

## **EPISODE 21: Transforming Client Resistance into Action—with Ellen Grace Henson**

Deb Zahn: Hi. I want to welcome you to Episode 21 of the Craft of Consulting Podcast. My guest today is Ellen Grace Henson, and she is a consultant. She works with companies and organizations that have products or services, and she helps make them more customer-centric. She does that across the entire life cycle of the customer, which increases customer loyalty and increases their margins and their revenues. So we're going to talk a little bit today about how she does that. We're also going to talk about client resistance, and that is when you go into a client organization or a company and there is resistance to what you're trying to do. How do you recognize that, and how do you ultimately transform it so that you can help the clients move forward and achieve their goals? She is also the president of Women in Consulting, which is an organization that helps women who are consultants around many phases and challenges that they experience in their consulting business, and she's going to talk about that as well. So we have a whole bunch of great stuff in this episode. Let's get started.

I want to welcome Ellen Grace Henson to the show. Welcome. Thank you so much for joining me.

Ellen G. Henson: It's a pleasure to be here, and I really appreciate the opportunity. Thank you.

Deb Zahn: Wonderful. Well, why don't we start off and tell my listeners what type of consulting you do.

Ellen G. Henson: I started my consulting career as a product management professional. I help my clients better understand their markets and customers so they can build better products, and I recently expanded my service offerings to encompass cross-functional teams, helping business leaders and those teams engage in strategic conversations regarding what's at the core of their company, their customers. Further, I help bring clarity on who the customer is, what the customer needs, wants, and is willing to pay for, while aligning the organization on everyone's role in delivering value to the customer. When teams are more effectively aligned on common goals and engaged in their work, the company experiences better customer satisfaction, impacts on profitability, and other key business performance metrics, including, of course, retention of their employees.

Deb Zahn: That's wonderful, and I love how clear and crisp that statement is in terms of what is it you're trying to do with your clients. I can't think of many types of consulting that doesn't apply to. So do you find, when you're working with companies or organizations to do that, is it that they need to just go deeper into a customer focus, or for some is it a reorientation?

Ellen G. Henson: For some it is going deeper into a customer-centric perspective or customer focus, and for others it is a significant reorientation, impacting how their teams work together and potentially even their culture. A lot of companies believe

themselves to be customer-centric and are operating to a great extent with concern about what it is their customers need and want from them. Oftentimes, though, when companies refer to themselves as being customer-centric, what they really mean is that they're user-centric and that their product is focused on user needs and delivering feature and function that the user will find valuable in their work. It's important, though, that companies look at the full customer life cycle and all aspects of the customer. Customers aren't just users. Customers are also buyers, influencers, and users.

So a company needs to assure that whether the customer breaks down into multiple individuals or is one individual who's making all the decisions and using the service, they need to assure that every experience that customer has with that company is an effective experience, is a satisfying experience, from when the company's first trying to attract customers with their marketing efforts and sales efforts to engagement with the company, they're making it easy to do business with them, through product or service use, and of course into support. Oftentimes, companies can break down in the customer experience that they're delivering at any point in that life cycle, and so I help assure that everyone in the company is oriented on delivering value to the customer at every point and phase in the life cycle.

Deb Zahn: That's great, and I know we've all had the experience, I certainly have, where I got a product or a service that I really liked, but then I needed to talk to customer service. And that was not a customer-centric experience, and now I've soured on the company. I shouldn't have because I really like the product. So that's wonderful. What a great thing to focus on. You also help other consultants, and in particular women consultants, through an organization called Women in Consulting. Can you describe that a little bit, what that is?

Ellen G. Henson: Yes, of course. Thanks for the opportunity. I love talking about Women in Consulting. We are a professional association, really a community, a community of female business leaders and our allies, focused on building our own businesses and also supporting other members in developing successful businesses. Consulting is a pretty broad field, and our membership encompasses a lot of different professional disciplines. Certainly marketing, coaching, product management. We have some lawyers. We have financial advisors. A very wide range, as I said, of professional expertise. The core thing, though, is that we all face similar challenges in developing our businesses, and Women in Consulting provides that community, that mutual support, educational content, and opportunity to develop strong relationships with other consultants that potentially could lead to expanding of our businesses.

