But right now, immediately, I was listening to even a recording that was done of a session that was held at Four Seasons as recently as a week ago, and they had some of our senior female leaders there. And we were talking about improving our diversity for women in underrepresented areas. And one of them said exactly your earlier point, we need to be the wind [at] someone's back. It behooves each and every one of us as a leader to help people with that, to spot their potential and to improve. You can reach out and touch someone in so many ways and change things for them and help pave it out, and they have to earn the right too, but I think we should challenge ourselves to go do that.

My young leaders will tell you I take a very active role in their career development. That's my responsibility. I also think it behooves us to do that because if we don't, that talent is going to self-deselect and go apply their skills-

Steven Karan:

Agree.

Cindy Kelly:

... to other departments and other verticals. So it's a retention strategy as well.

Steven Karan:

I fundamentally agree with you.

Cindy Kelly:

We talked about being intentional about our hiring. I go so far as to when I talk to my recruiters to say, "I invite you to bring me diversity in my candidates. It's not just that I'm open to it, but I invite you because I know you've got to be super purposeful about your language.

And I did a bunch of volunteering as well when my kids were in the school system, and now that we are in a different place right now I'm going to go back to that, but I think we've got to find a way to reach back into our communities and help with the language. I don't think there's kids in junior school or middle school or high school that are saying, "I love data." I think we need to change it to, "Do you enjoy problem solving? Can you assemble on multiple layers?" Give them new language and paint out these careers for them.

And I've approached several schools in the East End to say I'd be willing to do that and come on in and help foster. I've got daughters in high school right now. It occurred to me they didn't know what I do, Steven. They don't understand these career opportunities in front of them. And if they don't, as they enter university, how can we expect them to show up there?

Steven Karan:

Right. Absolutely. Absolutely. They need to see that example of somebody who's doing it and succeeding in their career and showing the example of, "Hey, there's a pathway for me there as well." It's that North Star or that role model, call it what you will, but that representation, that visual representation, matters so much.

Cindy Kelly:

Yeah. And I do have a daughter going into engineering in the fall, and she really enjoys problem solving and the challenge and the numbers and that sort of thing, but she said, "Stop telling us that girls should be more into STEM." She said, "Show us other ways to connect to this," because she said, "We're all just tired of that language." So I think that's super important to us.

Steven Karan:

Interesting. Interesting.

Cindy Kelly:

Yeah, yeah.

Steven Karan:

Very, very interesting. Well, you touched on a couple of things there. One is certainly around…the recruiting of talent in the organization. The world of data analytics technology and the in-demand skills, when you narrow that world down to Canada, it is a relatively small talent pool. And that talent pool needs to certainly become more diverse.

But I think one of the things that organizations like ours can do is really make sure that's an intent. I've said to my own recruiting team, "If we're going to recruit for this type of role, a data engineer or data architect or data scientist, out of the slate of individuals that you bring back to me, I want to make sure X percentage are coming from typically underrepresented groups, women and other underrepresented

groups as well." So we've made that a KPI for ourselves to say, "As we're looking at acquiring new talent, individuals in our organization, are we casting a wide net and actually bringing in a diverse pool of individuals coming forward?"

And I'll tell you, initially when we made that adjustment to our recruiting engine and recruiting process, it was very, very difficult, because we've asked people to essentially step out of their comfort zone and not go to the same two or three sources for talent that they traditionally have gone to and try these other sources. It caused a lot of, potentially, slowdown in our processes certainly.

But one of the things that I've remarked on now, having done this for about a year, the slate of candidates that are coming to me now are tremendously diverse, like different experiences, different backgrounds, different geographies in Canada as well. And one of the things that we've been able to uncover is some hidden, untapped gems, like really talented individuals who really haven't just been given the opportunity to put their foot forward or raise their hand for this opportunity. And they have all of the makings of somebody who is going to have a long and successful career in this field, but were just not given that opportunity.

