



Season 6: International Marketing and Brand Management Episode 3

Stacie Berdan

*International Careers Expert
(Podcast Host)*

Jessica Deckinger

*Founder and President
Mint Marketing Group*

[Music]

Stacie Berdan:

Welcome to the global careers podcast sponsored by GW-CIBER – THE source for inspiring stories from seasoned professionals who have embraced a global role and reaped the benefits. We offer practical advice and insider tips across a broad swath of industries and fields around the world. Whether or not you've considered moving abroad or taking on an international role, globalization will impact your career. So join us for a lively discussion as we explore what an international career really means. My name is Stacie Nevadomski Berdan and I'll be your host!

In Season 6, we focus on the challenges and opportunities in global careers in marketing, communications and brand management. What are the rising trends and skills employers in the field are seeking in new hires? Join us as we hear from award-winning international marketing professionals as they share their stories working on some of the most iconic brands around the world. Today I have the pleasure of interviewing Jessica Deckinger, an outstanding international marketing professional who has held leadership positions with many global brands, including Vention, Everbridge, Humana, Wolverine Worldwide, Promotion In Motion, and Avon. Her current role is Founder and President at Mint Marketing Group, where she serves as a fractional CMO for selective clients. Jessica was a member of the executive team of two startups with successful exits – MCX and Adeo – and in the earlier years of her career, she also held finance and operation roles at JP Morgan and the National Football League. In addition to her full-time roles, Jessica has been an active partner in her husband's entrepreneurial businesses for over two decades, as well as a mentor for more than ten years to U.S. veterans through American Corporate Partners. Welcome, Jessica, it's great to have you with us today.

Jessica Deckinger:

Thank you so much, Stacie, I'm so happy to be with you.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, so, you have had an amazing, stellar marketing career so far. Can you just tell us about it, share some highlights for listeners?

Jessica Deckinger:

Of course, thank you so much for having me as a guest. And I think you know, two of my favorite global experiences were actually very different from each other. The first, I think that is very memorable for me was my first marketing role out of business school, in a business-to-consumer brand Avon Products, which is a beauty company, global beauty company. And just an incredible opportunity to be as a brand manager, learn both the table stakes of what marketing in a global environment is like, and also Avon back then, if anyone is familiar with the old Avon world, it was basically and still is a business that runs B2B2C. So, it's a company that builds products, sells them to representatives, and the representatives sell them directly to consumers. So, I got kind of my first taste of B2B and B2C and really just got to explore what a global career would be like. And then, much later in my career, a second experience that I think was equally interesting for different reasons was my first fully B2B SaaS (software



as a service) Marketing CMO role with Everbridge was a Chief Communications Officer, and then later, I took on the CMO functionality in my role there. And that was really an opportunity to build global platforms, a global department and kind of see what it was like to have teams all over the world. And, you know, it was just a phenomenal place to kind of get a chance to do so many new things so late in my career, and that was just an exceptional experience for me personally and professionally.

Stacie Berdan:

It's so cool. You know, it's interesting, so many marketing professionals move up through marketing, and then to maybe CCO, CMO, and then oftentimes COO or CEO these days, too, isn't it? It's kind of interesting to see that many marketing professionals become the heads of companies. Are you seeing that?

Jessica Deckinger:

I am. And you know, what's interesting is that marketing is one of those great, I think, prolific kind of career fields where you can do many, many different things. And that's the reason why you see so many people in CMO or CCO or kind of name them, those marketing roles can take on executive leadership roles in a variety of areas, because you get to, in a way, dabble in so many different kinds of functional skills over the course of a marketing career. And every marketing role means a different thing, which is what's interesting also, so you could be a CMO at one software company or a CFO at a different software company, and the scope of your role could be drastically different. And so, the nice thing is that any marketing career in a way is a bit nonlinear and so gives you gifts along the way of new skills, new exposure to different kinds of opportunities and can cultivate you into a leader who can then do many, many different things, which is why I think we're seeing that trend.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, so neat. And, of course, as you have – moving among different companies and within different industries also makes it interesting, kind of fast paced, never a dull day, I assume in your career over the past couple of years.

