



EP284_Christy Barker

Lisa Nichols 00:03

Chromosomes, little strands of nucleic acids and proteins are the fundamental genetic instructions that tell us who we are at birth. Most people are born with 46 chromosomes. But each year in the United States, about 6000 people are born with an extra chromosome, making them a person with Down Syndrome. If you've ever encountered someone with Down Syndrome, you know that they are some of the kindest, most joyful people you will ever meet. They truly have something extra.

My name is Lisa Nichols and I have spent the last 24 years as both the CEO of Technology Partners and as the mother to Ally. Ally has something extra in every sense of the word. I have been blessed to be by her side as she impacts everyone, she meets. Through these two important roles as CEO and mother to Ally, I have witnessed countless life lessons that have fundamentally changed the way I look at the world. While you may not have an extra chromosome, every leader has something extra that defines who you are.

Join me as I explore this something extra in leaders from all walks of life and discover how that difference in each of them has made a difference in their companies, their families, their communities and in themselves. If you'd liked this episode today, please go to Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen and leave us a five-star rating.

I am delighted to have Christy Barker on the show today. Christy is the Vice President and Chief Information Officer at Olin Corporation. Well, Christy, welcome to the Podcast.

Christy Barker 01:22

I'm so glad we're doing this. And it's we've tried like getting this scheduled a few times.

Lisa Nichols 01:37

We have probably at least six months. So, I am grateful. And you are one busy woman. I have heard your schedule for the day. I know you're just back-to-back to back. So, I'm just honored that you're making the time. But yeah.

Christy Barker 02:08

I am too. Thank you, Lisa.

Lisa Nichols 02:10

Well, I'd love to kind of go back and go, how did we people always want to know, how did you get to know this person? You and I have known each other for a very long time. And as you say we were super young when we first met.

Christy Barker 02:23

I know. And you know, I think in I was married? So, you met Johnny? And, and I met Greg? But I think it was before I had kids. So, you know, it had to have been 25 or more years ago.

Lisa Nichols 02:42

Crazy. We were at a gala.

Christy Barker 02:45

We were at a Junior Achievement gala.

Lisa Nichols 02:47

We were at a Junior Achievement Gala. And just.

Christy Barker 02:51

All dressed up.

Lisa Nichols 02:52

All dressed up, yeah. So anyway, I love I love it, though, when you know, and then we've just remained friends. And it's just it's wonderful when we were in some organizations together and that sort of thing, which are really fun. But, you know, your award-winning CIO, I know you wouldn't say that about yourself. But you are we're gonna talk about that just a little bit. You were an ORBIE finalist. In fact, you weren't ORBIE National finalist. Last year, and I was very privileged and honored to go to that in Boston. And so, you know, you've just had a tremendous career journey. But before we get into that, Christy, I want to really chat about growing up. And I really want you if you would. I would love for you to talk about your sweet mama. Because I know your mama was such an inspiration to you, and she still inspires you to this day.

Christy Barker 03:10

She does. I mean, you know, we have lunch. So, we chatted a little bit about, about this and, and, you know, oftentimes people ask me, you know. Who, who had some big impacts on your life and, and not just that, like in your career. And there's been some great leaders that I have been exposed to. And great people that I've learned business skills from business acumen, technology, but you know, who I am as a person truly comes down to, you know, my parents and in particular, my mom, you know. She was a single mom. My parents divorced when they were young. When I was young, they were young, too. And, and, and, you know, when that happens, you know, I think it can be so easy for parents to get so caught up in the busyness of their own lives and things that can happen and my mom is just from the inside out, she exudes positivity. I mean, and self-improvement. And no matter how hard the challenge and we had challenges we had no, you know, you know, no money. And, you know, there were times when we were hungry. And I was, you know, wearing secondhand clothes. And, you know, it was it was a very humbling, you know, childhood, you know, but she just, you know. I remember being in, in the car in the house, and she put in these little cassette tapes back, I mean, I mean, think about this, this was back in the late 70s, in the 80s. And my mom's listening to Tony Robbins, I mean, back when he was just getting his start. But you know, this idea of, you know, how do you overcome challenges in your life. And so, everything that I am, is really built on the way that my mom has lived her life. And I'm emulating that, that same attitude and graciousness and joy, and not getting destroyed by the hard things that happen to us, you know, every day.

