

## **Episode 160: Building Doors with Lauren Karan**

*"If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door." – Milton Berle*

Growing up, Lauren Karan had one dream – to be a professional singer. At 19 years old, Lauren got her first shot at the big time, auditioning for the hit TV show *X Factor*. After making it through to the final 30, the aspiring singer fell victim to the pressure and spectacle of the occasion – a moment that crushed her confidence and caused her to rethink everything she wanted out of life.

But the devastating failure created space for a new opportunity, when Lauren landed her first role in the recruitment industry. With a natural talent for problem solving, relationships, and business, it was a slam dunk.

Today, Lauren is at the helm of Australia's most disruptive recruitment agency. As founder and director of Karan & Co, Lauren uses her extensive experience in engineering, construction, and other technical markets, to transform companies that want to find – and keep – the best people. Lauren's family focus allows her to truly partner with her clients who recognize that caring more about people is what unlocks the real profitability and goodwill of a business.

Lauren is also a certified organizational coach, is accredited in behavioral interviewing and psychometric testing, and is host of the Building Doors podcast.

Passionate and well networked in the industry she has also been Chair of the Memberships Committee for the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) and continues to serve in the memberships and mentoring committees for over 5 years.

In this episode, we're going to talk about:

- Why companies struggle to find and keep the right people
- How to balance family with career
- What failure taught Lauren about future possibilities; and
- How to build doors and turbocharge your career.

Before we begin, the right bit of inspiration can completely change the trajectory of someone's life, so if there's a friend or loved one who needs to hear this episode or could use some help to Win the Day, share it with them right now.

Let's WIN THE DAY with Lauren Karan!

**Lauren, great to see you! Thanks for coming on the show.**

Thanks for having me, James.

**How does it feel to finally be here in the Win the Day studio in Los Angeles, California in person?**

It feels pretty cool! We came over to the US with the family, so we've done three theme parks over three days. We don't do anything in halves, so we've come over and come at it at 100 miles an hour.

But it feels really good to be here. I'm already building some amazing connections and getting to know people face-to-face is so good because there's a lot of people that I have known, met through COVID times that I haven't ever met face-to-face.

So yeah, it's been really good.

**And after three theme parks with your family, it's probably nice to have a little bit of quiet time today.**

Yeah. This is so peaceful. Just quietly!

**Who was the very first person to believe in you?**

I've got to say my mum. My mum was my biggest fan. I started singing when I was 14 in gigs in venues where I was not old enough to be. So my mum would take me everywhere to all my gigs. I remember going on country music talent quests where we had to drive hours and my parents would take me there. So I think it was definitely my mum.

Mum was always that type of person who didn't need to be in the limelight. She was happy to be in the shadow and just wanted her family to shine. For me, so much of what I saw her model in that part of her life, that kindness, that family first, it just stuck with me and she always believed in me, and she never made me feel that if I had failed or if I didn't win, that I was any less than. So that was a really big guiding force in my life early on.

**Is there a particular story of struggle or success from when you were younger that shaped how you viewed the world and perhaps even your role in the world?**

I had a pretty good run as a teenager. I went well in school. I went well academically as well as musically. I wasn't great at sport, but we can't have everything, right!? I was very challenged in that respect.

But if I look back during that time, I was really into my singing and uber competitive, and I've definitely over the years tapered that back in terms of competing more with myself than others

and not judging myself by somebody else's highlight reel. That's been a huge journey as a parent and a business owner.

But when I was in high school, I wanted to be the best. There was this gospel singer and she would always beat me, and she was always really, really good. I'm ashamed to say this, but I'm going to say it. I would get back in the car afterwards if she'd win, and I'd huff and puff and sulk the whole way home. I remember both my parents and their attitude about it was, "You didn't win, but there's a lesson in it. That's okay. What could you do differently next time? What do you want to do more of? How was your breathing on stage?"

*You have to learn to fail first, then success comes from that.*

Because in entertainment, there's a whole lot of failure. That's the best and the worst part of it. So when you go through that and you are competitive, you have to learn to fail. You have to learn to fail first, then the success comes from that. If you don't learn to fail, you won't go anywhere because there's going to be more no's than there are yeses. So I think probably for me that was a big lesson.

Also, my parents both being disabled meant that when I talked before about mum taking me places, mum had a morphine pump in her stomach. I had a father with PTSD. It wasn't easy for her to take me places physically. She had an operation when I was younger when I was about 11, and her hip could never fully reattach back to her... The muscle couldn't reattach to the bone, so she had a morphine pump.

Dad had the back of an 80-year-old, suffered from PTSD, both had morphine pumps. So from a mental health perspective, that wasn't easy for her to show up every day and let me pursue my dreams, but definitely that get-back-up-again and take-the-lesson-in-it has carried me through in life.

