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HOW TO GET PROMOTED EXTERNALLY

Welcome to The Highly Valued Leader podcast where I make it simple for leaders at all levels to amplify their value. My name is Mel Savage and I went from working in the mailroom at a small ad agency to making multiple six figures in senior management at McDonald's, to running my own multiple six-figure executive coaching business. I've had huge successes in my career and epic failures. All of it taught me the world-class leadership, mind and skill sets that I simplify for my clients and share with you on this podcast. I'll help you reset your leadership style, demystify the politics, and help you become the highly valued leader everyone wants on their team. Get ready for the most honest, direct and revolutionary leadership coaching you've ever heard. Let's simplify leadership together.

Hey leaders, welcome back to the podcast. We are continuing this week to talk to some of my clients who have had the good fortune of getting promoted. It is good fortune, but it's also work that they're doing intentionally to reach a goal, which is to get promoted. And it's not just showing up and doing their job well. Each of them has put together a very focused, intentional plan to get themselves promoted.

Today, we're talking to one of my clients named Selena, who was recently promoted. She is an HR professional. She was promoted outside her organization. Last week we talked to Michaela—she got an internal promotion. This week, we're talking to Selena. She got an external promotion, and she took some similar but also very different tactics compared to Michaela. We want to talk about that today. The reason I'm doing this is because I want to share with you some of the tactics and ideas that my one-on-one clients have used while working with me to get promoted.

I'm putting everything I work with them on into a group program for the first time—a group coaching program called ***Promotions on Demand***—where I'm going to work with you to get you promoted within six months. This is a program specifically for leaders. Ideally, you're in that senior manager to VP range, and you're looking to get promoted. That's our sole focus in this program, which I'll be launching on **December 7th**.

Everything I'm doing between now and December 7th is really pushing towards this whole idea of helping you get promoted because, as a leader, what you need to do to get promoted is very different from what you do when you're an individual contributor or a doer. It's just a different strategy, and it's a bit more involved. It's a bit more of a stretch in terms of what people are usually comfortable with. So it's important that you get the support you need to get that promotion you're looking for.

Promotions on Demand opens for enrollment on **December 7th**. But if you want to learn some of my tools ahead of time, see some of the strategies at work and see how they all fit together, and get an overview of the program itself, I highly encourage you to sign up for my free training called ***Get Promotions Dropped in Your Lap***. It is on

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December 5th at **11 a.m. Eastern**. You just need to sign up at https://melsavage.com/getpromoted/. Go there, sign up for the free training, and your spot will be saved.

Along with all the great things you'll learn in that free training, you get a two-day advance enrollment period, meaning you get to enroll starting December 5th. You'll get advanced enrollment just by signing up for this free training. You'll be alerted ahead of everyone else, so I highly suggest that you sign up for this free training.

If you're a leader and you want to get promoted in 2025, this is exactly the program you need. I'm going to teach you how to market yourself, self-advocate, build confidence, stay focused, build your proactive and intentional promotion plan and strategy, and show up for it day in and day out—even if you already have a full plate of work. I know all my leaders are busy people, and I help them find the time within their day—not in their private time—to do this work. That is part of it. Finding the time is part of the program.

So I highly encourage you to go to https://melsavage.com/getpromoted/, register for the free training, and see if this is the right program for you.

Now let's get back to Selena because her story is not only inspiring but also so moving. I think the theme of what Selena brings to this interview, beyond the strategies she learned and put in place, is how she stayed motivated, found the time, and took every single thing that happened as a learning opportunity to grow stronger for the next thing. That's what made Selena so special and helped her get the promotion she deserved. So let's get to it.

Mel: Today I want to welcome Selena. She's been doing so well with her career and her leadership, and I thought it'd be great for her to come on today and share her process of getting promoted and finding a job that helped grow her career. So I want to welcome you, Selena. I'm not telling anybody any major background about you because we want to keep that confidential, but you do work for a big— even before now, a big corporation. Can I say oil and gas, that industry?

Selena: Yes.

Mel: Tell me a little bit about what made you want to work with a coach in general.