Lisa Nichols 06:08

You know, Chrissy, as you're talking, I'm just thinking about that old adage that things like that are caught more than they're taught. You can teach it, but your mom lived it. And she was the model, you know, for you.

Christy Barker 06:24

And just such, you know, demonstrated and now we're, you know, we talk about leadership and what we're doing she truly at such a young age for her demonstrated what real leadership was. And, you know, being knowing that she was a role model for me and my younger sister. I mean, it's, it really is amazing that, you know, she, she still tells a story. I mean, she was an administrative assistant at a big hospital. And she would work and sometimes she'd have to work on the weekends and to come in and catch up. And she would bring me and my sister in into the office with her. And, you know, her desk was right outside the big boardroom of this hospital. And, you know, we would go my sister, and I would go into the boardroom, and my mom says, Christy, I still remember like peeking in there, and you've got stuffed animals sitting in chairs around the boardroom table, and you've got papers in front of all of them, and you're standing there in front of table, like, leading, and she's said. She remembers thinking to herself, you're like, okay, I think, you know, I see, I see something here. You know, just she, she really just supported the growth of both, both me and my sister.

Lisa Nichols 07:43

Precious. I just, I love that so much. I do. I love that so much. And, you know, I also love that story. You just told me and I not heard that story about you leading in the boardroom. But I cannot tell you, Christy, I'm gonna do a study on this, if I ever go get my doctorate, which is not on the horizon. But if I do, maybe my body of work, we'll be talking about what kids did as children. I, it's crazy to me how many times I talked to leaders, and they're like, you know, you were doing something like, I don't know, taking computers apart or something like that. And then you ended up being, you know, an IT professional. I mean, it's just, it's crazy to me how many cases there are like that, but I can totally see it, you know, and she saw that there was a leader in you.

Christy Barker 08:33

It has probably any CIO. And, you know, to this day, I was the programmer of VCRs, when I was a kid and recording, you know, for my entire family. I'm still the helpdesk of my family.

Lisa Nichols 08:48

I hear that. So, you know, Greg is the IT professional, you know. He was a software engineer at McDonnell Douglas. I was corporate accounting, and then went into sales. But he says that all the time, he's the helpdesk. It's like Oh, dear. Oh, my goodness. Well, you went on, you know, to, to study computer information systems at Missouri State University. You know, what inspired you, was there someone or something that inspired you to go that path? Because I mean, you could have gone engineering, you could have done all kinds of things with your ability to navigate tech, but why, why computer information systems?

Christy Barker 09:35

You know, what? Well, first of all, as a first person in my family to go to university. And so, you know, there wasn't a lot of you can be an engineer, or you can I just didn't know and so I knew what I was exposed to my mom worked in offices, so I'm like, I'll be, I'll do business.

Lisa Nichols 09:56

Something in business.

Christy Barker 09:57

Yes, I'll start in business. So, I, I actually started off like, I think you said like, Greg, I was an accounting major.

Lisa Nichols 10:06

Yes, I was too, we both were. Greg was an accounting major.

Christy Barker 10:10

I think it's numbers, you know, like, math was math is my favorite subject. I love Math. And so, I'm like, okay, accounting is numbers. I think I can do accounting. And, it was fine. It wasn't my passion. But I again, here's an influence that my mother had on me. I was a sophomore in college. Actually, I think it started when I was younger. And she said, Christy, have you thought about computers? I think, I think there's something to this computer thing that you might, might be a good career. So, I took her advice, of course, and took my first information systems course. And it just clicked. And I don't think I don't even think I got through the semester. And I was already with the advisor changing my major. And, and, you know, the rest is history.