**A lot of people take their parents for granted until they have kids of their own and they realize the sacrifices. Did you have a bit more context given the situation you described there about going above and beyond?**

I didn't appreciate as much as I should have at the time. At the time, and I think teens can often be guilty of this, I focused more on what was lacking rather than what was being provided. So instead of thinking about the fact that mum was taking me places and trying to help me achieve my dreams and believing in me, I was more thinking, "Oh, sometimes I get home and mum's not happy or dad's struggling and I don't understand why."

That side of it that I was grappling with at the same time, you've got to remember your parents are human and they're doing the best with what they have and what they know. And everybody's different version of the best is different, too.

*I focused more on what was lacking rather than what was being provided.*

I think when you mature and become a parent yourself, you learn that. And now I can appreciate so much more that, yes, there were days that were really tough mentally for both of them.

But the fact that they showed up and wanted me to pursue my dreams, especially driving everywhere with mum's hip pain and condition was a big sacrifice on her behalf. Also, it's pretty much impossible to be grateful and then in a bad mood at the same time.

I went from entertainment to recruitment, and people that know both industries will understand both are full of rejection. In recruitment, you tell more people that they don't have the job than people that do. So that art of how to let someone down gently and really respect what they've brought to the process and them as a human, as an individual is so important.

We have a saying in our team: *what's the lesson in this?* It's important because you need to stop and instead of just moving forward from the emotion, also take stock and go, "But what's the lesson in what we've just gone through as a team?" Or what's the lesson in what I've just been through in a relationship, in a divorce, in whatever you're going through in life?

Many people are so busy forging forward, but they don't stop to take stock and think about what the lesson has or is.

**You go above and beyond to help people. You've got the most beautiful energy, and I love that about you. You instantly brighten up every room you're in! Where did that originate, do you think?**

I've thought a lot about this...

When I was a child, and I see it so much in my daughter, I very much had just had a zest and energy for life, and I just really enjoyed making other people happy. I think that's what music was for me.

As well, having a dad with PTSD, having mental health struggles, I realize that there's a power each of us has to brighten someone else's day in any small way, shape, or form: from the person that makes your coffee, from the person that sits you down for a podcast, anybody you interact with, you can change the trajectory of their day.

I learned that as a child through seeing the impact that I was able to make. I was a bit of a joker with my parents and me being able to lighten the mood, lighten the house, and then I took that out into the world as well. I thought, "Well, when I play music it makes people happy." Then I still think there's that element in life now.

*We have a saying in our team: what's the lesson in this?*

That's what I love about recruitment, is because when you get it right, you don't just make one person happy, you make that person that you've placed happy, their family's happier, the

businesses, the growing businesses that have been struggling to find people, you find the right person, you help their business become profitable and help all their employees.

So there's that ripple effect. We don't think enough about how we interact and improve the lives of others, but it's definitely been something core to me since a child.

**The stability and presence that can come from understanding the beauty of imperfection. If you're constantly hunting perfection, which of course can be good in some situations to bring out your best, but if you're always expecting perfection, you're going to be constantly disappointed, angry, and frustrated.**

**And, often, not getting what you want in the short-term can create the space for a much greater benefit over the long-term.**

Yeah. You do have to be able to do that. You do have to be able to go and change course and go, "That was a journey I was on and now I recognize that this isn't my life path or this was there to teach me something but not forever." you have to be able to move on and move forward.

I see so many people stuck in those. They're stuck in those jobs and they're negative and they hate their job. Change it. Do something about it. Even if it seems so insurmountable, take small steps to get towards a bigger goal. Break it down. What are little things you can be doing right now to improve your chances of getting to where you want to be?

*There's a power each of us has to brighten someone else's day in any small way.*

People often just sit in that being dissatisfied and not happy with their lot in life. On my Building Doors podcast, I interviewed an amazing young woman who's gone from being homeless to now going to the Olympics in boxing.

I mean, it's possible, if you believe it and you take the steps to get there,

**If you are not taking action on your own dreams, you think other people are going to be doing the work for you and finding the opportunity for you!? It's up to you. You've got to lead by example and you can attract all of that other help and resourcefulness along the way.**

And it's going to be harder for some people than others, of course. But that's just life.

Not everybody's going to have an equal playing field when we get out to the starting line. But if you work harder than the person that had the heads-up racing against you, and you are more willing to give to other people and you're more willing to be in abundance and provide help and support for others.

That will come back to you tenfold.

Yeah, so true.