Deb Zahn: That's great, and that's actually how I found you. I follow Women in Consulting on social media and love all the postings that you do. So for my listeners in the show notes, I will actually put links so you can go find it, and you can find Ellen as well. But yeah, it's a wonderful organization that I think is really getting to the

heart of some of the challenges that women in consulting face. So thank you very much for doing that. That's a great service.

When we talked, we talked about a particular topic that I don't know a single consultant who hasn't faced at some point, and if you haven't faced it, you're going to, which is how do you both recognize and then ultimately transform client resistance? That is resistance to doing the work, or resistance to where you're trying get to, or resistance to the steps that need to be taken. It shows up in a lot of different ways. But how, as a consultant, do we help get past that, transform it into action, and help them move forward? So we thought that would be a perfect topic to talk about because everybody needs to learn how to do this. So let's start with, particularly for those folks who haven't experienced it yet, what does it look like? How does it tend to show up in engagements? This is a tricky question because sometimes it's blatant, and then sometimes it's really subtle and you have to look for clues to see that it's actually happening. So how do you see it tend to show up?

Ellen G. Henson: You've laid out the problem space really well. Thanks so much for that. Earlier in my career, I had a tendency to work with an executive, understand more deeply the executive's perspective on the organizational pain points, develop a solution, something to help address those pain points and drive the organization to greater success, and once we agreed I was like, "OK, let's go." Because we had the executive's support and everything else, I made some assumptions about how the broader team would view myself and my team coming in. When I did encounter resistance, sometimes it was like you were saying, kind of mysterious. It's like, "What is going on here? I know something's not working right, and I don't understand why or how."

One client, there was a team that I was trying to get some time with. I wanted to work with them to get even deeper insights into the challenges, and nobody was available. People had a host of excuses about why they couldn't meet with me. They were too busy. They had a release coming. They just didn't have time on their calendar. Finally, someone in the organization told me that their boss had actually instructed them not to meet with me-

Deb Zahn: I've had that.

Ellen G. Henson: ...and not to provide me with any support. I found this very puzzling because I'm very motivated to help. I'm very motivated to see my clients and everyone who works at the client company succeed, so I couldn't understand why they couldn't see this and what was going on. I admit to having had some attitude about what is wrong with these people? Don't they know I'm here to help? I've actually heard other consultants express that frustration in a similar way. After encountering this and really trying to step back and understand what was going on, I realized that when a consultant is brought into a company, whomever it is that's bringing that consultant in doesn't always do a very good job of explaining the goals and the roles in the project. Depending on what was occurring at that

company previous to this consulting engagement, there might be resistance based on political fear.

Deb Zahn: Sure.

Ellen G. Henson: People are like, "Oh, a consultant's coming in. Am I going to lose my job?" or "I'm angry with the direction that this company is taking, so I'm going to just resist anybody who comes in to try to talk to me about doing something differently." There's just a whole range, or sometimes it's a matter of, "I wasn't involved in helping to shape this project. I don't feel comfortable supporting it."

Deb Zahn: Right. Right, and it could even be, "I have a million things on my plate. No one has told me that this is a priority relative to other things. So now I'm going to pick what matters to me. And I'm not picking this."

Ellen G. Henson: That's an excellent summation. That's a very, very common symptom because most people are working very hard, and whether or not the organization recognizes that or recognizes the priorities that that person's engaged with, that is the analysis a lot of people go through. So what I realized, finally, I came to some point where it's like, "Oh, it's not about them not understanding how valuable I am. It's about me being more effective at getting their input and understanding where they're at and meeting them where they are at and understanding what they need to get out of whatever project or engagement or initiative I'm involved in." So I've gotten much better at sitting down with people prior to full launch of an engagement and getting their insights and getting their input and making sure that that's a continuing part of my practice.

Deb Zahn: Which sounds like-

Ellen G. Henson: It's very interesting-

Deb Zahn: Oh, I'm sorry, go ahead.

Ellen G. Henson: Go ahead.