Selena: That was interesting. How it came about for me was that I didn't know I wanted to work with a coach. Late night scrolling on Instagram, going down the rabbit hole, feeling overwhelmed with things in my life but not knowing exactly where to find the answer. And you came into my stream, and it was like you were speaking directly to me.

Mel: My gosh!

Selena: Oh, this was a message for me. Okay, well, hold on. If she already knows me for this one, let me go to her page. Before actually getting coaching from you formally, I was getting coaching from your site as I was stalking you. So many of the things you were talking about in these bite-sized segments, I was able to implement into my life almost immediately. I started feeling that joy, that spark again, and excitement—like, okay, this is working. This is what I needed. But I needed more because now I was ready to dig into what I was working through to try

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to find answers. I was at a fork-in-the-road situation in my life, needing to make a big decision and feeling really stuck. That's when it was instrumental to reach out to you.

Mel: I love that. I think that's really good. You just shared a really good insight because I think a lot of people, especially really strong leaders—people who have grown in their careers—know how to do a lot of things themselves, right? And so seeking out, I think, some free advice and trying to implement it is a great way to start. Not only to see what's working for you, what you can easily implement, and what's harder for you, but also: *Am I connecting with someone? Is what they're saying speaking to me?* Not just for one reel, but after a while, *are they helping me in other places where I need help, not just that one thing?* I think that's a really great way to start finding a coach, just for anybody out there. A lot of people will come to me and say, *"I don't know. I wasn't sure exactly how to find a coach."* Then I popped into their feed.

I am convinced that Meta knows how to read our minds now. Like, I'll think things like, *"Oh, maybe it's time to get a new car,"* and all of a sudden, cars pop into my feed. I really don't know how that happens, but it happens.

Selena: It's true.

Mel: So you decided to get some coaching and you found me. Tell us a little bit about what was actually going on. Why were you stuck?

Selena: I have been in my organization, I was going on my 13th year. I had progressed over the years—I think five to six promotions. I wasn't stagnant in the role. However, I had hit a ceiling. One way the organization tried to accommodate me was by offering to support me in going back for my master's. But with that came an agreement that I would stay on for three more years. And so it was this big decision: Am I okay in this capacity? It's not where I really want to end up, but I do have this other route of education. Which position of growth is going to be most important to me now and for years to come?

It was an excellent school I was accepted to. In fact, it was Cornell. It was a dream to be at this Ivy League, very prestigious opportunity. I felt appreciated by the organization, yet it was going to be me giving up something. I was really struggling, especially with feeling a level of loyalty to the organization. I've been here; they're willing to invest in me. How do I say no to that?

Mel: I think that's really interesting too because a lot of people come and think, *"I need to get out of here,"* but you actually really liked your job. And just for everyone, you're at a director-level job already. So you're thinking about your next stage: How do I get to VP?

When we first started talking, there were a few different things we were talking about. One of them was growth in terms of title, but there were also leadership things you were working on that we were talking about as well. At that time, if I remember correctly, you were like, *"I don't know, Cornell—big opportunity. Do I want to stay here for three years? This is a dream, and we never get this chance again."* It was just really, I think, for the listeners as well as for you, the way we talked about it was: There is no wrong decision here. You just have to like your reasons.

If you're going to go for the Cornell thing, are you prepared to stay here for three years? Are you comfortable with that? Can you make that work? And how does that fit into your overall career goal? If your goal was to be a VP within three years, then that may or may not happen here. But you are committed to this organization now—or else you have to pay back the cost for the master's.

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I share that because I know you went back and forth a lot. It was exciting at the time to think about it, but having a strategy—a lens through which to make that decision—versus just going on excitement, I think, was what helped you make that decision. Do you have any thoughts about that?

Selena: You're right. It took me several months to finally come to the decision. What I had to come to terms with was, I had to live with this decision. There were other things that played into it as well. The biggest factor that came down to it was that I wasn't satisfied with the role I was in, and I did not want to commit to being at that same level for three years. Even though I knew the education itself was going to propel me in a new direction and elevate my career, it wasn't enough for me.

