

99. Getting Back to Business with Nancy McSharry Jensen and Sarah Duenwald – Episode Transcript

Leah: Welcome to Her Story of Success, a podcast featuring stories of influential women trailblazers and business leaders who have defined and pursued their own versions of success and fulfillment. We hope these stories, lessons learned and celebrations inspire you to believe in yourself and your own journey a little bit more. I'm Leah Glover Hayes, CEO and podcast host of Her Story of Success women's business and media collective.

In today's episode, I am going to be interviewing Nancy McSharry Jensen and Sarah Duenwald, who are the co-founders of The Swing Shift and authors of a brand new book called *Back to Business*. Before The Swing Shift, Nancy and Sarah both built extremely successful careers for themselves, but when they started to recognize some of the widespread challenges facing women in the workforce, they decided to team up and create a business.

Through The Swing Shift, Nancy and Sarah provide workshops, coaching, educational resources, and other tools to help women re-enter the workforce after a career break, or make a seamless pivot into a new role or industry. In our conversation today, they're going to share some of their incredible wisdom and advice for women looking to find a new job or deal with the transitions many of you have faced and are facing during COVID-19.

If you enjoy this episode, I invite you to share it with a friend or peer or coworker who is looking to re-enter the workforce or make a transition.

Welcome Sarah and Nancy! I'm glad to have you today.

Nancy: Thank you.

Sarah: It's great to be here.

Nancy: Yeah, we're excited.

Leah: Yes. And so I wanted you guys to just start out by sharing a little bit of who your company is, what you do, and then we'll get into like why you started in all of that. So who is The Swing Shift?

Nancy: Sure. This is Nancy and I'll start. The Swing Shift is the destination for women in career transition. We started the company in 2017 and our original goal was to offer some programming on a seasonal basis, focused on women who had taken breaks and wanted to come back to paid work. And what we found as we built that program was that there was a lot of demand, both in terms of programming and in terms of individual work. And so we've built our business to address the needs. So all the way from very large presentations, working with industry groups and with companies all the way down to individual, one-on-one coaching.

Leah: And when you work with the larger organizations, what does that work look like? Like why is a company engaging with you?

Sarah: Usually they're engaging with us one of two ways. This is Sarah. One, they're interested in hiring these women. So they've recognized that women returning from work are highly motivated, experienced and ready to get back in there. And so they want to partner with us to try to connect with these women and kind of show them what their company has to offer. The other way is that they just want to sponsor an event and support this demographic. And then a third way that we're newly rolling out is career break initiative that we're working on, and this is helping companies really embrace that career break. And so it's helping them to look at it differently than when an employee steps away from work, instead of just letting that employee go and probably never seeing them again and then having them struggle to get back, they're really keeping them tethered to that company throughout their career breaks so that the barriers of getting back to work are a lot less for that employee.

Leah: I love that. And then they're getting someone that would be, you get a mom that loves you. Like there is no more loyalty and like working your butt off, then a mom that's come back to work. I'm so, cause to me, that's like, it's very aspirational, like, oh, you hope companies think this way, but who are the companies that are like, "we already see the value?" Is it a certain industry, like, what is it that these companies are finally waking up to see? Did they have maybe a mom in the HR department? Like, I'm very curious in this because like me, I'm like, wow, thank God

this is happening. Like this obviously needs to, but I'm also seeing all of the data about the women leaving the workforce. And this part of the conversation about the career break is not being had. So I want to like, let's start to have that conversation about, hey, if women are leaving the workforce, maybe it doesn't have to be bad, maybe it doesn't have to be scary, and companies can do something to make the process and the timeframe better.

Sarah: Yeah, absolutely. That's a great question. So really this career break initiative is brand new for us. So this is really in response to the pandemic as well as just the hundreds of women that we've worked with. And figuring out the path back and how to make it easier. Right? And at the end of the day, companies who are interested in this is those bold forward thinking companies out there that know that the future of work is changing and they want to be on board for it. You know, research shows that 84% of millennial workers will take breaks throughout their career. And so instead of that traditional corporate ladder, it's turning into more like corporate waves. And those companies need to start riding those waves and really being loyal to their employees for the duration of their career, knowing that they will take a step back due to children, health reasons, family reasons, whatever it may be, you know, a few times in their career. And then there'll be there when that employee is ready to return. And at the end of the day, it's the bottom line as well. A company's bottom line, it's saving them money. It's saving them recruiting, rehiring, retraining. They have a ready pipeline of women coming back to work that they can choose from when they have openings. And it's also an attraction tool as well. It's a really competitive market out there for companies, especially in tech. And if you're a younger, you know, 20-something woman and, you know, you have three offers and one of them is career-break friendly, and you're not sure if you're going to have a family, but you may, and you want to know that that's an option. That's a big attraction for a company for talent.