So when I hear about what you've done at Four Seasons around this, have you seen a shift over the last little while in terms of the diversity of candidates coming forward for those positions?

Cindy Kelly:

Yeah, that's a great question. There's a couple of questions in there actually. I've done quite a bit of hiring over the last 12 to 18 months. There is an interesting mix across. I do find that it takes a little extra work to position some of the candidates that might look a little bit different, because again, we all go back to what has worked for us before.

Steven Karan:

Absolutely.

Cindy Kelly:

Part of my tacit contract with those individuals, or at least I take it on myself, is I'm here to help make them successful as well. It does take a little bit of extra work. They may not look like their predecessor or their teammates sitting next to them. They do, however, bring fresh new skills and a whole new approach in something that we desperately need. So that is a journey. It does not flip overnight, and we need to work in the longer view I think on that because a little bit begets a little bit, begets a lot.

Steven Karan:

Absolutely.

Cindy Kelly:

And it doesn't stop when we bring them in. We then need to continue the upward motion, if you will. So that is a long-term investment.

Steven Karan:

I agree.

Cindy Kelly:

Even at the beginning I think people are very open to it and it's refreshing.

Steven Karan:

Yes, absolutely.

Cindy Kelly:

It's a little uncomfortable for people and then it's refreshing.

Steven Karan:

Absolutely.

Cindy Kelly:

So that's the part you need to get to.

Steven Karan:

I agree, I agree.

You just touched on the other part of this talent management journey. It's really much around what do we do to develop people, to retain, to help them advance. I think from my own reflections of being in this industry for a while, there's both formal and informal things that are helpful. There's formal programs that an organization can develop, like leadership development programs for young professionals, young women in this field. Absolutely a tremendous value add. And there's other programs related to honing technical skills or helping people upskill into new technologies that are emerging, that are starting to take a foothold in the market. And in the field that we operate in, Cindy, technologies continue to evolve and that ability to upskill and make sure the opportunity to upskill is equitable in the organization, I think is key.

But I think there's also an informal side in terms of steps organizations can take to help with the development of talent, the retention of talent. And this is something that was really crystallized for me personally as a leader, when a couple of years ago I had an individual that was a very high-potential young professional woman in my team. She's probably just about four or five years out of university, and she was very ambitious. She said to me, "Steven, by the next seven years, I want to be a vice president in our business." And I loved it. I loved that ambition.

And she said, "But I'm struggling to get there." And she said the reason the struggle was, was actually something that I didn't have visibility into initially, which was the dynamics of her personal life and her home situation. And we were talking about that and I asked her, "Well, given that this is happening for you, what is the thing that I can do to help, to offset, to counter some of those challenges that you might face on a personal side?" And she said to me, it was a very simple thing, she said, "Flexibility."

Cindy Kelly:

One hundred percent.

Steven Karan:

"I just need flexibility in terms of how I can deliver on our projects and deliver on these mandates. And if I have that flexibility, it gives me what I need to be able to balance off some of the things that aren't exactly where I'd like them to be on the personal side."

So flexibility is something that I think is going to be applied both formally and informally. And I was just curious around your experiences with that, around some of those informal things that you think an organization can do that maybe you've done yourself personally to really help with this retention, with the advancement of young women in our field.

Cindy Kelly:

Sure, sure. The first thing I try to do is be very open and vulnerable with my employees. They need to know I have children too so that I can relate, and that I also have senior parents, frankly. Because those are the things that everybody has in the background that they sometimes think their one up or whatever won't understand. So I try to be vulnerable in that respect.

I think COVID has given all of us certainly many challenges, but now coming out of it, new opportunities. We've learned to be more flexible. Let's not lose some of that. Hybrid has made it so much easier for some of our employees to be present for their families a couple of days a week instead of ... That was so important. Or maybe core hours so they can come in a little later and make a daycare drop-off or make a pickup. I've had people say to me, thankfully we're still doing this because it has made all of this work for them, if you will.