Once I made that decision, it was full steam ahead. But then that was a whole chapter in itself—being a job seeker. I was the director of, and still am, the director of human resources. Now I'm in a different role. But you would think, *"Oh, well, great. You can easily fall into knowing what the interviewing process is,"* but I will say it's very different to be on the other side of the table, especially when you haven't been a job seeker for 13 years.

Mel: Yes, absolutely. But you did not waver. When I say you didn't waver, don't get me wrong—you had some discomfort. It was a bit of a push for yourself to do the work, but you were amazing at it. And I want to get to that.

One thing I want to just add about the Cornell thing that came to mind—and this is for anyone listening as well—is that it was an amazing opportunity. I think one of the things we talked about was, yes, it's going to look great on your CV, and obviously, you're going to grow through that experience. It's not just a CV thing. But do you need it to get to where you want to go?

I think that was the other question we talked about a lot: to be a VP in your field—again, you're in HR specifically—was this going to be the best return on effort based on your goals? It was just a question.

Selena: Well, it's so interesting that you bring that up. I'm glad you did because that was part of my journey in making the decision. I sought advice and guidance from several different women in my life. Particularly, I wanted to talk to women. One of the first pieces of feedback I got when I asked someone who was already in an executive role what they would do in my position was: *"You've already been doing this for over 20 years. You are already at that stage and ready for the opportunity. We, as women, will continue to want to validate ourselves with more credentials when we are already in that position."* That really sunk in for me. I didn't understand a lot of my motivation for doing it, but when it was brought to me, it resonated as being so true.

Mel: I agree.

Selena: I remember polling you about it, polling several others, and it was like, *"Yes, you're already there. You've already done the work. Your master's has been your last 20 years in the role."* If I were several years back, that decision might have been different. But for me, particularly in all the different areas—I can't even tell you the number of certifications I've received after my undergrad to keep building my career—when is enough enough?

Mel: Exactly. And I think we all struggle with that, especially as women. It just made me think of something I saw the other day. This isn't a political comment, but it was an interesting clip on my feed. It was a person talking about Kamala Harris. I'm Canadian, so I'm not invested in U.S. politics. For anyone listening, I know it's a charged topic, but this was an interesting anecdote. People were wondering if she was qualified given her background.

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But what they explained was that she had 30 years of experience, and people were still questioning her qualifications.

I think sometimes, too, as women, we don't just question ourselves—we might actually get questioned more. And so, there's that sense of reality: *"Do I have to do more? I have to be more to be accepted."* But is that true? Really? That's just a question to ask. I thought that was interesting.

So then you decided, *"Okay, I'm not going to do the Cornell thing. I'm going to go full steam ahead into becoming a great leader and also seeking out, inside and outside my organization, the job that I want to help grow toward the career goals that I have."* And you started interviewing like crazy because you started getting opportunities just coming to you. Tell me how that worked.

Selena: Quite a bit of work, though, and a little bit of a reality shock: where do you even begin in 2024 with a job search? I mean, when I found my last job by posting my resume on *Monster.com*—that's how far removed I was from how you go about this today.

Mel: Even as an HR person.

Selena: Exactly. I mean, it was really interesting to me to find out that you won't be the most successful by just applying to job after job. It's truly through networking and using the platform of LinkedIn—and there are strategic ways of using LinkedIn.

That was one of the first conversations that you and I had, and you challenged me with, *"Let's take a look at your page. First of all, you need to have a summary there. There isn't a summary—let's add more information about what each one of your jobs has been."* And then become really active on LinkedIn with a purpose. I think that was really the biggest awakening for me about how to use LinkedIn as a tool that drew recruiters to me.

And then that was when recruiters were seeking me out. I think out of all the offers that I ended up entertaining—which came down to several by the time I was making my final decision, which is stressful in itself, even though it's a good thing to be stressed about. I think, maybe I applied to two jobs. But the rest were recruiters coming to me because I chose to be very strategic in how I represented myself and built my own brand of who I am and how I will be an asset to my future organization.