Leah: Oh, absolutely. mean, oh my gosh. If I would have been in that situation and had seen that a company already made that investment and they already have that thought process, then, you know, if you're thinking in this one way, what are all of actually the other ways you're also supporting the people that work for you because you care enough on that type of thing? I have to tell you this conversation gets me so excited about the future to hear that companies are starting to do this because a lot

of times companies, even that don't want to, might feel like they have to, because it is a trend. So let's make this a trend that all companies are doing this, and you had such a good point. And Sarah, I do want to get into, you had talked about your own experience, taking a career break after having your second child. And I have a lot of, you know, I'm in that age that like most of my friends have kids, but I feel like that's something that's common too. You have one child and you still work. And then something about that second or third child. I want to talk a little bit about your experience of making the decision to take a break, what that looked like. I think having that personal experience is so important because you're bringing that into it. And I want to know the difference between your experience, but we all have different ones. So how do you make sure that you're covering the gamut for women? Like the gamut of experiences and why they leave and come back?

Sarah: Yeah, absolutely. You made such a great point, Leah. Yes. And the data supports it. That it's most, it's not the first kid that takes women out of the workforce. It's the second. And really it's due to rising childcare costs and being unable to justify spending time away from your family for making barely covering childcare. Right. And that at the end of the day is a lot of what it comes down to. For me, I wasn't happy where I was. I always say to young women that are starting out to really find your passions early on, if you can, try lots of different things, do what you can, you know, I was in one of those like golden handcuffs, careers, you know? And so you feel kind of stuck, and I liked it, but I had been there for a long time and before I had my second, I was like, you know, maybe I should think about taking a break after my second, but I did go back and realized, you know what, this isn't again, where I want to be versus with my kids. I did plan for that though. When I was pregnant, I did plan just in case I wanted to take a break, but yes, everyone's situation is different and not everyone can plan either. Some things happen and come up. Right? So yeah, that second kid is definitely statistically. The one that is shocking for people.

Nancy: Right. There's a Vanderbilt University study that bears this out and it's like 70% of women who are on break, it's when the second kid shows up. And I will say, you know, in terms of talking about breaks, I took a five-year break and it was again, kid number two. I didn't plan to take it. What we see with the women that we work with, and I think this is resonant with the millions of women that are out there right now, life's events unfold in a way that doesn't always map to what you think your career

direction is going to head into. In my case, my youngest was a very bad sleeper. I mean, I couldn't think. It was awful. And so I thought, well, I'll take a one-year break. And then my parents who were older, my dad died unexpectedly. And so it started as a one-year break, extended to five. This is very, very, very common. And so what we see a lot of times is that unlike what Sarah did, where she planned for this, in my case, and in many women's cases, you don't plan for it. Life intercedes and says, "Nope, you know what? You're going to have to go in a different direction for right now."

Leah: What's the main thing that you're providing women in support. Right? Because I've seen all the, there's like a bazillion mom groups, right? There's a lot of groups for women entrepreneurs that are moms, right. What is it that you saw as a lack that made you say we have to start this company?

Nancy: What we saw was that when women take breaks and when they're going back, that the job search game has changed. And so even five years ago, what you did then and what you do now, it's really different. And so what Sarah and I set out to do was to work with people, to let them in on what the secrets of the job search game are, so that they can go out and play it today. And you know, social media is important. Personal brand is important. Yeah, you need a resume, but you know, you really need a LinkedIn profile. And for some women, particularly women who have been affected by the pandemic, it may have been years since they've looked for a job. And so they need that extra boost to get themselves back on the track.

Leah: Let's talk about that for a minute. And I want to get into your book and who you wrote that for and who should grab that, but who is this book for? And what was the motivation behind writing it? And who did you write it for?