**Your audition on *The X-Factor* was an interesting moment in your life. What were you thinking going in? Was your goal to win or just to do your best?**

**What was your headspace going in and what did you view success as in that moment?**

So my headspace going in, I won't lie, I didn't really understand. It was the first X-Factor in Australia, so I probably didn't understand the gravity of it at the time. I was on a kind of a cusp. I'd met with the managers of Savage Garden; we'd talked about some of my music, and then this had kind of come after that. And so I kind of saw it as a kickstart.

I thought, "Well, this is what I'm going to do. If I'm going to make it, then it's going to be here. This is going to be where I'm going to be discovered and this is going to be where my career starts off." I was studying psychology at the same time at uni. So I was kind of at a crossroads. I'm here, like, "Do I want to help people or do I want to go into entertainment?" Which had been my passion my whole life.

Ever since I could talk, I wanted to sing. When I went and first auditioned for X-Factor in Brisbane, the pressure that I put on myself, I was the last to audition on the day when I got through. Then when I actually went and auditioned on the second round when I was on Kate Soprano's team at the time, I was the *last* to audition on the day. I was like, "Oh, I'm always last." But that gives you time to get nervous and it gives you time to see the competition. And let me tell you, the competition is fierce in entertainment. No matter how good you are, there's always people around you that are 10-20 times better than you, and you're going to be sitting watching them.

So my mindset was, I look at it now, and I got shaken up by seeing all the contestants before me. "Oh, I don't sing like that. My voice is more of a jazzy voice." So I've got people that one of them had been singing with Ricky Lee for years and she had this belter powerhouse voice, and I was listening to all of them and getting into my head. By the time I auditioned, I was out of time.

I really messed that audition up. I do think part of that was getting stuck in my head about comparing. Comparison is the thief of joy, they say, and comparing myself with every other contestant. Whereas I look at that now, it's like, I was unique. I had my *own* voice. How can you compare someone's voice to someone else's when they're completely different?

So I definitely didn't recognize the magnitude, but when I was in Melbourne, I did. When I was around all the other singers, I surely quickly realized, "Wow, these people are pretty amazing."

**If you had to transport yourself back to that moment now, the day of the audition, what would you have said to yourself? How would you rewrite that narrative and redo that experience if you had your time over?**

I speak at schools voluntarily on panels and things like that to encourage more women in the construction industry because that's the industry I recruit in, and one of the girls in the audience asked, "What advice would you give to your teenage self?" And this is the exact advice I would've given to myself because I was 19 at this time.

It's to stop fitting in when you were born to stand out. Stop trying to fit in with what everyone else is doing. Create your own path, stand out in your uniqueness, and then you can't be compared because you're you – and there is no other you. So I wish I'd said that to myself. It took me a long time to just kind of discover my own unique way of being and not compare myself to other people, to other voices.

*Create your own path, stand out in your uniqueness, and then you can't be compared because you're you – and there is no other you.*

So that ability just to be present and be who you are, lean more, allocate that energy into being more who you are rather than trying to fit in with these people that you really don't have a great context of what's going on behind the scenes.

I got into the hype of social media when I was growing our business and I actually got to the point... We outsource it now. We have a company that does it for us. And I did that intentionally. I still set the scene of what we want to put out there and things like that, but I just didn't want to be on there all the time because I think you also need to limit that time for yourself. You also need to have a healthy relationship with social media, where you can jump on and recognize that it's not all real. It's not all as rosy as it seems.

**Yeah, it's diving into this perfection pit of like, "Oh my god. I just want to feel bad about myself. I'm going to log into social media and check out some perfect people!"**

Log into social media and see everybody else that's doing great things at conferences. And you know what? It was a big thing for me as well because in the industry I work in, so we're all mums in the business, and the industry I work in can be long hours, and a lot of the recruiters that recruit in the industry are males. There's this industry of working long hours and the hustle and that sort of stuff.

I was like, "Man, I can't hustle and work the hours that other people are doing because I have young kids and I want to add value to their lives, and I want to have time with them." So my life has to be *my* life, not comparing myself to where other people are at in their journey because that might be what they want for them, but do I really want that other person's life?

Sometimes you need to question yourself: Do you really want that person's whole life? And I'm telling you, if you question it, you will actually say, no, you don't. So stop looking at parts of it because it's their whole life. It's the hours they work; it's the pressure that they're under. All of that is a bigger piece to why they might be where they are right now.

**How did you balance your individual career aspiration with becoming a parent?**

I feel like I had to find a new identity.

One of the reasons I started the podcast as well was because in that journey from being so career-driven and then having kids, and I was super maternal. I love my children. They crack me up. They're so funny. They're challenging and funny all at the same time. It's like this: If you think you are a structured person, put children in the mix because you just never know what's coming next!