Mel: So I want to talk a little bit more about that. You got your LinkedIn page in order, but I remember it wasn't just recruiters. You also started reaching out to your network. And when you say networking, it wasn't like events or necessarily things like that. It was reaching out to old bosses. It was reaching out to former colleagues, just chatting and letting people know what was happening. Tell us a little bit about how you felt about doing things like that.

Selena: Oh, uncomfortable. It was a stretch to begin with because I initially thought, *"I'm bothering them. Everybody's very busy. Here I am, asking for help."* Because essentially, I wasn't even just asking for jobs. I was stretching my thought process on this to think, *"I just need to get this exercise going, building the muscle of who I am and understanding what jobs and employers are looking for—specifically executives and their human resources partners."*

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I really wanted to go on this listening tour. So you and I had another session where we planned: *"Okay, let's make this a goal. Let's be strategic. How many people a week do you want to reach out to, and how many conversations do you want to have?"*

All of this became a planned-out project for me. I was simultaneously looking for ways to build my LinkedIn profile into the most productive tool, working on its own to bring opportunities to me—almost like passive income. At the same time, I was proactively reaching out to as many people as I could, including some I hadn't talked to in years.

I cast the net wide, saying, *"Hey, this is where I am in my journey. I'd love five to ten minutes of your time."* Often, that turned into much longer conversations. Some led somewhere, and others just gave me the opportunity to learn more.

Mel: Yeah, I love that too. You had a purpose—it was always about practice and engaging with people. I hear a lot of people say it was actually more energizing than difficult because they got to engage and talk to people. What was your experience with having those conversations, even with people you hadn't talked to in years?

Selena: First off, the most exciting part for me was that nine out of ten people responded—and quickly, with open arms. They said, *"Yes, of course! What do you need? I'm here for you. Let's do it."* That was not what I expected. I thought everyone would be too busy and wouldn't have time for this. But it was the contrary. People wanted to help. They wanted to be a part of it and were very candid with me. The more I showed vulnerability in the process and said, *"This is where I'm at. Please tell me my blind spots or what I should be looking for, or if you know anyone inside or outside your organization,"* the more they responded.

Mel: I just want to say to everyone listening—this is such a common fear. First, people worry, *"I haven't reached out to these people in a long time. They're going to think I want something from them. What if they don't respond? I'll feel rejected."* I have to say 100% of my clients express that same fear. But then they do it and are pleasantly surprised by how many people get back to them, make time for them, and don't care that it's been two years since you last talked.

They're just happy someone's reaching out, and they're happy to help. They also know that, down the road, as this person plants seeds with them, they'll get an opportunity to plant seeds with you. That's how networking works. Especially for people they've had great experiences with—it's a testament to you as a person. But even in general, people know the value of networking. So for anyone afraid to reach out—just try it. I think you'll be happy with the results.

Selena: I also included everyone on the list—even if it was the smallest opportunity to have a conversation. From my neighbour to someone at the grocery store, I kept my net as wide as possible. It was really important to me to thank them for their time. I did that twice. I sent handwritten, personal thank-you notes after each session. Then, once I landed my job, I wrote to them again and told them how they were a part of my success. And I recommitted to them that I would pay it forward.

Mel: That is gold. That's so good. Handwritten thank-you notes are the best. I used to use them all the time. People love them because they don't get them anymore, right? What a wonderful way to stand out, stay on top of mind, and remind people. That's so good.

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So you're networking, LinkedIn is bringing people in, recruiters are coming to you. At one point, I remember you were interviewing two or three times a week. But before we get to that, I'd love for you to share your experience. You're a busy person, like every other director in a big organization—or even a small one. You're busy. How did you find the time and create a consistent approach to this project?

Selena: I am busy. I have two little girls, ages 10 and 7, on top of a full-time job that's sometimes fuller than others, and I'm a homeowner with all the things life brings.