Sarah: So we wrote *Back to Business* after working with hundreds of women through The Swing Shift and our programming and services and seeing their pain, their shame, their hopelessness of not ever some didn't ever think they'd get back to work. And these women have so much to offer the world. They had very successful careers. They've raised families, they've contributed to society. They're running those nonprofits. They're running our local schools. They're raising those funds. They're doing all of this. They're literally our village. And they felt hopeless that they could not be paid for work in the future. And so we've run some very successful programming,

we used to call it our career catalyst program and it was a bootcamp style program and it really started with career discernment. You know, what do you want to do next? A lot of women just think that they have to go back to what they did that made them miserable. Right? So really like thinking what are your transferable skills, you know, and how can they translate into doing something different and then really going through the tactical items, you know, a modern resume, LinkedIn, social media, as Nancy mentioned, personal brand, networking, negotiating. So we had all of these components as part of our programming and it worked, the framework works. If you follow the process, it works. And we have hundreds of success stories of women in our community. And we were like, we have to make this more accessible in an easy format, self guided that you can take anywhere with you. You can refer back to it, you can do it on your own time. And that's where the book came into play.

Leah: One of the things I wanted to ask is when you are in this process, because one of the things you talked about was like, so you have the like discernment, figure out what you want to do. But then the other piece of it is the personal branding piece. Like if the person listening is starting that process to come back, what are some of the key things that she needs to maybe consider or look at for her own personal brand as she starts that career search?

Sarah: We like to say that your personal brand is who you are, what you contribute, what skills you have and what makes you different. And you know, many women think personal brand is having to become an internet influencer or something. And that's not the case at all, it's really just understanding who you are and then taking steps to showcase that.

And a lot of women struggle with really understanding what makes them, them, professionally, personally. And if that is something that you're struggling with, you know, we also recommend asking your friends, your family, past clients or coworkers, what are your strengths? What would you come to me for if you needed something? What did you admire most about me when we worked together? Those answers are all things that start building your personal brand. And then after you start really understanding what you have to offer, next you think about, okay, who do I want to talk to? Who is it that I want listening to me, you know, maybe it's recruiters, maybe it's thought leaders in your industry, maybe it's new customers or clients, depending

on what you want to do next. And then you pick your platforms of where those people are. We like to say most are going to be on LinkedIn, especially for job searching. So definitely have a profile on LinkedIn, but start engaging in a consistent way with that audience in mind. What do they want to hear? What is interesting to them? Where are they? What groups, what events are they attending online, all of that stuff. And then just start putting yourself out there.

Leah: I love that. That's a really good framework of some steps to take and to look at.

Nancy: One thing I want to, I want to make sure that we hit on is particularly for women who have gone off on breaks, you get consumed by your day to day role, whether you're a mom or you're a volunteer, or you're doing caretaking for someone who's ill or older, and those reminders of, yes, you are all those things. And also by the way, you are a Cracker Jack marketer. You have great customer service skills. You have wonderful analytical capabilities. What we found is many of these women need those reminders.

Leah: Yes. So let's talk about building a portfolio, not just a resume, cause everyone does want a resume, but when you have a five-year gap, there's literally nothing on there. How can you, without BSing, right? How do you help women look at who they are in their lives and put it down on paper so that it's valid, even if it's not, they're not getting paid for it. How does she take all of the project management? The, you know, taxiing people around all of the things that she did in her home for her kids, for her non-profits, all of that. How can she actually put that down in her portfolio of "No, no, no, no. This is my skillset. Just because I didn't get paid for it doesn't mean that it's not a skill that I possess."

Nancy: You're preaching our religion. Almost 80% of women who are on breaks. Do some kind of pro bono consulting work. And that is another way of talking about volunteer work, say that they do pro bono consulting work. And that's when you are lending your skills and your time and your energy and your effort to working on a task. Now, Sarah talks about this more eloquently than I do, but Sarah, talk about like volunteering with impact.

Sarah: Absolutely. You know, I, um, I think about this with, with my friends and everyone is volunteering at nonprofits, at their schools, and sometimes they're just

taking on projects that nobody else will do. And if you're spending your time volunteering, make sure that you're doing stuff that you like doing, and that actually building a skillset or a skillset that can be transferable into paid work. So it's just a mindset shift when you're approaching a volunteer project. Think about it in a very professional way. What are my responsibilities? What are the tasks that I'm doing? What is the outcome? What did I do? Did I raise money? Did I manage volunteers? Did I get this done in a certain amount of time? Like all of those accomplishments, just keep that in your mind as you're working on these projects and then think about, "Okay, this is an area that I don't know very well. Maybe I need to look for something here in this area that I can help out with." You know, it's just really being intentional about your volunteering time. And I know, Leah, you asked how to characterize that, maybe on your resume and there's some different ways. It depends on your industry that you're in and the type of role that you're looking for. Cause not all experience, even paid experience, is going to be applicable to that role. So you're not going to put everything on your resume anyways. So you want to take what is applicable. And then a lot of times, if let's say you're out five years and you did multiple projects, even managed a huge home renovation or something like that, you know, you can, you can say consulting and list those projects and what those accomplishments were and what the outcome was. You know, we like to remind women, it's not what you did. It's what happened. It's what came out of it. What was the impact?