Lisa Nichols 11:05

Christy, this is funny. I don't know if you've met Kimberly Martin yet. Kim Martin from MasterCard. She's an AVP at master. She started in accounting too. And she said, I'm not really sure that this is for me, took our first computer class, and she said she was hooked. So, there's something there too, but I do think it's kind of the math, maybe, you know, and when you're good at that,

Christy Barker 11:30

And its Analytics, you know, how you Yes, out, you know, process orientation. It's very structured and logical.

Lisa Nichols 11:38

Right, right. Right, right. Now, you said that you started as a COBOL Programmer, you and you said that wasn't really for you.

Christy Barker 11:48

Okay, like I can program, but it's just doesn't match my personality. Like, I can only sit and write code for so long before I'm popping up. And I've got to talk to people. So, you know, I think I did my stint that I knew I would have to do early in my career. But I was quick to look for something else.

Lisa Nichols 12:11

Yes. Well, and I think you were doing it at Monsanto, which, of course, is now bear a very iconic company here in the St. Louis region. We love, we love Monsanto/Bayer. Great, great company. But you know, I think then eventually you were put into a big enterprise resource planning project. And I'm assuming that was SAP but it could have been something else.

Christy Barker 12:36

Yes, it was. It was their big SAP project.

Lisa Nichols 12:37

What were the lessons that you learned through that? What did you learn about yourself? And I think you've already told me, what you learned about yourself is, I can't just sit there and code all day long. I need to be interacting with people and being you know, because really, would that SAP implementation, I'm sure, there is a lot of communication that needs to go on with the business, right?

Christy Barker 13:01

You know, here's what I learned really. I liked creating something new, like really thinking about how you transform the way you're doing something yesterday to how you want to do something tomorrow. And that is not by yourself. Individually thinking of these ideas, it is true collaboration. And I learned so early in my first jobs at Monsanto, that I thrived and I had better ideas sitting in a room with other experts, or people with more experience with me talking through a problem. And then my ideas got even better. And that is what I learned about myself is, you know, I can contribute more when I'm working with people, I'm connecting with people, I'm listening. And also recognizing I'm never the expert in the room. And you know, I have so much to learn from other people.

Lisa Nichols 14:07

I was talking to somebody yesterday. Christy, and it just reminds me, I was, I was saying about like, really leading with humility, and leading with humility, leading with empathy, compassion, that sort of thing. But I said, you know, that old adage that says, you know, if you think you're the smartest person in the room, you're clearly in the wrong room.

Christy Barker 14:31

I mean, it is so true. You may have expertise, a lot more expertise than somebody else in a particular. But it's, you know, there's so much more value that can be driven if you really listen and work together with everybody that's in the room.

Lisa Nichols 14:53

Well, and I've watched you. I've watched you through your career and I mean, I know you're so collaborative and what you're doing now and so I just love that. But, in 2004 you went to ICL, and for our listeners that don't know that's Israel Chemical Limited it may be yeah Chemicals Limited it may be something different now I don't know is it still ICL?

Christy Barker 15:18

Yes, still ICL.

Lisa Nichols 15:19

It's still ICL. And this was quite an experience for you in a number of ways because you were brought in to lead IT transformation and established business shared services for ICL in Europe. But I think this might be what took you over to Europe and you lived in Amsterdam for nine years.

Christy Barker 15:40

Absolutely. You know, you know, when I joined ICL, ICL had a few business units, which meant and they were in ICL itself was a holding company. So, each business unit had its own organization beyond IT, its own finance team and commercial teams and including an IT organization. But they were all business units in the chemical industry. So, you know, there was a recognition by our, the executive leadership team at the time that there is probably so much more we can do if we leverage the commonalities across the businesses. So, you know, I had, and I was the CIO of one of the business units that was actually based here in the U.S. And I had was asked, and, you know, so thankful for this opportunity to go to Israel. And I worked for two years just focused on their global reorg and transformation of their IT. So, taking our four different organizations, and figuring out how we could become one global team supporting our business units. So, it took a couple years to get there. But it was such a great experience, tons of travel, people can't believe, you know, I say, listen, it was a two-year period, and I had residency in Israel, but I was still traveling. I was traveling back and forth between the US and Israel every two weeks, for two years. I look back on that I'm like, I don't know how I survived at my, you know, distant with family, you know, thank God, my husband just was fantastic. He stepped up and, you know, really did what needed to be done during that period in our life when I was, you know, I committed to doing this, I needed to follow through with it. And, and, you know, the outcome was great. I mean, that today, I'm not with ICL today. But you know, they're still running that that global organization. And then from there, after that was done, the company asked me to do a reload to Amsterdam. And so, we were there for about two to three years. And, again, a fantastic experience. You know, my kids have traveled so well for their age.