Jessica Deckinger:

Yeah, well, you're being very generous – past couple of decades is more accurate. It is, it is an amazing thing to have a nonlinear decision-making process, even as you have those marketing opportunities to grow, because I think, frankly, building a career that has lots of different skill sets is now more than ever a benefit to any global company. Because you're talking about, kind of, bringing in aspects of knowledge across such a diverse base. If you've had lots of different experiences that you can bring in there's not like, kind of, a linear path, I think. Like there used to be thinking that like, business to business marketing is just one thing and business to consumer is one thing and verticals don't overlap, right. I really firmly believe, I call it business-to-human, every marketing opportunity is a business selling to a human being. And every vertical shares both the interest in disruption and the interest in creative thinking that every other vertical shares. And so, when you bring in a fresh perspective, from lots of different kinds of jobs and experiences and different functionality, I think you add value in any field. And I think that seems to have been shared by many people that I've come across. The old world where you kind of had to major in one thing for your whole career, you know, businesses are realizing that in a global environment that's changing so rapidly, you just can't afford to have leaders who don't understand how to build new innovative thinking and approach things in new ways, and, you know, learn... And so, it's really opened the door for like, my career having this opportunity to change between verticals, industries, types of roles. And I think now for the next generation coming up, it's an even bigger opportunity. And that's so exciting, because that's kind of the new normal – is that you won't have a linear, one singular path. So, I've been grateful for that. And I hope it's an opportunity for many people now as they move into marketing careers.



Stacie Berdan:

Most certainly. Do you have a tip or two for people? Because, obviously, careers change, paths changes, as you've just described. I think it is the way it's going to be now, right? It's the nonlinear is the way it is. But what tips or two do you have for listeners?

Jessica Deckinger:

I think, being deliberate. And I think... and what I mean by that is it's very difficult to know what's coming in any job, right, in any role. And every role is a component and a bigger part of a larger story or narrative that is your career. And so, what I mean is, with each step you take – have a reason, have an authentic reason as to why you've decided to make that choice, and have a developed, well-developed, cultivated, and practiced narrative around that reason. And then, when you are choosing to walk away from something, I think... like I always say, you should never leave a role... you should never take a role because you're trying to get out of a role. You should always deliberately exit and enter new things with a reason that's in your heart, authentic to who you are and what you want in your career – whether it's new opportunities, new experiences, new skills, new title, whatever the right things are. Know that, and just have... built a narrative throughout your career that allows you to articulate that story to people. And it makes it easier when you do go to your next thing and people ask you “tell me a little bit about yourself and what you've done”. It's... it becomes a really comfortable, like I said, authentic story about you, that becomes your brand story, your professional brand story. And I think that is to me the best advice I could give around changing... making changes in your career to anybody, not just in marketing. I think if you know the why and you can articulate it to other... someone else, and they can see that... as a human being they get it, your reason why, even if it doesn't resonate with them, they understand it. Then it makes it easier for people to connect the dots as to why you're the right person for this new role, or whatever the new opportunity is. And I think that's been a gift that someone gave me early in my career. And now I hope it's helpful for others.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, no, that's great. Great tip. Great advice. And maybe they don't even have to connect the dots. Maybe you even connect them for them in a way, right. Diving into some of the specifics regarding marketing... So, digital marketing has changed dramatically over the last couple of years, tech is changing things with AI and geolocation, all those kinds of things with respect to marketing... How do you begin to tackle that on a global scale?

Jessica Deckinger:

I mean, I think there are kind of a couple of different things to keep in mind about the way, you know, to absorb and then become empowered by the changes that are happening so rapidly in the digital world. Truthfully, I think having a learner's attitude and a non-ego driven approach are the two keys to being successful with digital marketing evolution. Because it's actually a revolution – like every day there's something new, you know, that's changing the way that we think about how marketing is done, is perceived, is received, is viewed, is engaged with. And that's not just social media, it's kind of all the different AI and machine learning and ChatGPT, all these kinds of new things are like... in one day can blow everything up that you knew. And so, if you're approaching these things with the learner's attitude, with kind of like, I am going to always have my eyes open for what's out there, to learn without an ego, so not assuming based on what other people say, or you have preconceived, you know, about digital that you know the answer already, but just observing, learning, testing, and taking some risk – I think is important. Like, when you find a new technology, learning about... educating yourself about it, making a decision whether it's worth, you know, taking a calculated risk on trying it out in a business line, or even just on your own to see what it's all about. I think being that learner's attitude can really provide a lot of value in adapting quickly to what's happening in a world that's moving so fast as; a marketer, it's just critical that you, you know, be always, always bringing in new information and not, you know, falling into the pattern of like, well, this is comfortable for me, the old way of doing things, because that's how I've always done it, right. It's just... you cannot, I think, thrive as a marketer unless you adapt to new generations and adapt to new technologies. And so, I just think those are the two keys – like being non-egocentric, knowing you can check your ego at the door. And even if you've been