Deb Zahn: I was going to say, that sounds like as much of a mindset shift as anything else, which is it's not on them, and I can't do anything until they get their act together. It's oh, yeah, one of the purposes of a consultant is to transform resistance. That's one of the reasons that we actually come in, even if the client doesn't know that that's what we're doing. So I think that mindset shift of what our role is is really critical, because you can't get to good tactics until you do that.

Ellen G. Henson: Very nicely stated. I find that most challenges involve a mindset shift, and I can't wave a magic wand and change that person, no matter what the situation is. So typically we need to look to ourselves to see what we can do to shift the dynamic, to very clearly identify not just the symptoms but the root cause for

any existing dynamic, and then shift the way we're behaving or I'm behaving or you're behaving to help generate a shift in other people.

Deb Zahn: That's great, and what are some of your...Let's say you recognize it, and sometimes you have to be a little seasoned as a consultant to say, and I love your example of no one's getting back to you and setting up a time with you, because that's a great one. I mean, well played. That is definitely a good way to express resistance, and so you've recognized it. Let's say you recognize it. You know that it's resistance. What are some of your go-to tactics for then transforming that so they can get to a point where they're talking about strategy and action?

Ellen G. Henson: One of the things I make sure to do now is have the hiring executive or the decision-making executive work with me to communicate at the beginning what the goals are for the project and also to have that executive help me set up some initial meetings with leaders inside the company so that I can get the insights and the perspective from those leaders and get their buy-in. Then once we have that buy-in, it becomes a lot easier to reach other people in the organization to get their support and buy-in. Especially with the work I do now, where it's cross-functional, it's not just a matter of influencing one team or getting buy-in from one team. I deeply believe that cross-functional buy-in is critical for long-term success of the business and making sure that the hiring executive helps me understand who are the internal leaders, the internal influencers, and then that that person helps assure that I get time initially with those influencers and leaders so that we can begin the work from a more effective perspective.

Deb Zahn: That's great, and I sometimes also will ask...I often ask, what's the dynamic? So explain to me the dynamic of how this works among the different leaders and of trying to get it a little bit of what's going on in the culture of the organization or the company. Sometimes executives can't have that conversation and sometimes they can. They're like, "Well, we're just what we are." As opposed to if you can get them talking about it, then you can get a little deeper into it. So how do you do that? What if you're in a situation, and I've seen this quite a bit, particularly when you're working cross-functionally, which I agree is critical, and you have two leaders who are purposely working in silos because it's easier, it's more comfortable. Maybe they have some dynamics between each other, but they don't really want to work together. How do you approach that? Because I've seen that a lot in client engagements.

Ellen G. Henson: That's an excellent question and can be a daunting challenge. Sometimes, as you said, the person who brings me in might understand or be articulate about the existing dynamic. Sometimes the person who brings a consultant in might be fairly new to the organization themselves.

Deb Zahn: Yeah.

Ellen G. Henson: So again, it's a matter of stepping back, understanding the overall goals for the project. Sometimes it's a matter of stepping back, clarifying the overall goals for the initiative, and then assuring that I get the executive's support to get on the calendar and have some one-on-one time with each of those leaders and really give them an opportunity to tell me their perspective on what's going on and what the challenges are. I find that assuring people of confidentiality and anonymity is important to really digging into some of those issues, and what I typically do, as well, is I have what I call neutral frameworks. One of the values of being customer-centric, the customer is a natural and neutral focus for common goals and collaboration. Sometimes instead of talking about, OK, what are the issues in your department and what are your issues in working with that department, I start the conversation by saying, "Let's talk about who the customer is and your view of what the customer needs from this organization and how we can be more effective at delivering what the customer needs."

Sometimes it has to be take out the personalities, take out the competitiveness, and build that mindset of there's something outside of myself, there's something outside of ourselves, there's a higher purpose that we have reason to collaborate on. That's something that I think there's a lot of work done on organizational dynamics and how important it is to have that joint purpose, that higher purpose. Bringing it back to talking about the customer, bringing it back to talking about the company's values, the company's purpose and focus, can oftentimes move people past the individual conflicts and frustration.