I also think as leaders we have to trust our good people. Trust them to be there so they can be there for the kindergarten pageant or to be there for whatever is important to their high schooler at four o'clock. People will figure that out. Your best people will figure that out. They don't need us to tell them. Those kinds of things go so far. And I especially think in a world where you're talking about women, they, for whatever it is that we're talking about, carry so much of the air traffic control in their homes.

Steven Karan:

Absolutely.

Cindy Kelly:

Flexibility is the response to that.

Steven Karan:

Absolutely.

Cindy Kelly:

And that's going to help.

Steven Karan:

Flexibility is the response to that. I love that. I think it really summarizes it well. It's not a significant investment of capital. It is really a mindset shift, and that mindset around how flexibility actually enables better outcomes is something that I think, if nothing else, people can take away from a conversation like this.

Cindy Kelly:

Well, these are the kinds of things that I think people describe in programmatic ways, and yet you give a little and you get so much back.

Steven Karan:

Absolutely. Absolutely. I agree with you. Cindy, I have talked a little bit about things that businesses can do, things that organizations can do, I think there's also a spotlight that can be put on individuals like you and I. There's things that we can do, probably personally, to help with this bridging of the gap, to help with advancing women in this field as well. And you early on talked about a couple of things that I'd love for you to come back to…

Cindy Kelly:

Sure.

Steven Karan:

… because when we look at things like promoting the field of data or of AI to young women, and mentorship, a lot of that carries a lot of weight and makes such an impact. And I'm just curious from your own experiences, what are those things that you've been able to put out there and make available personally that you have found to have a great return? Maybe not necessarily a return for you as an individual, but a return for those that you're communicating with, mentoring with. And I'd love to get a sense of what's worked well for you in the past.

Cindy Kelly:

Well, I will tell you that in a world of very intense data deliveries, and we all know what those compressed timelines and deliverables look like, this kind of work is some of the extra rewarding stuff that you find time to squeeze in, and I want to do more of it, if you will. I'm at this point in my career where I'm super inspired by people like Ginni Rometty. I don't know if you've seen her new book out, but she's the former CEO and chairman of IBM. She's now all about finding and developing alternative talent pools and giving back and doing some really innovative things there.

So I too am starting to, now as our children are all getting a little older, do more of that and finding it very rewarding. But I think it's not obvious to me. I didn't come through school thinking that I wanted to work in IT and data. So giving people language and lenses to careers they didn't know existed and how they can connect to them, I think we can all do a better job of that. You don't have to go change the world, just go change a little bit at a time.

I also find there are women in our internal organizations who could be in other departments, they could be in other roles. We're constantly needing to keep people and to help them see their career growth and their opportunity in our organizations. There was one thing that we did a year or two ago, and I got on the elevator and someone said, "Oh, you are the girl in IT." And I thought that was so funny. And it was important for them to see the women in IT and she engaged and she said, "I didn't know what you did before," and I didn't realize the change this was making. So now of course that just jazzes you up to do more of that, so that people can see themselves in your role and in your shop and wanting to work with you.

Steven Karan:

Yes, that's interesting. It's really interesting where what you've shared with me is, it's that visibility, and being intentionally visible and out there to say, "Hey, I'm proud of what I am and I'm proud of this industry that I'm in and the work that I lead." That carries a lot of impact, because you're not shying away in any way from representing who you are. And it's that representation that's highly visible that makes it attractive and I think it's pulling people into your sphere as well. And that goes back to what you've said earlier related to some of the mentorship that you've offered at the high school level as well.

And that's actually one of the questions that I wanted to follow up with you on is, when I think about where do we need to focus some of that messaging as women develop, in terms of starting to think through the careers that they want to have and the fields that they want to get into, I always have thought to myself, if we target some of that energy and effort at the high school level, the individuals that are in the junior or senior years of high school, is that the right focal point? Or have we potentially even lost some of our young women by that point and do we need to get down to the junior high school level or whatever it may be?