It's an Australian saying, but we call my daughter a bit of a loose cannon. We're like, "What's she going to do? We don't know. We don't know. It's probably going to be funny, maybe inappropriate. We're not sure what's coming up next." So I think when you have kids, if you've had this idea or an identity of yourself as a career person, and then you're a mother and you're a parent...

To me, the biggest change for me when I had children was I was in a global role when I had my son. He was a baby. I'll never forget. I did leadership programs for a couple of years, and I was doing a program, and I got a call from my husband who said our baby was really sick. He had to go to hospital. He wasn't keeping fluids down. He was a baby. He was like a year-and-a-half. I remember getting on the plane, and I was on the plane and crying the whole way, just upset. The flight attendant gave me a little blanky and settled me in. So I got home and I went, "Is this what I want for my life? Because I don't think it is anymore." I still didn't know then what my life would be or what that wanted to look like.

Then I had found out that I had a cancer familial gene. It's called SDHB. That was after the birth of my son. All this had been going on. I get regular scans, MRIs every two years and things like that so if there's anything, they'll catch it early. Sadly it took my nan's life and my cousin has had one as well. When I found that out, I went, "I need to stop waiting for life to start. We want to live on a farm. I know the life that I want. Why am I saying, 'In the future, I'll do this'? Or, 'After the kids are older, I'll move here'? Or constantly putting that off? We don't know that tomorrow is guaranteed. We don't know that. So why do we keep putting off the things we want in life or that are important to us for some promise of a tomorrow?"

I'm not saying that I felt like there wasn't that tomorrow, but I felt in that moment that if there was going to be a life change, we needed to make it now. I wanted to make memories with my kids that were important and that meant something to them for their whole life and that shaped them. To do that, I was like, "Right, I need goats and chickens stat!" I grew up on acreage and both of us, my husband and I, had grown up on acreage. So the idea of having a little farmhouse was absolutely what I had to do.

So we drove out, looked at all these houses. I knew it the moment I walked into the house. I just got this warm homely feeling. And everyone talks about that when they come in, like, we can't get people to leave. It's that kind of home where they just feel so at home.



That for me was a pivotal changing moment in my life, that I went, "You know?" I think it's shaped so much of what I do now. I wanted to start a business. I was like, "Okay. I'll start a business." I think people have a lot of thoughts around, "Oh, I'll do that when," or, "I'd love to in the future." Well, why can't the future be now? And you don't have any guarantee of the future.

**What are the absolute non-negotiables for you given that you have this career, you've got a growing team with clients all over the country for your business [Karan & Co], what are your non-negotiables for life when it comes to home and career that you just will not bend on?**

I need to be able to go to the stuff for my kids' school. I need to be there for the big moments. I won't compromise on that. That's really important to me.

I need to make time for exercise. If I'm in a role and I'm not having time for exercise or I get too busy, from a mental health perspective, if I don't make time for exercise, I'm really annoying because I overthink. I stay up at night. I'm quite a high energy person. So I feel like exercise expels that energy. My husband will even say to me sometimes, "Have you been to the gym in the last couple of days? Just asking, just checking in!" That's another one is making time for exercise.

Then the third one is working with people and clients that have the same values I do. I quickly learned in the corporate world that what would make my job rewarding is holding a high standard of our own personable ethics and integrity in the way we deal with people and also the clients we choose to partner with.

So often companies, it can be so tempting with big profits and lucrative deals to sell your soul, but your team feels it, and so will you as the business owner because they're more difficult to deal with; they take up more time; you don't feel appreciated or recognized as much. In our industry, if you're feeling that, then what do you think the people are feeling that you're placing into that role? I made that connection and I went right, but it can be done really well.

Recruitment is such an awesome thing. The ability to find someone a job that can shape their whole life. It's a privilege. So often it's turned into what I saw, a lot of money-making. It was almost like training people into jobs and just moving on. It was about making as much money as possible. Whereas where I see it is getting it right, you can really change someone's life.

**Congrats on the incredible growth you've had with Karan & Co. It sounds like the problem you wanted to solve with Karan & Co was the typical transactional way of doing things that the recruitment industry had become. Instead, you're coming in to partner with leading businesses and clients who just want to have great people and they recognize that by looking after their people first, that is going to heavily incentivize them to go the extra mile, which affects your bottom line?**

100%. Then also going in with those organizations and not looking at it like a transaction. When you're going into a business, and I think all of us in my team have over 10 years' experience working for companies doing their resourcing. When you go into a company, you can see the issues of why the role may not have been filled.

To me, the other thing is if you've got companies that want your help, they know that great people are the foundation for their success and they really mean that. I'm not talking about just having those values on the wall, but I'm talking about you see the way that they treat you as a supplier and the way they treat people in the interview. You partner with those kinds of clients and you help them, their business is going to be immensely successful and it's going to be because you help them as well.