Deb Zahn: That's right. It's easier now because you've switched up what the frame of the conversation is. It's easier to get to a we conversation and not an us versus them conversation.

Ellen G. Henson: Exactly. Exactly. That's exactly right, and it's another one of those, as you were saying earlier, kind of shifting the mindset, shifting the space. I've recently started talking about creating the space, and sometimes the conversations that need to happen aren't the conversations or the influence at that top of mind. We all have that. There's some external stimulus that's frustrating us or making us mad or unhappy in some way, and we need to shift it to what can I control, what can I contribute towards supporting that higher level goal or purpose?

Deb Zahn: That's great. I love that. I think you had mentioned when we talked before that you also set up some structures of ways that people can come together across what is often silos, so in this cross-functional way. Can you describe how you do that?

Ellen G. Henson: Absolutely. Again, part of the key is to get people to talk about the customer and what the customer needs and what is the company's key value proposition to that customer? Sometimes companies don't really fully have their act together on aligning around a common definition or a shared definition of the customer and aligning clearly around the company's purpose and goals. So it

might be necessary to have that conversation first, and I do have frameworks that. One of the key frameworks I use I call the Wheel of Value™. It's a very simple framework, and it makes sense to people. It's basically a circle with the customer at the center, and all the wedges on the wheel represent functional groups, including partners, including HR, including finance. Every person in the company and every functional group in the company has a potential impact on the customer, so it's important to include all of them. Even if they don't see themselves as directly customer facing, they have an impact, and so they need to be part of that conversation.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Ellen G. Henson: So the Wheel of Value™ is a framework that I use to bring cross-functional teams together. The exercise is pretty straightforward. What is it that you and your team do to contribute value to the customer? What can you offer other teams to support them, and what do you need from other teams? You talk about a mindset shift. This is exactly what that does. I've been so gratified at how many people participating in what I call Alignment Think Tanks™ around the Wheel of Value™. Their eyes open. They go, "Wow. I never thought of it that way before." It's transformative to put people into a different space, to create a different framework or a different space for talking about goals and for talking about working together.

Deb Zahn: Well, even calling it Alignment Think Tanks™, which is the coolest name ever, is fantastic because otherwise what are these typically called? Meetings, which is snooze inducing.

Ellen G. Henson: Right.

Deb Zahn: Like it's just another meeting, and you can decide whether or not to go. But an alignment think tank, you're essentially branding the process as something different, something out of the ordinary, and I think that's fantastic. What else happens in those think tanks that get people out of their normal space and into this new created space?

Ellen G. Henson: There's a couple of things. One is everyone gets listened to. Everyone has an opportunity to present themselves, their role, their questions about other people's roles, and as we facilitate these think tanks, we assure that everybody has that opportunity to step forward, express themselves, and be listened to. It's also important that people understand the work we're doing in the context of Alignment Think Tanks™ will have a result. It's not just let's get together and have a fantasy conversation.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Ellen G. Henson: It really is about the result of everybody working together more effectively and everybody really getting a perspective on the broader organization. People are

not necessarily happy working in silos, and I have found that many people feel more engaged when they understand a larger context. Oftentimes, also, conflicts can arise across groups or between groups because they don't understand the role that that group plays. They don't understand the vocabulary, and they might feel actually uncomfortable because of that lack of understanding. We tend to, as a species, to avoid discomfort.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Ellen G. Henson: So creating this space to have these conversations, helping people understand that the conversations will have a positive result, that it's not just fantasy conversation, that we are going to do some process work and that we're going to together define more effective solutions for them to collaborate and operate together against that common set of goals, and that it's not one team being more important than the other. Bringing forward that everyone in the organization has an impact on the customer and thus an impact on the success of the company is very high value in terms of developing mutual respect, which has to be a basis, one of the baselines, for effective collaboration.

Deb Zahn: That's right, and that gets you into, then, culture, also. So obviously, culture has a lot to do with whether or not you experience resistance or they can get past resistance. So how does understanding how an organization's culture is today or where you might need to move it, because it sounds like part of what you're doing is you're shifting culture, that you're essentially shifting towards we're all contributing rather than we're a company and we each have these functional things that we do. So how does understanding culture and how it operates help you as a consultant get people past resistance and into doing things that they want to do? I like to ask big questions.