And I've thought through it and I've studied and read a variety of different things, and I don't think there's a conclusive answer out there. I think the perception that I have is, it's yes to everything, because any and all visible representation, any and all efforts to mentor and to guide and to provide a new language, is impactful at the end of the day. But I wanted to get your take on that as somebody who's done this for many, many years now, in terms of that mentorship and being highly visible in the field, is that your own takeaway? Or have you found that there are some cohorts or populations that typically respond more effectively and get more value out of the time that you're investing and the time that you're putting forward?

Cindy Kelly:

Yeah, no, absolutely. I couldn't agree with you more. I think you've probably got lots of listeners who are avid sports fans. If people want to talk about developing hockey teams, you got to go right back to your feeder markets. You got to go way down low and start there, and it happens over time.

So if you and I look at the change in percentage participation from 15 to 18 to 20 percent, it's taken us decades to get that far. I also think a little bit like Malcolm Gladwell's Tipping Point, there's going to come a point where the one percent and the one percent change starts to add up to a whole lot more. We just got to start affecting the one and the one and the one kind of thing.

Steven Karan:

Yes, yes. Absolutely.

Cindy Kelly:

But I agree with you, by the time you get to high school, many have already not connected and they just don't see themselves there. We've somehow got to get deeper. Now, I'm not sure you and I can also go change the entire school board system. So for those of us that can find ways to reach into our communities, we're all part of alumni associations, they're always looking for people to come. If we can help give people a vision of ... Again, I'll go back to, my partner and I have four in university right now, so that's a whole funny skit in and of itself. But going back and giving them: "Here are careers in data. Here are careers in engineering." And by the way, they're not all engineers.

So I'll take you to my second point. Let's go back to massive talent and resource constraints, and that is not getting any better. I would challenge us, we have constrained ideas as to what our talent pool looks like. Let's go into alternate segments and find people who have…maybe it's finance or analytics or people who are comfortable problem solving, people who are comfortable managing numbers and who can see them visually, and find ways to look for skills and not certain degrees, if you will. And find ways to short-path them into these careers because with training, they get it. They get it.

Steven Karan:

What you've just said is fairly radical as well. I mean, there's a tendency to just focus on, "Hey, I got these numbers of skills that I'm looking for in an individual and I need somebody who can just tick those

boxes." And the intentional focus to say, "No, shift the spotlight elsewhere. Look for this type of profile, where we know from our history they're transferable skills." It's a longer endeavor to do. It's a different approach as well.

But I think what you're saying is, we're getting to the point where if we don't make a radical step like that and cast a very wide net and look into sources of talent in talent pools that we traditionally would've just excluded, we're never going to reach that intentional outcome that we're working on. We're never going to get to that point where 50 percent of the people that work in the world of data, in the world of technology, are women.

Cindy Kelly:

Yeah. I think if we're looking at Canadian leaders right now and anyone who's working in the tech or the consulting space, you and I are not going to solve this problem one way.

Steven Karan:

No.

Cindy Kelly:

We're going to have to solve this more than one way. And why not? Absolutely, let's help diversity, let's go find the diversity where it is. And it's not going to be just one way out with, "Let's make it up with engineering degrees and two masters in management analytics," those kinds of things.

Steven Karan:

Absolutely.

Cindy Kelly:

And so by the way, I'm talking about sea change. I have this burning platform. I can't get enough resource and enough talent, so I'm forced to come up with alternate things. So we all need to make this work.

The second thing is I think, I don't think people know enough about what we do. They're not coached or taught anywhere in high school or university. So how do we get this sort of figurative or virtual roadshow going so that they can see themselves and have places to connect? And then what would that look like? If you like problem solving and you happen to be good at these types of topics, this could be a great fit for you.

Steven Karan:

Absolutely.

Cindy Kelly:

And so these people that are good at consolidating and encapsulating and finding the thread line through things, that shows up early, that shows up in various other things. So I think that's the thing that we somehow need to foster and grow out over time.