I'll tell you—being busy with my daughters, they were a huge motivating factor for me. Every time I found myself facing a fear—*"Am I ready? Can I do this? This is a big step"*—I thought about them. Every time I tell them they are ready, and that they can do it, I have to model that for them. Especially with my older daughter, who's turning 11 soon, I talked to her about my fears. *"Mommy's nervous about this. This is new. I'm not sure I can do it, but I'm going to try anyway. I'm going to give it my best, and if things don't go perfectly, I'll be okay with that."*

I let her see me cry and talked to her about it. That wasn't easy for me because I didn't grow up with that type of openness in my family. But that's the relationship I want with them. I want them to see that even when things are hard and I'm not 100% sure of myself, I stand up and try anyway. I'm learning from even the moments when I fall.

Mel: I love that so much. Congratulations. Your kiddos are really lucky to have you as a role model. That's wonderful. It's going to help them for years and years. What a great motivation for you.

So you're interviewing a lot. You're doing all the things. Tell me a little bit about how you ended up where you are now and what was happening. Did you have a lot of jobs, like, coming to you in terms of getting to a point where they might hire you? How did you choose this one?

Selena: First thing, I'll make just a comment about the lot of interviewing I did. And it honestly was because every opportunity that came to me, I said yes to. Even if on paper it didn't look like it was going to be what was best suited for me, I still saw it as a grand opportunity to practice, and to hear what the recruiters were asking about. How are they digging in? How can I navigate through some of the questions? And it just gave me one more chance to practice and exercise.

Not every interview was great, and there were some interviews where they were just complete flops. But again, if I hadn't taken the opportunity to put myself out there, I wouldn't have been so good at the one that I finally did nail. So, practice makes perfect for sure.

Why I chose the position that I did, a lot went into that decision. And at this phase—and I think at any phase—we have to realize for ourselves that we're interviewing that organization as much as they're interviewing us. We spend way more hours in our days at work than we do even with our family and friends. And so, it was really important for me for them to understand that's how I was approaching this as well. A lot of homework went into me looking at the organization ahead of time knowing the stage of where they were and preparing responses that were going to show them that I was ready to jump in and be a support and value. I made sure that I was addressing questions that I knew were going to show that I was looking for ways to support them—not a hundred per cent or even fifty per cent of ways that they were going to just support me.

Mel: I love that. That's so good. I remember when you were interviewing for this job—I mean, maybe I'm jumping ahead, so you can take it back if you want—but I remember when they finally sent the offer. You were in a meeting or something, and you couldn't get back to them for half a day, and they were so excited to hire you.

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They just thought that maybe you were not going to respond positively or something, and then they just came back and offered you more money.

Selena: That's exactly what happened. They did offer me the role. It was earlier in the day, and, even though internally I was thrilled and super excited, I just stayed calm and said, *"Okay, thank you. Please send over the written offer, and I'll take a look at it and send you my response."*

As soon as I hung up, of course, I was jumping around, but I wanted to review it. And you're right—I had other things coming in, as I had my full-time job, was taking other calls, and was fully planning to send it back in. But I believe four hours passed, maybe five, and they called back and said, *"Is everything okay? We are looking forward to hearing back from you soon. We just want to let you know that we are increasing it."* And so, okay, again, stay calm. *"Thank you. Let me see that and please forward that to me in the written format, and I will get back to you."*

I didn't want to try and hold out any further, so I was ready to sign at that point. But I think it was really important—and it was something that I was coached on—that you don't want to show your hand at any point, and you also don't want to take anything at a verbal offer. You want to make sure that you're receiving it in writing.

Mel: I'm always a big proponent, too, of just asking for more. Like, you just ask. You always say, ask—you don't know what you're going to get. And they expect—everyone expects you to negotiate. But these people were like, *"Oh, let's just give you more."* I'm like, *"Okay."*

Selena: And on that topic, too, from the very beginning, I was always stating my range of where I was at. And it wasn't a large range; it was a pretty tightened range of, *"This is where I am, and we can continue conversations as long as we're both on the same page with this."* And so, they ended up topping that range.