Ellen G. Henson: That's great. That's great. Part of it is to determine whether or not the executive team is aware of any what I'll call cultural drag in the organization and whether or not the executive team is committed to transforming the organization, not just functionally but with the cultural baselines that are necessary to contribute to a higher level of performance. Because it's that executive commitment. No matter whether you're able to help people engage up and down the hierarchy, if the executive team is not committed to delivering and supporting the transformation, there's very little possibility of success. I have to assure myself and assure the company that they have that level of commitment.

Deb Zahn: That's great, and I love the sort of cultural baseline. That's a great way to describe. You got to have some of the right ingredients in order for it to work, and they have to be at enough of a dose or a level that it actually can have the impact it needs to have. That's a great way to think about it.

Ellen G. Henson: Over the last couple of decades, maybe the last three decades, we've seen a big shift in the definition of leadership and what skills and attributes effective leaders need. That is pretty awesome because a lot of that shift is more towards

positively supporting human beings and their experience at work. I don't want to get all high level academic. It makes a lot of sense though that we've evolved that way because the industrial revolution is not that old, and so it takes a while for us as a society to kind of work through different levels of effectiveness. We spent a lot of time figuring out the functional level of how companies need to fit together, and now we're about to be higher on Maslow's hierarchy and worry more about the emotional connection, the empathy, people's productivity not from a machine perspective but from a human perspective, and all of the things that come together to enable a full experience and a full contribute to the company as a community. That's very exciting to see, and it can be challenging for all of us to be more authentically human at work and to be more authentically engaged at work.

Deb Zahn: That's right, and part of what we have to do as consultants is we have to help leaders who need it, and they don't all, embrace that more or point in a direction if they want to do it and they're not sure how. Or if something's not going well and we see an opportunity for them to do leadership in a little bit different way that's going to get them what they want, that's part of what we do as consultants, and that's also how you transform resistance into the beautiful world of strategy and action. Because we're often in a position, particularly if we're the trusted advisor of an executive, to be able to say to them, "I think you're going to get a better response if you look at it and feel about it and respond to it like this."

Ellen G. Henson: Yes.

Deb Zahn: To me, those are the magic moments.

Ellen G. Henson: Yes. I want to say that I don't go into an organization with a full plan for Alignment Think Tanks™. The approach we take is very flexible and highly adaptable to the needs of the client. So while it's pretty standard to do some exercises around clarity on a shared understanding of the customer and also the Wheel of Value™, we can add or design or take away particular exercises, again based on the real needs of the organization. Sometimes that involves myself collaborating with other consultants. I can't be an expert in everything, although I am interested in almost everything.

Deb Zahn: Exactly.

Ellen G. Henson: It's important to find partners who can complement the work I do and whose work I can also complement. People who might have much more expertise in programmatic engagement. People who might have more expertise in training managers to support their teams in engaging more effectively. I mean, there's a lot of different techniques, the appreciation culture, that type of thing, which an organization might need more focus on. Sometimes organizations need to be flexible. We as consultants also need to be flexible and adaptable. I've been in situations where, prior to actually going on site to work with teams in a think

tank, I thought we had a pretty good plan, and I got agreement that that was the plan. Then on site, something might come up, and the client might say, "Oh, we really need to go deeper on that." So I've designed afternoon workshops over lunch just to accommodate that deeper insight into what the client needs.

Deb Zahn: Yeah.

Ellen G. Henson: That's one of the things I think, again, the workshops or any approach we take as consultants to supporting the success of our clients, has to be based not on a rigid perspective and us telling them. Rather, there needs to be an approach that leverages the expertise, the insights, and the experience that our client's team members have. Because without them having an opportunity to participate and developing buy-in based on trust, no initiative, no matter how well designed, will be effective without buy-in from the people who have to do the work.