Steven Karan:

Yeah. And I would add to that, Cindy, that from my view, a lot of the fields that are related to technology, related to data, where you think, for example, about financial analysis, or even if you think about things like managing operational processes, a lot of those fields are now being influenced by technology. You are now being handed tools, that are technology tools, data tools, AI tools, to help facilitate and execute on your work. And I think oftentimes people operating those fields don't step back for a minute and think through: "Hey, I'm using AI. I'm using data already in my day job. It's not actually a step too far for me to be the one who actually puts together that tool or puts together that data model a financial analyst would use."

And so it's just a different sort of mind shift around, hey, go from the person using that tool that's been provided to you, to the person that helps build that product, that builds that data product, that solution. And it's a mindset shift I think we just need to get out there and encourage.

Cindy Kelly:

Can I build on that for a second? And you can say yes or no.

Steven Karan:

Please. Please.

Cindy Kelly:

You and I talked once upon a time about moving into multi-cloud environments, moving from data at the center into mesh and how we support the mesh. As you and I think about how fast we can implement that, that means that I've got to have people that know their data and who would want to do exactly what you just described, but that's how you and I are going to scale and grow and implement faster.

Steven Karan:

Absolutely.

Cindy Kelly:

I'm looking for fast learners. I'm looking for people who can assemble and who can…because the institutional knowledge I have to teach everyone. And frankly, I'm not sure you actually do need an entire BEng or other degree to be able to figure out how to be a data engineer. I can teach you some of this stuff.

Steven Karan:

Yeah, it's absolutely true. It's incredible what can be taught on the job. It's also incredible that what you can learn now online through all the different educational ed-tech providers that are out there. It's truly astonishing.

And so I think closing this question off, there's a new way that's emerging, just due to the advancements of technology, around how to enact and build technology, data, digital-centric products and solutions. And that new way is really an inclusive way that brings together a mix of individuals, product individuals, design individuals, engineers and developers. And I think that new paradigm of execution can only help this, provided that it's also the intention. And that you as business leaders, when you go out and put this model of operating together, to say, "Hey, we're doing this to create very inclusive teams and diverse products that can serve our customers better. But hey, we're also doing this to widen your aperture

around where you can go in terms of your own career, in your own field." And I think we just need to make that a focal point.

Cindy Kelly:

Yep, absolutely. This talks too, remember I had said trying to find candidates who can do these jobs that aren't necessarily in your department today, they could be elsewhere in your organization. And keeping them because you're growing them and they've got more success now in your company.

Steven Karan:

And I think, one of the things that I think, this is a topic that has been talked about for probably decades, but when I look at where we are today as a society, that we're going through this significant socio-technology change, as we look at AI really starting to take root in what we do both professionally and personally, we've seen all of the attention ChatGPT has been getting in the market recently as well, and there's been a lot of thought around commercial applications of technologies like that.

If we don't address this problem today and address this gap today, we're going to get to outcomes with advanced capabilities like an AI, that aren't going to lead to inclusive predictive models or inclusive recommendation engines. They're going to become more narrow and more narrow and more narrow. And if we don't address this gap, we look ahead and maybe 10, 15 years from today, we're going to see the fundamental flaws of not addressing the gap really impact, not at only what we do professionally, but also personally. Because it's one where it's that point where we're reaching that sort of level of maturity of our AI capability.

Do you feel like we're getting at a point where there is that inflection point as I described it? And what would your own personal reflections be on that?

Cindy Kelly:

It's so interesting that you mention this. Literally, I was talking with someone about it this weekend. We were at Western for a graduation event, and we got into this whole AI topic and several of the students were super excited about it. But you're right, if you look at data, like in the world of AI we use, what, 80 percent of our data to train the model and 20 percent to test it. If your data is not inclusive, then you're predictably going to end up in the wrong place as a result of your model. So if your teams are not diverse, you are blind to your own bias, you may not even realize it's there. And that's such a disadvantage for so many reasons.