A lot of the time, they don't have all the time to know everything about recruitment. They might not understand that the salary is pitched wrong. They might not know that the title is incorrect for the position. They may not know that their onboarding experience isn't great for someone coming in. There's so much that we can help with outside of just the actual finding of the person. And that's what lights me up, too. To see an organization get it and get great people is so rewarding.

We had one client that said to me... I didn't even know this story. I sat down and I took my team member out there and they go, "Do you know why we use Karan & Co.?" And she was like, "No. I know that we had a long relationship with you." And she said, "In our first year, we hired 40 people and kept five. 40 people we hired, paid fees for, kept five of those people." And she said, "And for the last over a year, we're keeping *everyone*."

So that's the difference that it can make, actually putting the time in and doing it wrong. People always talk about what's the cost of a toxic employee when you get it wrong? What's the cost of someone falling out? What's the cost of, actually firstly, paying all the agency fees for these people, but the damage to your culture, too?

For me, when I started to make those connections and missing pieces, I thought, "Let's do it the way that I want to do it and the way that I think is going to add value to businesses."

**How often do you turn down companies if you feel like they're not values-oriented or there's just some part of the communication you have with them where you're like, "This is just not a good fit for me"?**

About 25 to 30% of the time.

**You have an attrition rate like the Navy SEAL training!**

Sometimes you've really got to be conscious about whether the company wants to change as well because sometimes a company doesn't have bad values, but they have inherited bad processes or things that are disengaging for somebody coming into the organization. So you've really got to make the connection of whether it's a values misalignment or have they developed

learned behaviors or bad behaviors in their hiring processes that we need to tweak to improve their result? And so I see both.

I had one client that they needed to tweak... They had a bit of a bad reputation, but the reality of working there was really good. However, they were getting tied with a previous executive that had worked there three or four years ago who was a bad fit that everyone remembered. So we just had to help them recover from that. That's fine.

*If you allow people to show up as their whole selves at work and build the opportunity they want in your organization, you'll have a loyal employee for life.*

Then you'll get other clients that they'll ask you to recruit for them, you'll send them options, and then you never hear back. You never hear back. You don't have feedback for the person. That's a complete no-no for me. So if that's the case, I just won't go there.

A lot of the time, the tricky part is you don't always figure it out until you start dealing with them. So you've got to be okay to go as a team collectively and go, "Hey, that wasn't a great experience and these are the reasons why we don't feel like that client is going to change. Let's move on because we know that that's not going to be a values alignment for us."

I always put my team first and I say, "I don't want you getting up at work and not enjoying your job. I don't want you dragging your feet to deal with a client that doesn't appreciate the work and the great work that you do. It's important to me that you enjoy your work as well."

So you owe it to your team, too.

**Are you comfortable providing unsolicited feedback to a company that needs it?**

Yeah, I am.

We do a lot of executive search for senior roles. And the reason I love that is because when you start searching for the role, you go to the market and you talk about the company to the market. Ooh, you get a lot of insights there.

So you go back to them and you say, "Are you aware that people feel that there might be some burnout in your business, that you're under-resourced? Or are you aware you have a view of a very traditional model and people are craving more flexibility? Are these things that you are aware of?"

Business owners particularly just love hearing that because how often do you get that opportunity to have a lens shone on your business and be able to reflect on that? So I think feedback is super important.

I'm also open to feedback, too, and I think everyone needs to be because it's how we grow and it's how we get better in business,

## **The importance of outside perspective.**

So important.

## **The more you're in the trenches doing your own stuff, it doesn't matter who it is, Elon Musk right through to someone who's starting a business, soliciting and asking for specific critical feedback as much as possible.**

Absolutely. And not being afraid to sometimes say the unpopular thing. I like making people happy, but making people happy isn't always being liked. Sometimes people need to go through uncomfortable growth to be better, for their business to be better.

Someone on my team said to me once before, because I always just wanted to help, and they said to me, "Every time you help or you step in, you rob that person of the opportunity to grow. So you might think you're helping them, but you're actually just swooping in and fixing it. Let them fix it."

Also, let your team not be afraid to fail. I say that all the time: "I don't mind if you get it wrong, as long as you learn from it and you work with the client to fix it. That's fine." I think so often if we live in fear, we live in fear of failure, then we're not really learning because we can't be because we're not giving ourselves fully to whatever we're doing.

## **What do candidates want and what should businesses these days be offering?**

Candidates want to be connected to your business when they see you on social media, when they interview with you, and they want you to understand them as a person. This is really hard for businesses to do, particularly in markets like engineering or finance, where they're very logical sometimes in those markets.