marketing for 30 years, there's probably something coming along that someone else might know better than you. So, what I mean by that, even just generationally, oftentimes, the smartest person at the table in digital world is not me, is not even someone more senior than me, sometimes it's someone 20 years younger than me, who just really gets it and understands it, because to them, they're native much more in the new “new thing”, even someone five years older than that may not be. And so, like being able to check your ego and say, hey, you know what, probably the smartest person on this topic is not me. Let me find the person who is and, you know, absorb that wealth of information and leverage their knowledge to lift us all up, I think makes you really successful in a changing digital environment.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And speaking of ego, and blunders, and mistakes, you know, there are lots of interesting, I think marketing kind of mistakes made around the world, specifically cross-culturally, different languages. It's really tricky to market just one product or brand across various cultures in those different languages. Can you share any mistakes or funny stories, examples that listeners can learn from?

Jessica Deckinger:

Oh, definitely. I mean, I have many, many of these, unfortunately, it's one of the challenges of... real challenges of global marketing is that you have to take a glocalised approach – like local meets global – because there are cultural differences. There are regional differences within a specific, you know, area of the world, there are neighborhood differences, there are generational differences within a cultural environment. And so, understanding that complexity requires deep listening, empathy, and also an understanding that when you blunder, it's just important to own it, and then kind of, you know, own it, recognize it, listen to your customers all the time, tell them you're listening, you heard them when you blundered something, and then move forward. I think an example of this for me that really kind of rings true... I've told the story before, I think I've actually told you this story before, it was when I was at Avon actually, in my first role, we had launched a series of fragrances that had coconut scent, the coconut note in them and they just really were not performing well in the United Kingdom. And you know, we couldn't figure out why. The “global team”, which was very diverse but based in the U.S., based in New York City, couldn't figure out why they weren't selling. So, we actually called the local team and asked, in the UK, like, what's going on... And they said, you know, you've priced these like they're in the higher end of the pricing, and then it kind of like almost in the “masstige” category, which is a little higher pricing for fragrances, and yet here coconut is, locally, in UK here, is like sunscreen, it's not something you pay aspirationally a lot of money for, it's something you buy in booths, pharmacy, or in the, you know, grocery store, Tesco or whatever, and it's not something that you, you know, are going to aspire to wear. It's like vacation, cheap vacation sunscreen. And that was eye opening, because that's not true everywhere in the world. And we had overlooked that and not gone customer first in our approach. And so, you know, we could apologize about it, but what we could do is tell the representatives we are, you know, shifting gears and really gonna focus on bringing those fragrances down to the value category that contain that scent and then we're going to spend some time listening to you, representatives and local folks selling our fragrances, about what is relevant, what is not relevant, you know, what is aspirational in your market, so we can understand how... when we should be local, when we should be global so that we can create that glocalised kind of perspective. And it was eye opening for me because it was early in my marketing career that I... You know, you have to be customer first, you have to be customer back. You cannot be global first... it is not, especially if your global team is centralized. If your global team is dispersed and in local markets, it affords more... the more, the luxury of having local knowledge infuse a global group. But if you are literally geolocated all together in one place, you will develop bias. And that's a hard thing to overcome. The only way to do that is to listen to your customers.

Stacie Berdan:

How about some of the dynamic tension that occurs? Maybe there was, or maybe in another instance, there is a local team on the ground – they're like, nuh-huh, this isn't gonna work, but the headquarters, maybe the global



brand managers are like, yes, we know what we're talking about. Have you ever had any of that kind of dynamic tension? And what kind of advice do you have for dealing with it?