So yes, if any of your listeners are out in the AI space right now, I think it behooves you to go out and figure this out and make sure you've got diversity represented, or your compass will take you the wrong way and you won't realize it. Your data, because of its gaps and biases, will also create more of the same. Diversity on your teams is going to get you to applying your AI in places where you're going to get solutions that represent your market, or you're going to miss the opportunities to those who figure this out.

Steven Karan:

That is very well said.

Cindy Kelly:

We're in the hospitality business and we all know who's driving some of these decisions, and there's diversity of all aspects across those.

Steven Karan:

Absolutely.

Cindy Kelly:

So it's super important to us to be able to channel into that.

Steven Karan:

Absolutely. I completely agree with you. That diversity of thought, that diversity of putting a solution and applying AI into an area that maybe a stereotypical data scientist may not have looked to apply it, I think these are intangible outcomes that will lead to tangible benefits for businesses if that intention is there. So wholeheartedly agree with you. Wholeheartedly agree.

Cindy Kelly:

Yeah. And we all have wizard people working in our shops that know how to mechanically work with AI and ML. They may not be aware of their own biases or what the data that was given to them has inherent in it. And if someone is not asking those questions, you need to go find someone who will.

Steven Karan:

Absolutely. Absolutely.

So Cindy, we've covered a lot of ground, but there's one final question that I wanted to give you the opportunity to close with. If there is a young professional, a young woman listening to this conversation and they had a bit of trepidation of moving into this field of data, into the field of analytics, AI, whatever it may be, and they're coming from this historically underrepresented group, do you have any parting advice and closing advice for them around what they can do, steps that they can take, to actually put two feet forward and step into this world of data and analytics, into this field, and to start them on a path towards success in this area?

Cindy Kelly:

Yeah, absolutely. I think all of us, you and I started this, let's go full circle back to find a mentor, find a coach, find someone who's done it that you can connect with, so in those moments of great personal doubt you've got someone to help carry you through. I would say go look at LinkedIn. Look at the profiles of the people who have gone before you and the kinds of work that they've done, and figure out how you can add some of that to your CV, if you will. That is the formula. There's no short path to it.

I also think the technology is changing so radically. There is no shortage right now of application software that will help you do this or data that all of us… What we really need are people who can throw their hat in the ring and who can figure out how to assemble all of this. And that's a whole new skillset that I think is different than what people thought of. So consider yourself for some of these roles. They're not as stereotypical as you might think. And reach out to those of us that are in the field. And again, I don't have silver bullets, it is a path, but figure out how you can insert yourself into that. The merry-go-round is going. Get on.

Steven Karan:

The merry-go-round is going.

Cindy Kelly:

We're all hiring. Everyone is hiring.

Steven Karan:

Absolutely. The merry-go-round is going, get on, and it can be a very lucrative merry-go-round. And we want to make sure people, an inclusive group of people, can benefit from that as well. So that's tremendous.

Cindy, thank you so much. I think I've jotted down a couple of notes myself from things that I'm going to take away. And one of the things that I'm going to take away is really making sure that as we look at talent, we're looking in places that we traditionally may not have looked at, and looking at a skillset that we can take the time to upskill and invest in bringing on that different type of profile into our business. I think that was a tremendous piece of insight.

I really enjoyed the conversation today. It's energized me to go out there and make some changes and make some impact immediately as possible. And I can't thank you enough for joining us on the *How Data Should Work* podcast. Thank you so much, and we really did value your time today.

Cindy Kelly:

Thanks for having me. I think it's a terrific topic. Let's come back in a year and see how we've done.

Steven Karan:

You got it.

And I hope you also tune in next time where we have another very unique, very thought-provoking guest lined up, where we're going to be discussing some of their latest and greatest advancements in the field of data and analytics. Tune in next time. Thank you for joining us. Bye for now.