But what they're looking for is for you to connect with them at multiple touchpoints. So when they see your brand, they want to build connection there and want to work for your business and learn more about what it's like to work there. A lot of the time, what you see is in the projects that a company does or very much vanilla stuff, which is still good, but as a person looking for a job, you want to know what's the candidate experience? What's it going to be like for me working in that company?

*Individuals want businesses to think about their personal circumstances.*

Then that carries on in the interview. When you interview, do I have rapport with this person? Do I feel like I could see them as an inspirational leader or a manager? And if you're firing questions at a person one after the other, not really giving them that opportunity to see in or to get a lens into your business.

Then I think the hardest thing that people are grappling with at the moment is individuals want businesses to think about their personal circumstances. And this is a huge shift that I've seen

since COVID. I think the media's made it so black and white where it's like everyone get back to the office; everyone's lazy at home. It's actually not that at all. It is people are now going, "I want a job that suits my life."

COVID let home life into the business world. And you can't just undo that now. So now you've got to go, "Okay, what is the model that works for me? Is it hybrid? Is it me being in the office and working from home some days? Is it me having every second week... On school holidays, working from home if I can, starting early, finishing early for school so I can at least do maybe school pickup, but I can't do drop off." Think of all of that stuff.

It's not a cookie cutter approach anymore, and that's what people want. They want to be seen. They want to see into your business, know what it's like to work there, and know that you see them as a person, too.

**I think one of the reasons Karan & Co. has been so successful in such a short period of time is that you're helping people build a *life*. You're not helping people build a career. If they're just building a career, they're going to be grabbing whatever vine's coming up or they're going to be getting frustrated and burnt out in that role.**

**But when they can build a life, it's so much more meaning; they have so much more energy. They can go and give back to the company as well. It's a win-win for everyone, right?**

Exactly. I think we were foolish if we ever thought we could separate career from our home life because the two intertwine. Each decision we make in one impacts the other.

This whole notion of work-life balance, well, I don't know. I think that that work-life balance notion sets us up to fail because is there ever really a balance? Because sometimes your kids are going to need you more because they're going through a tough time or they're sick or they're struggling at school, so your effort's going to need to be more there. But then you're going to need to have other times when your business needs you more.

So you need to be able to scale up and scale down when you need it as a parent and as a person running a business or building a career.

**Absolutely.**

**The quote for this episode from Milton Berle, I know it's a favorite of yours and mine, "If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door." What does that quote mean to you, and what doors have you been able to build that have been most effective for your life and your trajectory?**

When my daughter was three months old, I wanted to do recruitment, but I didn't want to be in an office at that stage. I wanted to juggle. At that time, my husband was in a role that had a lot of travel involved and things like that, and so I wanted to be home more while they were little.

There was nothing I could see that existed. This is pre-COVID. There wasn't that flexibility that I was hoping for.

So what I ended up doing is going, "Okay." I worked commission only for four years for a business, mainly from home. I was only meant to do it for a year. Four years later, I made it work. I worked three days with my daughter and my son around his kindy and her part-time daycare. And it wasn't easy, but it was my choice, and it was what I wanted for my life and the balance that I wanted in my life, which is different for everyone, by the way, and that is completely fine. But whatever you want, listen to it.

*Your children will take lessons from what you do well and what you don't do well. Both are equally important lessons.*

You're still going to have mum guilt and dad guilt and parent guilt because that's just ongoing because you never know if you're doing it right and you probably won't know. What is right, anyway? You're going to do your best. At the end of the day, your children will take lessons from what you do well and what you don't do well. Both are equally important lessons.

So I think for me, the opportunity to build something that isn't there yet and go, "Well, I want to work from home part-time." It was like, "What do you mean? No one does that." I was like, "Well, I want to. So I'll figure out how I can make it work." And I did. And then I wanted to have a business that was a remote model. It's now more hybrid because I do spend a lot of time going in and out of the city because I love seeing people, but the base is that the team can work remotely and work in and around their kids' hobbies and family commitments.

I get messages from mothers on the daily about what we're doing and just saying, "Oh, I wish I could find something like that. Do you have anything?" We don't have to advertise. If we wanted more recruiters to grow, we would have people. This is the thing businesses don't understand a lot of the time, is if you allow people to come up and show up as their whole selves at work and build the opportunity they want in your organization, you'll have a loyal employee for life.

**So good. You are the host of the Building Doors podcast. How has just having a podcast changed your life? Any big opportunities in particular that have come from that or in terms of the confidence or relationships you've been able to build?**

So many ways!

Podcasting is a game changer, and especially if you do it well. And, James, you've been a huge help to me. I have to thank you so much because you just run a fantastic podcast. Win the Day was the first podcast that I listened to and really got engaged with, and that was during COVID, and COVID was tough in recruitment. So I thought, "I want to create the Building Doors podcast to use what I know around careers and help other people see."