Deb Zahn: Right, and I think you're pointing directly at a common mistake that I think a lot of consultants make, particularly maybe at the beginning, which is you can't go find out general information, or even in depth information, go lock yourself in a room, and design the whole thing as if human beings aren't involved.

Ellen G. Henson: Right.

Deb Zahn: And think that you're going to airlift it, plop it down, and say, "Behold what I have done. Now enjoy it." It is that flexibility. It is that back and forth. Because even if you look at how resistance shows up, the solutions are different, depending on what type of resistance it is and the context. So you might solve it by taking someone to lunch and establishing a personal connection with them, like two human beings are going to sit down and figure each other out and find common ground. Or you might have to solve it by a think tank where you bring everybody together and they all have to work really hard to figure it out. It depends on what shows up, and you can't have these preconceived notions of this is what I do. I'm going to show up. I'm going to do that, and you either love it, because you should, or you don't love it and that's because you don't know any better.

Ellen G. Henson: Consulting as a profession actually has somewhat of a reputation of coming in, sharing their brilliance, and going away.

Deb Zahn: Exactly.

Ellen G. Henson: I was at an event for an organization called Women in Product, and these were all product management professionals, some very early in that phase of their career, some more experienced. When I talked about being a consultant, I actually saw resistance in that audience almost immediately. I was saying, "Well, what's your impression of consultants?" "Oh, well, they come in. They share their brilliance. They write a report, and then they go." And I say, "Oh, really?"

Then I talked about my experience as a product management professional, how I've written requirements documents, I've done a lot of customer validation work, I've helped transform the way a company thinks about their customer. They say, "You've written requirement documents? You're the first consultant I've ever met who's written a requirements document."

Deb Zahn: And then they don't want you to go away.

Ellen G. Henson: Right. So we have to be very careful, again, to connect on a human level and to connect in a way that shows we understand the challenges people face day-to-day and that we're really there to help, and that we're not there just to share our brilliance, no matter how brilliant we may be.

Deb Zahn: Right, and particularly as accomplished professionals who become consultants who know how to actually do things. That is often not the experience that a lot of people have of consultants, who might have people come in who are very, very smart and can think quickly and have great tools at their disposal, but they haven't seen it all. They haven't encountered this problem before, which you're not going to find the solution in your toolbox. You're going to have to think on your feet, and that's a whole different thing when professionals become consultants. So what other mistakes do you see, particularly when it comes to being able to transform resistance? Is there another mistake that you see a lot that you'd love to never see again?

Ellen G. Henson: It can be very valuable to ask individuals their perspective on the dynamic in the company.

Deb Zahn: Yep.

Ellen G. Henson: Not just get that information from the executives, but to get the feet on the street. "So what's going on? What's happening? Tell me what's going on." And to also understand what types of efforts the company has engaged in in the past, to see how do people feel about that. Do they perceive those as having been successful? Sincere? Insincere? Failures? And if they failed, why? That's another way to gain buy-in, and it's also, though, a very important way to get insight.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Ellen G. Henson: If we're going to be effective with our clients, really understanding them as deeply as possible, I believe, is one source of that effectiveness. Independent, though, of encountering resistance or working with clients, there's certain things that consultants can do to be more effective business people as well, which is one area of focus for Women in Consulting. I see a lot of new consultants, and I was this way myself, very resistant to hiring outside help.

Deb Zahn: Yeah.

Ellen G. Henson: I think, oh, I have to conserve cash. I have to do all this work. I've got to do my own books. I've got to do my own marketing. I've got to do all my own meeting schedules. All that kind of stuff. And what in fact can happen, if you can hire a virtual assistant or somebody else to help you, make sure you have a bookkeeper, all those things, that frees you up to spend more time with prospects and clients so that you can gain the insight that you need to be more effective and contribute to their success.

Deb Zahn: Hear, hear. I love that. I'm a healthcare consultant. In the healthcare world, when we talk about...There's a phrase called top of license, which essentially means you want physicians only doing what physicians can only do. You want nurses only doing what...You don't want your well-trained nurse practitioners making reminder phone calls about appointments because there's other people that can do that.

Ellen G. Henson: That's right.