Jessica Deckinger:

I have had that. Partially, it's usually... and I don't want to assert that this is like every company... but it usually tends to stem from an operational financials place – like, it's... you're working for a corporation, and, you know, name any corporation where the goal is to streamline and build efficiency. And localizing doesn't do that, right. So, like, operationally, if your manufacturing is local, but, like, in one area, you don't want to spend for, like, local-local-local – name it, like one in UK; you don't want to have like five factories if you can have one, which creates a centralized approach to promote both production and marketing in a CPG world. So, like, if you work for a corporation where they want to centralize everything in one global place where manufacturing is happening in like one global favorite place, and the ideation and the marketing is from one global place... Again, it's very hard to, like, to argue that you should do something that is less efficient, by, like, you know, doing the local thing, also, because it feels like you're dispersing operations. But really, I think the argument has to be made that if you want to succeed in a global world, getting to scale from an end productivity and sales and growth perspective, is more important than operational efficiency, to the point where you sacrifice that opportunity to grow. And I think that's the argument that has to be made. And sometimes it's hard to make, because a financial person might be like, well I don't want to spend a million dollars on localizing all these products. And you gotta say, well, the 1x, you know, you get from the little savings you get from cutting that down to like, half, by putting it in one market, you know, is not as important as the, like, potential five or 10x growth you could get by scaling with localization. Like, I think that's the argument that has to be made. And there's tons of math to support it in corporate world. But I understand that if you're, you know, if you're an operations, if you're a finance person, if you're in a public company, it can be really hard because you're trying to measure profitability with growth, you know, and balance the two. And that's when I think it has come up for me the most, I don't know that that's true in every company. But for me, it's come up the most when I've been in situations where, like the optics of the balance sheet matter as much as the optics of the growth. And so, you know, that I think the only way to combat it is that we live in a world where the only way there's so much information, people know what they like locally and want to be respected for their personal, you know, environmental cares and wishes and things that are in their cultural environment. And I think, not to honor that is you lose a lot of business, because there's so much proliferation of information – like, you can reach everybody, but if you're not actually reaching them with something that's relevant for them, they're gonna dismiss it, because someone else will reach them first with something relevant to them. That's a long-winded way to say it, but I think it's really, I think, it really is a common thing. And it's hard to fight, but there is data to support that localization, you know, enhances growth, and ultimately helps the balance sheet, because if there's a big top-line number, then it's easier to manage a margin that creates profitability, it's expensive model...

Stacie Berdan:

Great, different way to look at it. That's great. What is the biggest effect globalization has had on marketing in the past five years, you think?

Jessica Deckinger:

Honestly, I think it's really created so much opportunity for disruption. Because the market dynamics of where how you grow where you grow have shifted so rapidly. The opportunity to grow in markets that never seemed like they were opportunities was kind of like an opening the aperture for like “the sky's the limit”, because you could find that your thing that you develop scales much more rapidly in a country or region, or whatever it is part of the world, that you never knew was going to be your target audience when you find something that resonates at a local level. And so, I think that globalization has opened the opportunity for companies, you know, that the old world prior to, like, digital world felt they couldn't grow outside U.S. boundaries, or outside European boundaries, or outside Asian boundaries like now can do that. And that's amazing, because it means that you can... kind of like, the sky's the limit – especially for startups, which I think is just spectacular. Like watching the rise of small businesses to big



businesses is just, it's so phenomenal. And it means that there are lots of ways to be a marketer and lots more opportunities to prove your worth. Because you don't have to just plug yourself in like a cog in a wheel in a company that has been doing it for 50 years. You can go somewhere that's new, and it can become the biggest thing that ever was, bigger than some of those, you know, behemoth older companies. So, I love that. I think that's a giant win for the whole world, that globalness has created opportunity.

Stacie Berdan:

How about... And does that affect global marketing jobs, things that some of our listeners should consider when they're pursuing their jobs?

Jessica Deckinger:

100%! I mean, realistically, these days, many roles are already global, that maybe weren't in past. Most companies that are not in regulated spaces, if they're not global already, will be soon. And that's amazing. If you're in a regulated space, it makes it tougher, because if you're in regulations that are at a federal or a state level, and you're in that federal or state governing body, it makes it harder. If you're in biotech, or pharma, or biotech-pharma – same-same – but, you know, I don't know, Medicare in the U.S., or, you know, name your regulated industry in other countries, I think that makes it tough to be global, because you have to navigate. It's not impossible, but it makes it tougher, because you have to, you know, abide by whatever the regulatory bodies say. But even those industries have started to... you know, the biopharma space has started to become much more global, especially during the pandemic. But really, like most other companies, they aspire to, if not now, at some point to be global, because like I said, the sky's the limit now. And because the barriers of old are not geographic anymore, it's not like the edge of your country is the edge of your ability to market now because of the digital environment we live in. So, I don't know, I think that's an amazing thing for global marketing roles. Because I think inevitably, we're moving towards a world where every role in some way will be global. Even if it doesn't start out that way, we'll end up that way. And the pace at which the startup world has navigated creating global roles and global companies has definitely lit a fire for having those opportunities at a faster pace.