I have so many amazing conversations every day. I've always thought, "Geez, I wish this was recorded." That's the great thing about podcasts now: it can be. And people forget as well when you're in a room and relaxed. They're just so much more vulnerable and share.

When we are combating the highlight reel of social media, having those deep and intimate conversations and podcasts, firstly, it's fed my soul. It's helped me reconnect with who I am as a person and not just a business owner or a mum, but that human connection with people and recognizing that it doesn't matter how powerful, senior or executive, everyone's got their stuff, everyone's dealing... I always shared the saying with my kids, "Be kind because everyone is fighting a battle you know nothing about," and that doesn't just exist in one area of society. It exists *everywhere*.

So I think that podcasting has opened my eyes to different people in terms of their own personal struggles, but also connections, like I'm doing a speaking event coming up, my first speaking event, which I'm super excited about, around designing a career you'll love. So that's coming up in November. Then I've gone on other podcasts, here in Los Angeles at the Win the Day Mastermind coming up in a couple of days. I feel like the podcast opens up opportunities for you to connect with people who have shared values and can take things to the next level with you.

Once you have a podcast and you can provide value to people, they provide value back and it's just an amazing feeling. It's unlike anything else.

**Having a podcast means that every couple of weeks, you and I are meeting someone who's incredible, someone new, which gives us energy. Compare that to someone who's working in isolation the whole time or they're doing the same thing over and over again.**

**You need to have access to that *inspiration*. The best way to get that by far is to have a podcast, but it's not the only way. There's many ways you can do that, but I think it's a good lesson for people to be able to get out of their comfort zone and to do what you can to try and connect with people who are just high energy, who can help you be more successful in your life.**

Absolutely. When you are doing that, the great part about it is you're connecting with these high energy people, who are sharing great insights, and then you're sharing that with the world. \

It blew my mind that our podcast was listened to in over 25 countries. So there's people that I don't even know over the world that are getting something out of that, that might just wake up with a bit more of a spring in their step or that might be the day that they take action. That might be the day that they go, "You know what? I'm not happy in my job and I'm going to make a change, or I'm not spending enough time with my kids and that's important to me, so I'm going to change things."

If I've done that in some small way for one person, then that's success to me, too.

**You'd be walking down the street in Paris being like, "Wow, I didn't realize how popular I was in France!"**

Want an autograph!?

**How do you create fun experiences for your kids? Is there a process that you have or something you just focused on thinking about every year?**

We make it a priority. We go camping a lot. We have overseas trips. It's been a little while. This has been our first one in a few years.

I kind of always did it, even when I was working in New Zealand, we would tack on a family holiday at the end and then my husband would come with my son. Just make it a priority and ask yourself, "What do you want your children to remember?"

*Ask yourself, "What do you want your children to remember?"*

Because there's only going to be a small finite amount of time that they're going to want to hang out with you and then they're going to be teenagers and they're going to be in their room and then you're going to try and knock on their door and they're going to tell you to go away.

Or I would hope that when my kids are teens that they'll think I'm a pretty cool mum anyway!

So I think you've got to make it a focal point and you've got to plan for it, plan for it in your year and go, "Okay, when can we create some fun experiences as a family?" We have a tradition. We do Blues and Roots in Australia, which is a big music festival. We take the kids. It was just a great experience. We do that every year with our kids and then we're here and they've gone to Disneyland. I think you've got to make it a priority.

And it doesn't have to be expensive. It doesn't have to be an overseas trip. Camping is really affordable and it's still a great experience with the kids. So making that time. What do we work for? We don't just work and work and work. Our kids want to have that time with us. So just intertwining it into your life is really important. Planning for it when you plan your year.

**On your best day, what's an affirmation that you would write on a flashcard that you could show yourself on your worst day?**

This too shall pass. Stay the course.

Because I think sometimes when you're in those dark moments, you can get stuck there and it can feel hopeless. But then we even have that saying in our team, "This too shall pass. Just stay the course." Because often when things aren't going well, you don't know if the plan that you're doing is right and you don't know if you're doing anything right.



But if you stay the course and you believe in your values and believe in why you're doing something, you'll get there.

**I also think about that quote in the positive side about this too shall pass. If it's something good you're experiencing or just a fun moment with your kids, it's like, "Hey, this too shall pass." It's a reminder to connect with the good things that's going on as well. It's such a great quote.**

And just be there. Be in the moment.

How often are we hanging with our kids or coloring or doing homework and we're thinking, "Oh, my gosh. I've got this big meeting tomorrow." We're all guilty of it. There's no shame in it and we're never going to be perfect at it. But it's just always reconnecting and bringing yourself back to that.