Lisa Nichols 18:12

Yes, I was going to ask you about that.

Christy Barker 18:13

For them it's like the world is small, you know. It was tough to leave family. I'm from St. Louis. So, my family is here, and to pick up and leave. It's not always an easy decision. It was a bit of a courageous decision, a leap of faith that we had to take. Because I had, had offers like this, go do an international assignment here and there and, you know, only so much can you say, can you turn them down and say no, I'm like, Johnny, and I felt like, okay, we need to do this. And we took advantage of it. So glad that we did. It was a great company. And I miss that team very much.

Lisa Nichols 18:56

Right. Well, I know you do great things there. But it had been just an amazing experience for Rachel and Alice too. I mean, were they little Chrissy were they little during that time? Were they in school?

Christy Barker 19:09

Rachel was, so my oldest was in, just starting high school. Okay, and my youngest was finishing like grade school going into middle school. So, you know, for my oldest, for Alice. She's she was very excited about the move. You know, she's more like me, she, you know, she's a bit of an adventure seeker, risk taker and you know, so she was all in my youngest, maybe was the age was much more hesitant about making the change, but you know, it did not take long. Kids are so adaptable, they make friends very quickly. And then when we moved back to the US, it was like the opposite. You know, nobody wanted to come back. And, you know, they just kind of resettled themselves living in the Netherlands. So, but now, you know, everybody adjusts back.

Lisa Nichols 19:23

Right. Well, I've not met Alice, but I've met Rachel. And that young woman could walk into any room and talk to anyone. And I mean, I, you will never really know, Christy, maybe just how that experience of being uprooted and put into a new situation really helped her build her agility muscle. Yeah, so who knows?

Christy Barker 20:37

I think you're, I think you're very right. And I think, you know, part of that is confidence that you know, that they can survive in a very ambiguous type of a situation. And, you know, they just push themselves forward, and now they're gonna, they're gonna come out on the other end, as good as they did in the beginning,

Lisa Nichols 21:01

Right, yes. Well, okay, we're gonna, we're gonna start with Olin little bit, and then we need to take a very quick break, and then we'll be right back with the second half here. But you had an amazing experience there. In May of 2016. You were brought in to Olin as the CIO, and what were you brought in to do Christy?

Christy Barker 21:22

So, I joined Olin, about nine months after they closed on a very large acquisition of several business units from Dow Chemical. So, you know, Olin, at the time, you know, in 2015, Olin was a to roughly a \$2 billion business, it had a, you know, they had a billion-dollar business in ammunitions, because they own Winchester and a billion dollars chemical company. Then they, they bought some units from Dow Chemical, and it was a \$5 billion business. So just imagine just in their chemicals business alone, they went from \$1 billion operating really, in the US and Canada, you know, and, and some international sales to you know, being a \$6 billion+ chemical company that was global. And the leader in the global market now the leader in, you know, of, of their, the businesses that they were in, in the global market. So, it was a massive change. And Olin didn't have a CIO.

Lisa Nichols 22:34

Right, I was gonna say, I think you were the first CIO, right?

Christy Barker 22:36

You know, they had, you know, some really great, and today, you know, Jeff, you know, as is, you know, in my organization, some really strong leadership within the IT organization, but they didn't have anyone titled as CIO with global responsibility for all business units, including the Winchester business. So, you know, I was lucky enough to get a phone call about a potential opportunity back in the US because I was living in Europe at the time. And it was, it was the top job for a technology team, in an industry that I knew well, because I've been working in this industry for 25 years.

Lisa Nichols 23:16

You had been working in Chemicals for a long time.