Nancy: So in that case, if you have overseen a renovation of a home, you can talk about your \$250,000 budget, overseeing a range of five to 10 contractors, making sure that you came in on schedule and on budget. That's just one example. We have somebody that we've done some work with recently has been an in-home caregiver. And what she's been doing is taking care of her, her ill relatives, but she's the in-home caregiver. There are people who earn money doing that. Not enough, I will say, but you want to think about what it is you're doing, what the skills are that you are using when, when you're doing those roles, then as Sarah says, as you think about what your next step is going to be, you'll talk about it selectively depending on who you want to talk to. I think one thing, particularly if you've had a break and you mentioned the year, you know, the five-year or more break, many people really worry about that and to say, well, how am I going to account for my time? And what if they want to know why I didn't come back sooner? You need a very simple pitch. And you say

something like I took a five-year break to care for my young children. Now I'm looking to get a job that uses my great interpersonal skills and fundraising capabilities. That's it.

Leah: That is very good. And then you can go into detail based on the questions that they ask.

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Leah: I think the other thing that I'm very passionate about with women going into this situation or men, I mean, there's, there's a lot of men that have to take breaks. Some men are the caregivers. That's great, but it's still being confident that like you are interviewing the company just as much as they're interviewing you, because you don't go into it if you don't know that you're going to be able to make a difference. But when you are a mom, when you are coming back from a break, and you are going to be passionate, you're going to give it your all, that company better damn well deserve you. And so making it, making sure that you understand, like you are just as capable, like they want you as much as you want them. And really, as you're looking, focusing on, I want this company because I've researched you. And here's the environment that I know that I thrive in. And then when I bring my skills, my passion and my like, I'm going to get everything done that I can in this timeframe. Because

when I go home, my time is so precious. You know, I'm going to give you 110% every day that I'm here.

Sarah: Absolutely. I can think of so many women surrounding me in different areas of my life that I would hire in a heartbeat. Right? But this also goes both ways. As you mentioned, Leah, that you are interviewing the company, but you have to make sure that you are talking about yourself in a way that they can understand what your skills are and why you would also be a good fit. So it's kind of a balance it's like, you don't want to go in and just be like, please hire me, please hire me. And you don't want to be like, "Well, I'm interviewing you, you know, I want to make sure you're a good fit for me." It's this balance, and the way that you balance it is you have to practice, you have to practice your pitch. And we go into this and we have templates and everything in our book of to get people started. And you practice, you practice talking about yourself because that's hard for a lot of women to do you practice what accomplishments you had, you practice speaking it, but you need to understand how do they mesh with the goals of that 20-something year old recruiter? How do you talk to them in a way that they can understand that you could be a good fit in the organization? So it's research and it's practice. And then it's also, I wanted to go back a step on the whole resume and all the volunteer and work and all of that. Let's say you were out for five years and you had three kids back to back and you didn't have time to do anything but keep these little humans alive, you're in the weeds. Also, that is okay. That is fantastic. You don't have to be superwoman volunteer, helping friends start businesses. You don't have to be that person either. And that is okay. You just be unapologetic about your choices that you made because you made them for a reason. And now you're in a position in your life where you are excited and you're ready to get back into the workforce and you've practiced your pitch. And you know what your skills are that you have to offer. And that's where you start from there. And again, if you say, like Nancy said, I took five years off, raised my family, I'm excited to get back to work. That's it. They don't care. They really don't care about what you've done. They just want you to account for your time, and then you move on. And the only way you can move on is if you're feeling confident about those choices.

Nancy: That's right. And the other part of the confidence, I'm going to just double down on this. You have to practice, you really do. When you practice and you know

how to respond to these questions. You're going to feel more confident because you're not going to feel like they're going to catch you unaware.

Leah: I love that. Let's talk a little bit about each of your roles in the company, because I want to talk about like your experience that brought you to this company, and then why you have the role that you have. So Nancy, why don't you share a little bit about your background and when you came back from your break that made you be the CEO of the company, and then Sarah, I want you to do the same.