Deb Zahn: I think the same way when it comes to your consulting business, which is I should not spend time trying to pretend like I'm an accountant. One, I'm going to end up in jail because I don't know what I'm doing, but that's not the best use of my time. The things that only I can do are to show up and add value to my clients, or to do business development. But if I'm always just scheduling and doing things like that, then that's time I can't get back.

Ellen G. Henson: Right.

Deb Zahn: So I love that. I love that as advice. Any other advice you would give to new consultants that are coming in and hanging up their shingle?

Ellen G. Henson: Be confident in the value that you bring. Be clear on the value that you deliver, and know your own worth. Which maybe those are similar, but what I think oftentimes gets in...we get in our way more than any client or other condition, and oftentimes we get in our own way because we don't feel confident. We're not clear on how we can help and the best ways that we can help, and we also need to be open and understand that an engagement with a client isn't a one way. It's not us pushing out knowledge. It's us opening up to jointly improve. I sometimes teach at a local university, and I always end my class by saying, "Thank you for the opportunity to learn with you."

Deb Zahn: That's great. I love that, and I do think that's exactly what you do with clients. So let me ask you one last question, because I like to ask everybody this. I do firmly, firmly believe that life balance matters, that work is great, but it's one part of your life. So how do you either try or actually create balance in your own life?

Ellen G. Henson: I love the work I do, and I love the impact of the work I do on myself as a human being and other human beings. So I don't find the work I do that stressful. At the

same time, there's other things I love. I've got good family and friends. I make sure I spend time with them and in a way that's enriching for all of us. I wanted to be careful about that because enriching...Long ago I learned that there's not just quality time, but there's also quantity time. I'll tell you a quick personal anecdote. I fostered a young woman. She was 15 when she came to live with me. She's in her early 40s now. When she first came to live with me, I would say I was in the depth of my workaholic years, and she was the one who said to me, "You know what? It's not just about quality time. It's about quantity time."

Deb Zahn: Oh, love it. That's why teenagers exist, to help us understand those things.

Ellen G. Henson: Yes. Yes, and I think it's also important to find activities that feed you. I'm considering joining a chorus right now. I'm looking for things that are not work, that let me engage in activities that I truly enjoy, and singing is one of those things, and that also kind of gets me out. One of the challenges we continually hear about from members in Women in Consulting is the risk of isolation. A lot of consultants are independent or solopreneurs, and it can be very easy to get isolated and spend a lot of time in your office by yourself. So you need to find activities that you find gratifying that get you out, whether it's volunteering, whether it's joining different types of groups that engage in activities, hiking, etc. Certainly I love engaging with children, and I have a dog. That dog keeps me moving, keeps me getting up and moving around.

Deb Zahn: That's wonderful. That's wonderful. I love that advice. Well, Ellen, thank you so much for joining me today. This was absolutely wonderful, and so many gems in there that people can take. In particular, I want to point out one, because you talked about how important clarity is, and again, your statement at the beginning about what it is that you do for clients. For folks who are new and still figuring out your value proposition, listen to that again, because that was a really good example of how crisp and clear you want to be in terms of what it is that you do for clients. So thank you for bringing that to us, and all this other wisdom.

Ellen G. Henson: You're welcome, and thank you. I appreciate the opportunity. I love learning, and I love sharing. If any lessons I've learned already can help someone be more successful, I'm gratified.

Deb Zahn: That's wonderful. Well, that's why we're here. Thanks so much.

Deb Zahn: Thanks so much for listening to Episode 21 of the Craft of Consulting Podcast. Hit subscribe. I definitely don't want you to miss any of the great episodes that're going to be coming up, and I'd also love it if you'd leave a review. You can leave a review and tell me what you think about the podcast, and you can also suggest topics that you'd like to hear podcasts about in the future. That'll help me as I plan out podcasts that're coming up for the rest of this year and next year. Then also, don't forget to go to [Craftofconsulting.com](http://Craftofconsulting.com). Lot of great information on there that I update all the time to help you be a successful

consultant faster, and as always, because life balance means so much, to also have the life that you want. So thanks so much. I will talk with you next time. Bby-bye.