This too shall pass. They won't be little forever.

**Well, let's now move into the Win the Day rocket round, 10 questions with some quick answers. You up for this one, Lauren?**

Yep. Yep. I'm up for a challenge.

**Number one. You and I love a good quote. What quote inspires you the most? Is it the Milton Berle quote for the episode?**

It actually is. It actually is because it's everything that I've done in life, absolutely. If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door. Then I also do like the be kind because everyone's fighting a battle you know nothing about.

**So good. Number two. Morning coffee or evening wine.?**

Oh, I have to say morning coffee. I can't survive without that. But wine, I probably could.

**Yeah, the wine's more of the luxury and it's the morning coffee that's just very nice to get the-**

The morning coffee gets me going. The wine's like if I have the time and can download and decompress. Then wine's a luxury.

**And that means you need more coffee the next day.**

Yeah, yeah, exactly. So it's a self-fulfilling thing.

**Number three. What's one bit of advice you would give your 18-year-old self?**

I would say what got you here won't get you there, so keep growing.

**Number four. What book do you gift the most or is there a book that contributed most to the mindset you have today?**

I like How to Win Friends and Influence People. That's probably a good one. I should say Think and Grow Rich as well because I have read that recently and it was brilliant from... Yeah, and there's a recent one. There's so many. I gift books all the time, so every time someone comes on my podcast generally I'll gift them a book because books are such a beautiful gift to give. But How to Win Friends and Influence People was the... I need to think of the first book that got me into reading and it was that.

**Came out within one year of Think and Grow Rich, 1937 and 1938. Very interesting time for the world. Those two books are absolute all-time classics.**

Number five. Was there a vulnerability you once hid within that became your superpower?

I think being emotionally and really caring about people. I think for a long time, particularly in the industry working in construction and a heavy industry, I thought that that was a sign of weakness, but now I see the empathy and compassion is just a sign of a good leader.

**Mm-hmm. Number six. What's one thing you've learned about failure?**

It's constant.

**It is, right? Every day.**

Every day, and you've got to go with it. Don't fear it because if you fear it, you'll be constantly met with disappointment. Failure is constant because it's how we learn. It's how we grow.

**When we win the day, it doesn't mean that you're immune from scars. So often you have those scars. Sometimes it feels like every day, but we do what we can to make sure we keep moving forward.**

Number seven. If you could sit on a park bench and have a conversation with someone alive or dead, who would it be?

I really like Oprah. I would love to sit down with Oprah. I just think so much of her compassion, for me, the connection she has with people, she's got this beautiful energy. It would definitely be Oprah, just to hang out with her.

**Number eight. What tool or resource best helps you run your life or your business?**

Ooh, that's a good one. Tool or resource. I would say... It's not coffee. That is a really good question and it's kind of stumped me. Tool or resource that best helps me run my business. I

would have to say Teams. I don't love Teams, but I think Teams helps us stay connected during the day if you want to have a quick chat or something like that. So I think working in a hybrid model where we are remote, I still need to see their faces and we still need to connect, so I think Teams is something that's been a game changer for us.

**Number nine. Share one thing on your bucket list.**

I think doing a TED Talk. That's on my bucket list. I would love to do that. A good friend of ours, Libby, recently did one. I was watching it. Super proud and I would love to do that one day.

**Yeah. Libby's got poise beyond her years, doesn't she?**

She does.

**It's amazing.**

She's such a natural. I was watching every five minutes on the video, I'd message her, "I'm so proud. This is so great." I think my husband was like, "Who are you messaging?" "Oh, I'm like messaging her," while I'm watching the video. But I think that's just... I love speaking and that's one thing I'd love to share the message.

**Shout out to Libby Redden. We're going to leave a link to her TED talk in the show notes of this video, especially if you've got young people or you're a young person yourself. It's an amazing TED Talk.**

**Final question. Number ten. What's one thing you do to win the day?**

One thing I do to win the day is constantly show up with good energy. So no matter what's going on in my life, I will always bring my energy for the people that I care about and for the people that I am here to serve.

**I can vouch for that. You definitely do.**

Thanks, James.

**Well, Lauren, thank you so much. There are a bunch of ways to connect with Lauren Karan and we'll link to all of these in the show notes. You can follow her on Instagram at the Building Doors podcast. Connect with her on LinkedIn. She's crushing it on LinkedIn at Lauren Karan, and learn more about her business at [karanandco.com.au](http://karanandco.com.au). Again, all that and more will be linked in the show notes. Lauren, I can't thank you enough for coming on. It's been amazing.**

Thank you so much for having me. It's been awesome. Thanks, James.