Nancy: Sure. Well, yeah. My background is in market research and in enterprise software, product marketing, and I did it for a long time and I loved it, but it was also pretty time consuming. I took that five-year break, and when I was coming back, honestly, I just thought I would go back to product management and I started interviewing around and I was really appalled, frankly, by the kind of responses that I was getting from recruiters and hiring managers, you know, despite the fact that I had worked on this billion dollar business and had been very, very successful, I was getting responses like, yeah, you haven't worked for four years. Thanks for coming in. And I thought, "If this is what it's like for me, what is it like for everybody else?" Well, it turns out it's terrible. There's a lot of biases, some of them hidden and some of them explicit with recruiting and hiring managers, and I just thought, okay, I'm going to fix this. This is crazy. And that's when Sarah and I met, you know, it was very serendipitous and we started putting the business together. So I will say for me, this is a passion project in many ways. It turns out it's a business too.

Leah: Yeah. I love that. Sarah. What about for you?

Sarah: Yeah, so I was in technology consulting for the decade before I started the Swing Shift and really focused in gaming and entertainment. And Microsoft was my main client. And when I took a break, I took a year off, and I didn't know what I wanted to do next. I was really lost. I was confused. I was hormonal. I had two little kids. But what I did do is I just started talking to people about it. I kept in contact with my network, my old colleagues, past clients, friends, and it wasn't a lot, it wasn't much, it wasn't a lot of effort, but it was just kept me moving in the right direction. And I connected with a friend and I just said, I'm a little bit confused about what I want to do next, but I know this is what I like doing. I like helping women. I need to make an impact. I was always that person that my friends would come to for career advice. I

had a passion around that. And she happened to have got me in touch with Nancy, and we met and Nancy kind of laid out a vision, and I have a business development background and I was like, well, let's get a big corporate sponsor to help launch this program. And we just kind of worked together, and we have very specific strengths that are different and that's kind of how we've fallen into our roles within the company. And Nancy's very strategic and long-term thinking, and has that background and I liked strategy as well, but I'm also a doer and, you know, running the programming and the operations and whatnot. So it's been a really great balance in partnership.

Nancy: Yeah. And sometimes we talk about it as you know, I'll have a big idea and Sarah will say, "Well, okay, come off the range cowgirl. Well, because the realit is 45% of American women take breaks. And in, during the pandemic, millions of women have unexpectedly found themselves out of work either because their industry has imploded, they need to go home, because they're educating and caring for, and, um, working all at the same time and it becomes too much, and they're all going to need to go back. The majority of American households are dual earner. And so thankfully the vaccines are, are rolling out, and over the next few months, people are going to start looking for jobs. What we found is when women take breaks, they use that as a re-evaluation time to say, well, what is it that I really want to do? And so for us, we feel that this is a good time for them to come talk to us. And because we've got the book and the e-course, they're readily available to anybody, right? The price point should not be a prohibition to getting access to it.

Leah: I love that. I want to talk for a moment before we got on the call, you were talking about homeschooling your children, and I know that a lot of women can, the ones that do currently work or if they are, some people might be nervous to go back to work because they are home and taking care of their kids. And I know that yours was not voluntary. So can you share a little bit just about your experience of building a business while you were not planning to homeschool your kids, but now you are.

Nancy: Yeah, well, like everybody, our kids got sent home very unexpectedly last spring, and I have a 14 year old who's a freshman in high school and then a ten-year-old who's in the fourth grade. My high schooler is pretty self-managed. She is able to handle her own coursework. My fourth grader is not there yet, and it really

requires hands-on work. And also unless it's Among Us or Minecraft, refuses to go online. So, you know, he has said explicitly, I only want you to teach me. And so my option is either to let it all fall on the floor or to double down and work with him. So the good news is, is that, you know, he's a good student and for 90 minutes a day, it's me and him doing English, language arts and reading and math. And we're starting some social studies this week. And for me, I am very time sliced about it. And Sarah does this as well. Where from this time to this time, that's when I do homeschool with him. He understands that, I understand that. Then from this time to this time, I do work. I won't lie. There's times when it's like six minute increments, where I work with Joe, and then I'll go draft a quick piece of mail and then I'll take a phone call and then I'll go back and work with Joe. I can't say that it's sustainable or the right term, but like millions and millions of other women. I'm piecing it together and making it work, but it is not what I would choose.