Christy Barker 23:20

And it was transformation. It was integrate this business post-acquisition, get us independent, really advance our digital capability. And so it was, you know, I said in the beginning, what I learned about myself as I love creating something and transforming something and making it better, and so it was, was almost like the perfect opportunity. So, I had to go for it. I got the job and moved back here in the summer of 2016.

Lisa Nichols 23:54

Oh, my goodness. Well, yeah, I know, and you've just done an amazing job. Well, we've got so much more to talk about, but we do need to take a quick break. And we'll be right back with Christy Barker on Something Extra Podcast.

AD 24:06

Hey there. In a challenging business climate like this savvy leaders look to technology to find an edge. This can mean the difference between staying ahead of the curve, or playing catch up. It's time to collaborate with the highly skilled experts at Technology Partners. Our team of technologists draws upon decades of experience for your project, with each bringing a passion for solving problems and a track record of success. How can we help you overcome your biggest technology challenges? Visit technologypartners.net to book a free consultation with one of our leaders.

Lisa Nichols 24:36

Well, welcome back everyone to the Something Extra Podcast with my friend Christy Barker. So, Christy, you know, I believe because this was a huge lift for you. I mean, this was a huge thing that you were brought in to do. So, I think you began I always want to know, where do you start? And I think you started with surveys, and more like what I would call listening tour, right?

Christy Barker 25:01

Well, yeah, you know. Your first few months, when you're in any new role like this, you know, my approach that I've had the most successful is, you've just got to understand what the need is, and really just listen, so don't come in with any preconceived ideas just really focus on listening, and talking with people in all sorts of jobs and different levels, you know, within your organization. And that's exactly what I did. So, you know, had one on ones with other senior leaders to really understand, what are you guys trying to accomplish? You know, from there, it was, you know, I needed to know what people thought about this IT organization, and what didn't, what were their expectations for years out? So, you know, it was interviews, we did surveys. And, you know, it was clear that people felt like the organization just ran well, but it was a utility. It was like, you know, your phone working, you know, that's what the value of IT was in the past. And they knew that there was so much, much more that could come out of it. So, you know, you know, it was clear that we needed a much larger strategy. And part of that strategy was related to integrating all these businesses that the company had just acquired.

You know, Olin is over 130 years old, it is a very historical company that is strong in both businesses that we're in very strong and ammunitions. You know, Winchester is a very well-known brand, for any sportsman or hunter that's out there, you can, you can find it at many of the stores here. So, there's the ammunition side, and the support that they had during various war periods over all of these, you know, century. And then you've got the chemical side of the business. And it's also got such a long, deep standing history. And, you know, the two, the two companies came together because of common, you know, common needs, who the customers were at periods of time, and, you know, they've retained these two legacies. You know, today, the chemicals business is, is a larger footprint. It's been global for a long time, we have locations and more than 20 countries, customers, in 100 countries, and the Winchester brand is also growing. So, it's a pretty, I should say, it's a very exciting time very to be with Olin today.

Lisa Nichols 27:55

Yes, yes. Well, and I know, the culture there is a very strong culture. And I was reading about this, but he has seen a lot of change. But I think Christy and correct me if I'm wrong, but the North star for you guys that has not changed is integrity, integrity, and everything you do. And I just love that. And it's really, you know, not just doing the big things, but the small things. And I know that that's very important to you guys. Integrity first, last, and always, it's the only way that Olin does business, and I love that, but some of your other values, you've got act with integrity, but then driving innovation and improvement. And that's certainly you know, where technology can come in, right?

Christy Barker 28:45

Absolutely. I think, you know, it is technology across the board, whether it's chemistry, you know, and R&D, or Digital Technology, or how we are looking at our business through data and analytics. You know, we, we truly have this core value that's underpinning everything, which is continuous improvement, further innovation, driving value for our customers. You know, even the communities that we live in being a great employer, you know, for where we have

manufacturing assets, you know. These are all true, important factors to how to our culture, and how do you want to be in the world?