Stacie Berdan:

And that makes me think about ESG, DEI, those are also... because you're talking about regulated industries, but also perception and social causes and things that matter to consumers as well. How has that affected the marketing industry? And what do, you know, students, young/early career marketing professionals need to know to stay competitive in this space?

Jessica Deckinger:

I think, you know, the interesting thing about ESG is that it's a newer construct relative to other kind of thinking about, like... if you think about regulatory or other constructs. It's not actually fully regulated yet. And so, therefore, there's not a lot of alignment, because we're in kind of like early years of what is ESG. And even DEI, there isn't like one normative, established kind of rule set around what that is. And I think that means that it's an incredible space to innovate. And so, I think there's opportunity there and making yourself knowledgeable about it. It's almost like, kind of reminds me of like organic status for food in the early years of organic status. And even still, like it's not clearly defined exactly how organic status is determined. In some ways it is, in some ways it's not... There are lots of regulatory bodies, and lots of people are influencing it. But if you're in the space of food, you got to understand what organic is in different frameworks. I think ESG is the same. If you can start to educate yourself about it, it is becoming more and more of a priority for businesses, public and private, for many reasons. In the U.S., SEC – The Securities Exchange Commission – if you're a public company, they have already announced that they are planning to regulate that companies that are public have an ESG strategy. What that exactly means, I don't know if it's fully been defined yet. Potentially, it's being defined as we speak. But I think, like, just being knowledgeable about what it means is important for another reason, which is that your brand... as a company, now



it's more important than ever that your brand stands for what your consumers believe in from a positioning standpoint. And the next generation... like the generations beyond, like, millennials and younger – environmental awareness, you know, social resilience, and sustainability and governance, and how you run your business and what it looks like as an operation – those things matter. And they're valuable both to consumers and to employees. And so, if you have a company, and you're not delivering on a brand that authentically delivers some kind of ESG – you know, thinking, plan execution, whatever it is – I think you're gonna lose out on an entire, you know, bucket of incredible talent and potential customers who, you know, are deeply steeped in values that are, you know, very progressive comparatively to those of generations past. And so, you know, that's it's just smart business as a marketer to be aware of what ESG could mean to your audience and to your potential people you're going to hire and to live those things authentically. And DEI is a critical part of that. And, you know, diversity, equity, and inclusion means completely different things than it did you know, five years ago, ten years ago... And one of the big market differences to me is that diversity, equity, inclusion, like kind of used to mean from what I saw, really, you know, kind of, like demographic markers of diversity - did you have demographically diverse, you know, people working in your organization, did you represent that in your brand, did you seek consumers who were demographically diverse... It's not, I think, you know, thank the stars, it's not that anymore. It's so much more inclusive... And DEI now from businesses, in my thinking, really has to mean inclusion in all ways – whether it's, you know, kind of psychographics types of ways of working, if you're talking about DEI in employment world. You know, people want to work in different ways, they want to be accommodated with their needs, and I think, and they do legally have to be accommodated with their needs, and I think that's right. And so, being knowledgeable about DEI as a marketer helps you to understand and be sensitive to and empathetic to the needs of others – to accommodate, you know, how best you can be in service to the people who work for you and who buy things from you. And that's just like, ethically, like the right thing to do. And we should have more of it. I wish we did have more of it. But I think it's going to be the staple of marketers of the future as people who actually, you know, build a DEI strategy that is consumer backed again and employee backed, and with empathy, I think will be the most successful, because people will feel... You know, humans want to connect and feel seen and heard and if you are empathetic to their unique situations, and needs, and differences, your business does better. Your customers buy more, your people are happier and more productive. And by the way, you get smarter thinking... Because, like, even when you're building a marketing team, one of my favorite things is to hire people who are smarter than me, about stuff that I know nothing about. Because you just do better when those people are in the room because they make you smarter. And how amazing is that? I don't care if someone's younger than me or older than me or my same age, whatever it is, but people who are smarter than me at other things than I am, whether it's like cultural things or other things, bring differences to the table, make the team better. Like it's just the reality. And so, I hope, as all marketers, everyone will take that on as their kind of badge of honor that they have the opportunity to encourage build up and you know, grow diversity and inclusion, equity and inclusion in all ways.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, that's great. That's wonderful. Forward thinking, and how it is going to be completely part and parcel of what marketing is. I love it. That is great. That is great. Jessica, can you share one of the biggest challenges you faced in your career and how you dealt with it?