Leah: Right. Well, thank you for sharing it. I think that's so important. I mean, especially in your work, like you've got to be honest about the challenges that you face. In different areas. And I think, you know, part of what you all are talking about is, you know, when you have the stories of other women and how they did it and what they're doing, and being able to be honest and allow yourself to let go of the shame that you feel gives other women permission to let go of the shame that they feel.

Nancy: Right. There's nothing to be ashamed of.

Leah: No matter what your situation is, it's all different, and the choices that you make are yours, because one of the, the women I was just talking to, it's like, I have to make choices for myself before I can make choices for my children, because whether it's the oxygen mask on a flight, but especially for working moms, cause she works with, I actually need to introduce you guys. That's what she does is work with working moms and CEOs to have the strategy that you need to be able to be the wife, the mom, or, you know, a spouse or a partner or a single mom or whatever that looks like it's that you have to take care of you and put in place the things that you need for yourself before doing it with and for your children, because to your point, like sustainability is important. So even understanding when you're in a situation where something's not sustainable, understanding, like this is not sustainable. So the things I'm working on, is there an end date? Do I already know what it is? What are the trigger points? What do

I need to set up to get to that point? So I think that that's one thing that I'd love for you guys to talk about. Maybe some of the things that you've seen as you're helping women understand, like when do I come back? What are the things that need to be in place? What can I share with my future employer? Not that they have to know, but sometimes if you have the plan that you can share, it gives you more confidence that yes, I'm going to be a great employee because I have things planned out for when I leave work, come home, do those things.

Nancy: The women that we work with, and some of them have children. Some of them have children that are grown. Some of them don't have kids, but have taken breaks for other reasons. Regardless of their situation, you're absolutely right. The women who have a working plan about how they're going to reincorporate themselves into the workplace are the most successful. You know, the childcare issue is really the issue with the pandemic.

A lot of people aren't talking about that, but that's what's booting people out. It's what boots women out in the first place. Right. Sarah talked about this at the top. It's super expensive to put your kids in childcare in many women, just say it's not worth that expense, but regardless of the reason you do need a plan when you go back. And it's an interesting balance, because when you're talking to a recruiter or a hiring manager by law, they're not allowed to ask you about, are you married? Do you have children? But those topics do come up informally. And so being able to say, "Yes, I have two young children and I have childcare lined up." That's gonna alleviate. And again, it's some of it's a social media thing. You can search anybody's name. I mean, if you search me on social media, go on to Instagram. It's me, kids and dogs. Yeah. And there it's very common and that's what every hiring or recruiting manager does, they look in LinkedIn and they Google you. That's it. So they're going to know a little bit about you. So you want to be able to, for your own confidence as well as for anybody who you're talking to, to be able to say, well, this is my working plan. When I start working in a paid engagement again, my mom's going to take the kids or they're going to be going back to in-person school. I think for many women right now, as they think about having their children return to schools, that's going to open up a whole lot of opportunities. And so it's okay, like if you thought, "Well, I thought I was going to go back in January or February, but now it's looking like September." Take the long view. Okay. That's only what eight months from now. It's not very much time.

And you can use that time to your advantage to start talking to people now and saying, "Hey. The kids are going to be back on site in September. This is what I'd like to do."

Leah: I love that. Cause Sarah, I feel like that's what you did, right? Like you said, that you started talking to people before to help you figure out, like, what did you need to think about seeing around the corners and that type of thing?

Sarah: I think that's the biggest miss we see with some women that are like, "I'm going to go back next year, but I'm not going to think about it until then." And it takes a lot longer than what you think it will. Any, even if you've been working for men, women, The job search process is a long time. And if you can start taking baby steps, that don't take up much time right now, they make a huge difference down the road. So don't think of it as I'm going to start doing it. I want the job next year and I'm going to start working on it next year. If you want the job down the road, you start doing things now.

Leah: What are some of the first things that women need to look at and start doing? Like, what are some of those first steps?