Lisa Nichols 29:32

Yes, making a difference, making a difference in the world in multiple ways, right? So, Christy, I mean, we've already talked about this a little bit, and I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I know you're a very collaborative leader. But what would you say is your leadership style and have you seen it evolve over the years? And I think there are parts of you that have been tried and true from the get go, but what would you say? I mean, you're more of a color I believe coaching kind of leader, none of, you know, you know, command and control, you're definitely not command and control.

Christy Barker 30:09

Absolutely not. I mean, I can be I'm very decisive. I can make a decision. You know, when it, you know, at the time when a decision is really needed, and I will garner support and influence over those decisions that we need. So, you know, that's not quite command and control, but there is a strong sense of decisiveness, and then let's move on, because that's I can execute and actually make change, rather than just talk about change, you know, talking. So, you know, I think, you know, I am also a big connector. So, this comes with collaboration, but connecting people together and connecting with people. And, you know, I think, you know, a big part of who I am, is, I focus on, you know, and we do this at Olin, and we have this whole program in our culture, you know, called lifting people, but I take it a step further, you know, it's more to me about lifting people up, and not pushing people down. And this is how, you know, this is how you're going to get the best output and results. And, you know, ideas, if you're really focusing on the strengths, and the capabilities that people can bring, and not necessarily, you know, focusing on their weaknesses, you know, really focus on their strengths. And, you know, that that's the kind of leader that I am and, you know, get out of you individualism.

Lisa Nichols 31:47

It's about the relationship.

Christy Barker 31:49

And let's just kind of share what we're trying to accomplish, make sure everyone understands the mission that we're on, what is the mission and understanding why is so critical as well, you know. It's, it's not just because my boss told me that we need to do this or, you know, it's understanding the big picture, because then you get more buy in, for the actions that people are taking. And if you can get them to believe, you know, work through their heart and work through their gut and their intuition, you're gonna get such a better outcome.

Lisa Nichols 32:25

Absolutely. And I do see that in you, you know, Christy, that just reminds me, I mean, you can influence people in their head, okay, this is what the, they're my boss is telling me to do. But really, the goal is to get to their heart, there's 18 inches, between here and here. And you want to get to their heart. And I think the way that you do that is the way that you lead, which is really understanding, like you said, not focusing on their weaknesses, focusing on their strengths, putting people in the right seat on the bus, right? Getting people to connect with one another toward a common goal, and really getting people to understand that what they're doing is part of the bigger purpose and the bigger goal and mission. And I think that's something that you do really, really well. And I think that's probably, you know, why you were a national ORBIE finalist last year, because, because you do lead that way. So, you know, can you what, you know, what are some of the most impactful technological advancements that you have implemented at Olin? And how are they really contributed to the business's success? Can you can you just talk about a few of those?

Christy Barker 33:41

Well, you know, I think there are so many levels, and you can't just, the change that we have put in place, and the capability that we've built inside Olin, spans everything from having information and data that you can trust, to make decisions on. So, what that means is we had to get to a common data model and definition of what it is that we're looking at. And, you know, understanding how we're measuring our business and, you know, get it so that everybody's in understands that same model. So, it was basics that we had to put in place. We, you know, we had to, we put in place all new manufacturing and engineering capability and standardized how we were doing that across all of our manufacturing assets around the world. So that when we're looking at an engineering drawing of a plant, it's coming out, you know, it's we're doing this on a common way across all of our sites. Because then when you start doing this, then you have an engineer who now can span knowledge and expertise, and can contribute towards solving a problem that can go beyond their one location. So, you know, how do we connect people and leverage what we're doing on a much broader scale than what we could do before?

We put in a whole new SAP, you know, latest and greatest in the chemical industry, we were one of the very first big global companies to take, take the jump into SAP S/4. And, you know, do it in a way that allowed us to take advantage of many of the new technologies that were part of that whole portfolio from SAP. We had new infrastructure, we had to put in place, new collaboration tools for how people were going to work every single day using taking advantage of cloud. You know, now we're at a position we're done with all that we have a whole new, a whole new platform, a potpourri of solutions, common data models. So like, now we're focused on the next way we leverage all that investment we made. So, we started our first artificial intelligence, center of excellence within the company. We're talking with partners, you know about what that might look like, and potential use cases that, that could make a real step change difference on helping people be more productive than they are today. We have our first governance committee that started as kind of our review board, but also making sure because, you know, AI, and especially in this gen AI field, there, it's growing, or it's changing and evolving so quickly, that, you know, there's risks that we need to understand as well. And you know, what I need to make sure and I take it as my job is, this is not a technology to replace people, you know, people will always human needs to be in the loop at all times and make the judgment. But boy, if I can do some of my tactical you know, tactical work that I do so much faster, think about the hours I free up to do other sorts of.