Jessica Deckinger:

Yeah, I mean, I think I get this question a lot. And I am very frank about it, which I think sometimes may scare people, but the hardest thing for me has been building a family – growing as a professional, growing as a person and working – like I think it's just hard. I mean, my parents, and I think a lot of, kind of, one generation before me – the baby boomer generation – had this ideal of like, have it all was the ideal, you know, have a home and a family and a career and whatever... And you know, you can have all things. And my generation, one level younger, you know, I think tried to do that and found out it was really hard and watched many people who were in the generation kind of in between us – in between our parents and us – tried to do it and saw the sacrifices they had to make. And we were like kind of mid-career when they were like making all their sacrifices in that early career and that, you



know, is a hard thing to figure out. People ask me, how do you do at all? Or like, how do you find balance? And I think that's been the biggest challenge as a marketer, as a global marketer, particularly for a couple of reasons. One, marketing in the roles I've been, many of them have included functions like PR, investor relations... I don't know, let me think... advertising, digital advertising, things that never sleep, with teams that are all over the world. And so, thinking about managing a global schedule, a global team – you're kind of always on. And how do you do that when you want to... maybe you don't want to have children, maybe you do, maybe you don't want to get married, maybe you do... Well, so I just think, you know, as you bring things into your life, you have to make choices. And that was never part of how the story I was told about the decisions I would have to make if I wanted to do all the things I wanted to do. And in my case, it included having a partner that I married, and we committed to each other for many, many years, which is hard in itself – having any kind of relationship is always a challenge, because you're talking about two humans who are different. And then I wanted to have children – I have three children. I have a home, we have cars, we, I don't know, we, you know, we make choices to, you know, be in very high-powered careers, both of us. And there are just I think, complexity... we have aging parents now, you know, thinking about like, the complexities that happen in life... To be honest, even if you don't choose to bring them in, is something that's hard to plan for. And as a marketer, if you're like, you know, on a call... I'm on the East Coast, and I was you know, in some cases I've been on calls with teams in Asia Pacific, and those calls happen, you know, at 11 o'clock at night, 12 o'clock at night, and then, you know, my children wake up at 5:30 to get the bus. So, you know, how do you maintain health and wellness and, you know, balance is like, is a constant challenge. And, frankly, my only answer for it is that you never have everything at once. If you're achievement-oriented, which I am, and I think, you know, I feel value, and like, almost like a happy joy moment, when I achieve something, it's part of my identity, it's fine, it's part of who I am. But also, then, like you're driven to want to achieve more, because it makes you feel good. And that's great, except that you can push yourself too hard and if you get like an A-, it feels like an F. And that's a really tough thing to balance when you're trying to, like, live a healthy, happy lifestyle. And so, I think, like, you know, for me, that meant that sometimes I've sacrificed in unhealthy ways my physical health, or my emotional health or my family's time, or whatever it is, for things in my career or the other way around. And so, I have this, like constant feeling a little bit that I, you know, have failed at something that week. I think, getting to be to that stage of life I am at now required that, like, earlier, ten years ago, when I had little kids, I kind of had to let go of some stuff, which was really hard. And say, you know, it's okay if I do fail at some things, because I can't keep all the things running. I can't keep all the plates spinning at the same time. It's not gonna happen. Like it's just not happening. And that's a hard truth. And I think that's the biggest challenge for me, is that kind of like, you have to just kind of like, man, okay, so like, I missed my kids winter concert, I'll go to the spring concert, or, and I'm not a failure as a mom, because I missed that one thing, like, my kids still love me, they're still great, they still feel loved. You know, or like, name your multitude of professional things I've had to sacrifice. I can't go to that trade show. because it's during, I don't know, vacation week. I should be there for my team. You know, I think like letting go of the guilt was the only way to cope for me. And I think, for individuals figuring out what those challenges are early is great, and then kind of navigate them. But I think that, like, having it all, is hard. And I don't think you can have it all at the same time. And so therefore, like making peace with that is it's hard too.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, but that's super important. Thank you for sharing that. And you're right! I mean, I totally agree with you. It is hard for achievement-oriented, because once you are achieving in one thing, you are not, necessarily, in another... And it really is tough to handle. But thanks for sharing that, because it's great to know that you're struggling too, just like everybody. Ha-ha...