Sarah: First is making sure that your LinkedIn profile is up to date, and it's complete and that you have one. It doesn't need to be perfect. It's never going to be perfect because it's always going to evolve as you start figuring out where you want to go in your focus, but just start engaging, you know, liking posts, congratulating someone on their promotion, maybe sharing an article that resonated with you in your appropriate industry. And it doesn't need to be often, you know, if you're not working at all, maybe every other week, just start getting some activity on there. But also, you know, we switched around our programming completely when the pandemic started, we had to change up our business model and we changed our programming to weekly, 30 minutes, once a week, we get expert speakers that come on about job search related topics. And you log on, you're hearing about these topics, you're learning. And then at the end we have networking time. So we're forcing these women to network with each other in breakout groups because that won't happen, especially during this pandemic, if someone's not forcing you to do it. Right. So a lot of times what our community was doing is they're saying, well, I know I'm not gonna be able to go back to work for six months or so, but I'm going to start logging

onto these hangouts every week, and Thursdays at 10:00 AM, that's when I'm going to focus on my job search. I'm going to hear what's happening in the industry. I'm going to make a connection with that speaker. I'm going to make connections with these other women on the call, and that is all, some people have been doing. And even that is enough to just start that momentum.

Leah: Hmm. I love that.

Nancy: And the second thing that I would say is start telling people, even if you don't know what you're looking for, because yes, we're all still kind of locked down right now, but things are starting to open up. So if you're on a house party call. Or if you're at your neighborhood's little social distanced, Friday afternoon cocktail hour, right? Or a morning coffee chat with, you know, the folks on your street and somebody says, "How are you doing?" Don't go, "Oh, you know, we're hanging in there." You say, "You know, I'm starting to think about heading back to work when the kids go onsite in September. Not quite sure what I'm going to do yet, but I'm looking at a couple of options." That is how you're going to find out what those next pieces are.

Leah: Because once you start talking, people will be like, Oh, well, what do you enjoy? What do you want to do? I think that's so wise for sure. Talk to me just a little bit about, so a woman has started this process. She is engaged with you. She's gotten your book. She's coming to these little events. What are some of the things you help with the confidence on, like, do you have like a membership program or is it just that they're coming to the events? How can she really engage with you all and stay connected with you?

Nancy: Well, we are looking to build out our consumer side of the business. So the biggest thing is to join our community, which we do have a community page and you can talk to other people in an ad hoc manner. We have a couple of live programs that we do offer where you, you know, there's an accountability program as well as the hangout habits programs. And we do have other things coming up. So the biggest thing is to get on the newsletter and to get on our community page.

Sarah: The accountability program is actually amazing. It's bite-sized action items each week that we formally present, and we put you in accountability groups. So your group is three or four other women and you touch base with them each week

and make sure that you're working on these things that we've talked about. It could be part of your LinkedIn. It can be your pitch, it can be your resume. So it's kind of a progression. And then what happens is, even our book is formatted in the same way, is as you start doing these worksheets and putting some of this stuff into action, your confidence is building. It's like a layering as a stepping stone, as it's kind of getting your mindset back into that professional mode a little bit, and you're remembering, "Oh, yeah. I bring a lot to the table. Now I'm learning how to talk about it. Now I'm learning how to show it on my LinkedIn profile. I'm learning how to get the confidence of negotiating, all of that kind of stuff, interviews, I'm understanding what does a modern interview look like? Because I haven't interviewed in, you know, years. Now I'm understanding, these are the questions that they're going to be answering. This is how I can prepare myself." Just teaching them the tools and the resources to prepare is essentially. How they're building their confidence up.

Leah: I love that you just talked about confidence in being a stair-step. I think like people will say like, Oh, you're, you're confident. And I'm like, I deal with a lot of insecurities, but I work on my confidence and it is a stair-step right. And sometimes on stairs, like you go backwards sometimes, and you go forwards, but I think that's a really good picture of, going back to your point of, if you want to go back in September or let's say like, women are like hardcore in their career and they're like forced to take a step back for whatever reason, let's take this moment and then really look at where do I want to go? And it's about building that confidence. It is about stair-step. It's saying you don't have to be confident today, you know, as confident today as you need to be. When you go for a job interview, Arlan Hamilton always talks about, you know, she doesn't deal with imposter syndrome, because she knows what she needs to know to, to walk in that door, but it's because she prepared. So I think looking at this time of preparation, as you're building your confidence, you're building your portfolio, you're learning the things that you need to learn and being able to take it. And the, the beautiful thing is being able to take it in bite size chunks. Cause I don't know, especially for moms, it's like you, you do get so busy and you have so many things going like, very few people have time to sit down for like an hour and a half session where they're just learning and you don't get interrupted. Like you said, Nancy, like sometimes it's six minutes at a time and that's okay. Whether it's this book or, um, some of the, you know, you said you have some on demand type

programs and things, like being able to just do it at your pace and gain your confidence as you go. Um, well, I appreciate y'all's time today. I do want to ask where is it that we can find you? Where do people need to connect with you?