Lisa Nichols 37:19

Higher value, higher value creating activities.

Christy Barker 37:24

This is, this is what we're focused on now. We're moving it around to the cloud environments. We have so much advancements we've done on protecting Olin on the cybersecurity space right now. It's just it's a very exciting time.

Lisa Nichols 37:39

Right? You know, Christy, I'm just thinking, as you're talking, you've laid the foundation. Yeah, you think about building a house, right? That foundation is so critical. So, you, you put the SAP in you've, you've laid this foundation with common data models. Now, you can really build on that. And it's scalable, right? And I'm even thinking, goodness, gracious. I mean, you've done that hard work, Christy, and even like, I'm not saying that this is on the horizon. But if there were another chemical company that Olin wanted to purchase, you're going, by slowing down and doing the work that you have for the past, whatever, eight years, you're gonna go so much faster now, right?

Christy Barker 38:30

And it's no secret, you know, we're a public company, it's, you know, its public information, we, you know, we're looking to grow as well. And we've done some of these growth moves, and we've leveraged the technology capability that we just put in place in these last few years, for those alliances and joint ventures that we have in place.

Lisa Nichols 38:50

Very, very exciting. Well, all right, we're kind of coming to the close of our I, there's so much more, I'd love to talk to you about women in business, women and leadership women in IT. I mean, we got so many more, so we may have to do a part two, but I have a little lightning round that I'm gonna do with you real fast, and then we'll talk about something extra. So, you know, what, what would be the best piece of advice or it doesn't have to be one piece but for aspiring technology leaders and they're like, I want to be Christy when I grow up. I want to have that top technology spot. What advice would you give them, Christy?

Christy Barker 39:33

Well, I'll tell you, it's not anything unique. Someone once told me very early in my career, that you have two responsibilities. You need to know the business and you need to know the technology and that knowing that technology is not enough. You have a business mindset. And I think that is, you know, making that shift like, for me, we talked, in the beginning of this podcast, I started off programming, you know, to get a senior leadership position, you've got to get beyond just the technical know-how, you know. You have the technology expertise. But how do you in a very concise way, be able to communicate the business value behind what technology you are putting in place and having that acumen, and being able to talk about the financial aspects of a business case and what this return may be, and how it's going to impact your end customers. The customers that are buying the product that your, your company is making, or the services that your company is serving? You know, this, I think once you get this, you know, you've got both sides, you know, what you need to be a top executive anywhere.

Lisa Nichols 41:02

I could not agree more. And I was not going to do this. But I'm just thinking to myself, I'm going to put a shameless plug in there. Because we have a whole leadership division now at Technology Partners, and that's the precise thing. We're not teaching technical skills, Christy, we're teaching those kinds of things, business acumen agility? How do you

move from being an order taker to consulting, mindset, all of these different things. So, reach out to me, listeners, if you want to learn more about that, but I want to ask you this. So, you've got, Christy, you got a big, big role. You got a precious family that I know is number one for you. How do you keep yourself energized? Or, you know, maybe self-care? I mean, tell me a little bit about that. And then I've got two more questions for you in order to get something extra.

Christy Barker 41:57

Okay. So, for me, I truly believe taking personal time is critical. No matter how busy your life is, and how many kids you have in a big career. You can always find time for yourself. So, you know, for me, sleep is, I mean, so important. My head is clear. When I've had a good night's sleep, so don't sacrifice sleep. At least I don't sacrifice sleep. The other thing I do is I am very active. So, I just I practice yoga. I've practiced yoga for 15 years. You know, there's not a week that goes by you know, sometimes I will only have one solid yoga practice session and that's okay. But I Pilates I used to run marathons, I don't do that anymore because I'm older and my bones hurt.