Jessica Deckinger:

We are all human! Everybody... I don't care what anyone posts on social media, we are all just flawed humans trying to do our best.



Stacie Berdan:

Absolutely! And in that vein, is that some piece of advice you'd like to go back and give your younger self?

Jessica Deckinger:

Oh yeah! Oh yeah, yeah, yeah! I could probably... this could be a long answer, which I will not do to people... But I think... three quick things. One is building a balance between being patient and sprinting, because careers are a long game, life is a long game, and I think I was so focused early on in my career on sprinting to the next achievement. It felt so good, I didn't pace myself in some ways... Not that that's a bad thing, but what it did do was create a habit of sprinting. And, like they say, you do things one time – it's a practice, two times – it's a practice, three times – it's a habit, or whatever, habit building... how to build successful habits... But whatever it was, I built a habit of, like, high-poweredness that was not going to be maintainable for the entirety of my life. And so, learning, cultivating that balance, like when it's OK to just, kind of, give yourself a little break... not a break, but patience... and just sit in something, and when to, like, you know, stay up till 2:00 in the morning doing it, you, know, I think that's a really early skill I wish I'd taught myself. And the second quick one – that is not quite quick – but the second one is, doing what you're good at feels safe... I wish I had taken more risks early, because I would've accelerated myself, my personal growth faster... and my professional growth faster, in a way. And taking risks is so hard. And I think, the third is just start early with seeking out... like, I learned from someone early in my career that you should find cool people and make yourself valuable to them. It doesn't mean like sending them articles, it means, like, be a human being that is a good listener in their lives, in whatever capacity they want you invited into their lives. And I wish I had started that when I was like really young, because I think... you know, I learn more from humans, I love saying I'm an anthropologist, like a learn more from human beings that are different than me than I do from my own introspection. That's just my way of learning. And I wish I had started at like, I don't know, as a young kid – like just absorbing things from smarter, cooler people around me. Now I try to all the time, but I think, you know... that would've been amazing... I can't imagine what I must've missed out during all those years of like... I didn't really learn that skill until I was in my mid-20s and I wish I had known, I don't know, like when I was really young, that human beings were going to teach me more than anything else that I'd find... you know, those cool humans who just... because they've shaped my life so dramatically since I started really opening up to like finding the cool people around me. And they are not always who you'd think they are; sometimes it's, you know, the person who cleans the offices at the end of the night, it's not always the aspirational CEO of the company. Sometimes you'll learn more from that human being because they see everything than you will from anyone else and... Like, I wish... I would love more of those people, I would love to welcome more into my life over the years.

Stacie Berdan:

That's wonderful. Well, even if you couldn't give it to your younger self, you can at least give it to all of our listeners, right now. So that's terrific. Thank you for that. And this had been a wonderful, wonderful session with you, conversation, Jessica. Is there anything, before we wrap up, anything else you'd like to add that maybe I didn't ask you, that you want to make sure our listeners hear?

Jessica Deckinger:

I mean, I think I... I guess I just... I hope that people on this... you know, as they are heading into different career moments, whatever stage of their career it is, especially people who are high-achieving, that they will give themselves grace and be... just have moments of gratitude and self-awareness that will allow them to, you know, be patient and forgiving of themselves. Because I think that is probably a gift we should all give ourselves, especially as marketers, because we are front and center in a business, we are the person who creates the opportunities, so it's easy to feel... to be hard on yourself, to push really hard, to drive forward. So, I guess my last thing I would just add is I think, like, that gratitude for how amazing everyone listening to this is in their own unique way and in a diverse way, and self-awareness and, you know, forgiveness. Those are my biggest life lessons I would love to pass on for anybody listening to this, that I'm trying to embrace myself still to this day.



Stacie Berdan:

That's great. And to the point you made just a little while ago – you know, you are human, we are human, and humans are the most interesting part... So, be kind to your own human self, right...

Jessica Deckinger:

Exactly!

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah. This has been wonderful, wonderful, Jessica. You are a fountain of information, knowledge, energy... it's always a pleasure to talk with you. So, thank you so much for taking the time, I know you are super busy these days. I really appreciate it.

Jessica Deckinger:

Thank you, Stacie, I really appreciate it, it was so much fun.

Stacie Berdan:

OK, take care!

[Music]

Stacie Berdan:

You have been listening to the GW-CIBER Global Careers podcast. Join us again next time, and in the meantime – go global!