And then I'm going to ask you both, I'm going to give you a minute to think about it, but how do you define success today. I want you to think about it individually, like for yourself, Sarah, for yourself, Nancy. And then how do you define success as your company today? So where can our listeners find you?

Sarah: So you can find the book at www.backtobusinessbook.com. And that includes the book. It has our e-course on there. There's also some free downloads on 15 minutes to refresh your resume and LinkedIn. So there's some great resources on there. And then our company, you can find us at theswingshift.co, and there you'll find where you can find our hangouts, different events we have coming up. We have an amazing blog of community stories of women. Some that we've featured in our book that have navigated these crazy challenging career paths. So there's a lot of, a lot of great resources there and a lot of them are free on their website. And then of course, follow us on social media. We're on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram at The Swing Shift Co.

Leah: Awesome.

Nancy: I think for women that we're working with and for anybody who's listening, success can come in small increments. If you even say, "I am going to put a stake in the ground and I am going to work on getting a job by the time the kids go back to school in September." That's great. Every small step forward is going to build to a bigger goal. So many women, I think, beat themselves up and say, "Oh, well, I should just have it all wrapped up and ready to go." That's very unrealistic. And so break it down into small steps and then take some joy in each of the small steps as you achieve them along the way. I think for me, knowing that I've done everything in my power to help advance this cause forward makes me incredibly happy. We feel just so fortunate to have the opportunity to bring *Back to Business*, to light both in the book and the e-course. And so I will say for today, that is making me really happy.

Leah: love it. What about you, Sarah?

Sarah: Yeah. So what my version of success looks like on a daily basis is I've said this before that I think of, what are my priorities for the day? You know, I list out personal and professional. They're all mixed together. And then I think of them as balls in the air that I'm juggling, and which ones are glass and which ones are rubber, which ones will I be able to drop if I need to, versus ones that cannot be dropped, sometimes that is two thirds personal. And I try to balance them, but it is what it is. And so I just really take note of that and think, you know, what, if this drops, I can do it tomorrow. It's going to be okay, but this one needs to get done today. So I just really am organized about my time and priorities. And I'm just really realistic about what I can accomplish, especially right now. And that took some work, that took some grace, because we're all running probably a bit less productive than we're used to. With all of these other things happening right now, even the news cycle, the emotional mental stress, you know, there's a number of things that are. So challenging right now for people that be realistic with what you can accomplish. And again, as Nancy said, celebrate those accomplishments too. And then I try to finish the day. Some people start the day with us, but I finished the day with a mini mental gratitude checklist, which is, you know, what am I grateful for? Personal and professional. And then to me that helps me celebrate those successes because those are usually. Can be interwoven many times. I love it from a company perspective. It's same as Nancy. If we're having the right conversations with the right people to advance this message, which is usually on the advocating corporate side, but at the same time, arming women to play the game today while we're trying to move the needle. Yeah. Again, that's a balance as well. We'd like the pie in the sky. This is how it should be. And that's what we're advocating for. But we also understand that you have to get jobs and the game needs to get played. And so we want to teach you how to do that. So if those two things simultaneously are happening, then I count that as success.

Leah: I love it. Well, thank you ladies so much, not just for being here today, but just thank you for doing this work. I know that you're going to bring so much hope to literally millions of women that may have not felt hope for when they go back or even that it would be an option for them. And so I just want to thank you and acknowledge the fact that what you're doing is going to have impact that does matter.

And I look forward to introducing you to a lot. Cause I like through the conversation, like writing down, I'm like, I need to introduce them to this person. I need to introduce them to that person. So, um, I think what you're doing is awesome. It makes a difference and women are going to be better off for it.

And you know what, back to your point, Nancy, so will companies the bottom line. Companies will be better because of this work. So it's really a win-win win. So thank you ladies. And I hope you have a great day.

Sarah: Thank you so much.

Leah: Thanks for tuning in! At Her Story of Success, we are on a mission to help women-business owners, leaders and professionals build your tribe and reach your next level of success by connecting you to one another, equipping you with resources and empowering you along your journey. We would love for you to be a part of our tribe and further this mission by sharing this podcast with a friend or co-worker you want to help succeed. And you can stay up to date with all of our episodes, blogs and events by signing up for our newsletter at Herstoryofsuccess.com.

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