Lisa Nichols 42:49

The knees hurt.

Christy Barker 42:52

But you know, then I shifted to other forms of activity. I hike. Winter, I snow ski. So, I try as much as I can, take a couple long weekends during the winter and hit the mountain somewhere and just really connect with nature. You know, that kind of goes back to the way I grew up. We didn't have a whole lot of money. So, you know what we did on vacations? We went to a State Park and we hiked.

Lisa Nichols 43:19

You hiked.

Christy Barker 43:20

You know, it was that's how we would connect and spend our time together. And I still love that and I have pushed that on my own kids. They're the same way.

Lisa Nichols 43:30

It's so true. And I mean, this this could be something like and, what I have found for myself, even if you're getting stuck and you're thinking, try to take a walk, you know maybe just take a walk at lunch. Because you're getting out in nature, you're breathing the fresh air you're getting your heart rate up. I mean it, it does make a difference. So, I know you and Johnny the kids you guys love to travel. Do you have a bucket list for travel right now?

Christy Barker 43:57

Well, so, so you know I've been to 31 countries.

Lisa Nichols 44:01

31, that's awesome.

Christy Barker 44:04

And it helps doing a lot of international work and living in other countries because then you take advantage of it. But there's some places many places I haven't been yet. I, on my bucket list. I want to go to Croatia. I love Europe. Italy is beautiful, but man it is just very overrun with tourists. I would love to you know, I think Croatia has got that same deep history and beauty and food and sunshine. And then the other thing Johnny and I talk about, because you know I'm usually in airplanes. I, when we retire, I am you know we're gonna,

Lisa Nichols 44:44

You're gonna buy an RV?

Christy Barker 44:45

Not an RV. Maybe like one of those little teardrops. But we're just hitting National Parks.

Lisa Nichols 44:52

Love it.

Christy Barker 44:53

Yes.

Lisa Nichols 44:54

Love it. I've got a really good friend, James Barnett, that was the CEO for Dayspring. And they determined early on that, that was going to be their thing. And they've done that since their kids were even little. And they their goal is to hit every I think there's what 63 of them in total. We've got one here in St. Louis.

Christy Barker 45:17

Yes, I know. The St. Louis Arch. Absolutely. I have stickers for all the ones that we've, you know, we've been to so far and it is some of our favorite vacations we take.

Lisa Nichols 45:27

Oh, my goodness. I love it. One more question. We're going to talk about something extra. What's your favorite pair of shoes?

Christy Barker 45:32

You know, I'm a girl and you'd think they'd be you know, some, you know, cute little pumps or something. But my sneakers. I love wearing sneakers. Like right now my favorite pair of sneakers is a pair of white with rose gold. I think they're Steve Madden's. They're so versatile. And every time I wear them people are like, I love your sneakers. I was in Denver a couple weeks ago, and I'm sitting there at breakfast at the hotel and this little girl leans over to me and she goes, I like your sneakers.

Lisa Nichols 46:03

Well, you and I share that too. I love a cute pair, yes. Dolces, I think, is what I've got right now that are just so cute. And just love them. And you know what I'm wearing with a blazer and you know, it's awesome.

Christy Barker 46:22

Dresses.

Lisa Nichols 46:23

It's awesome. It's awesome. So, Christie, this is called something extra. So, I have to ask you, what do you believe is something extra? Or I'll give you two, if any do that every leader needs?

Christy Barker 46:36

You know, we've talked about it to me, it's connecting people and connecting with people. You know, that's how collaboration starts. That's how you can influence. Influence and selling are one of the same. You know, this is the something extra.

Lisa Nichols 46:58

I love it. Well, thank you so much, my friend. This has been so much fun. I've loved, loved, loved this time with you and I cannot wait for our listeners to learn from you.

Christy Barker 47:09

Lisa, you are awesome. You make it so easy. And thank you so much. You are you know a legend here as well.

Announcer 47:18

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