Mel: That's so good. That's so good. And then tell me a little bit about how onboarding goes. Like, you've been in the job for 13 years in the same organization—you know everybody, you know how to get things done shorthand, you know the language, the culture, etc. And then you go into this job—this new place—they're dying to have you. They've paid you lots of money, and you walk in. It's like a job with a title that you wanted in this bigger organization with more growth opportunities. And it wasn't like a huge promotion, but there were a lot of other things. There was a lot more upward opportunity for you, and it was bigger—more responsibility, bigger team, all the things if I remember correctly.

Selena: Yeah. Larger scope. I went from being—I was the Director of Human Resources for the Western Hemisphere. Now I have a global scope. It is a much larger organization. It is a higher title, the compensation and benefits and perks going with that. So, all of it—it was a step up, and I wasn't going to settle for anything less at this point.

But the onboarding phase. To be honest, the same amount of effort that I put into job searching and preparing myself for that, I also put into preparing for onboarding. Thinking ahead, reading the books, and thinking about how I would need to develop. And at my level, it wasn't that I was—I needed to be prepared to present to them what my first 30 days were going to look like. And then ahead of that, what are my 60 and 90 days?

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And so, it was already bringing to them, *"Here is what I'm going to be looking for. These are the phases I'm going to be in,"* and absolutely knowing that even though I am at the level of a career that I am in, I need to realize I need to take a step back and just listen and learn.

Mel: One of the things you and I talked about was—this comes up with everyone too, especially given that these guys are paying a lot of money for you—this tendency that people have to go in there trying to prove themselves, trying to get quick wins, and grabbing all the low-hanging fruit in the first 90 days.

And one of the things we talked about was not just what you'll accomplish in the first 90 days, but who you want to be as a leader. Who do you want to be in your team? To your organization? How will you listen? If you're going to have those meetings with people, who do you want to be in those meetings with those people as you're learning to connect with some of your key stakeholders and onboard in the role?

Tell me a little bit about—if I remember correctly, we went back and forth, like everyone does—how you were trying to think, *"Okay, I'm not going to prove myself,"* but that still came up a little bit. Tell me your experience with that in terms of thinking proactively about who you wanted to be in this role.

Selena: That thought process was already going on for me during the interviews—knowing that I needed to be authentic. Even though you're your most buttoned-up, polished self for the interviews, as you should be, you still want to make sure that you're true to yourself and not overcommitting or putting on a mask that you're not going to be able to sustain over time. It's not fair to the prospective employers, and it's mostly not fair to yourself, because then you're going to keep this level of stress, wondering, *"How do I maintain this facade?"*

It was really refreshing to me when you and I had that conversation, and you reminded me that I'd already proven myself just to even be at the level of being entertained for the interviews. I'd proven myself by the time I got the job. I'd already done that work. They'd already hired me. And yes, there is a level of stress and responsibility to show up and prove that you do have the expertise you displayed on your CV or through the conversations. But there's also a more important responsibility to pace yourself through that and not go at a rate that's so hard and fast that you're burning out.

It was really important for me to keep pulling back and asking, *"What's most important right now?"* Especially at this phase of being a leader, I needed to show a level of calm and thoughtfulness and recognize that my past history wasn't always going to be the answer to what this organization or team was facing now. I needed to take the time to have the proper conversations.

Mel: I love that. And one of the things I often say too is that organizations—they've hired you. They might be looking for you to prove yourself. Some people might even come to you and say, *"Now you've got to prove to us that you're qualified for this,"* or something like that.

But I think the more you can act as if you've already proven yourself—projecting yourself into a year from now in the job, thinking, *"Who will I be?"*—the more you can ground yourself in that person who is confident in their ability. You're not trying to people-please, say yes to everything, overwork to demonstrate value, or do favours just to get people to like you. The more you stay away from that, the more you act from a place of already being the leader you envision yourself being a year from now. Actually, you'll do your job better sooner when you're not trying to prove yourself. That *"proving yourself"* energy is hustling, needy, and graspy, and you don't have access to your best leadership qualities when you're like that.

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I totally understand—it's hard to always stay in that space, especially in a new job. But even if you can get to that place 50 per cent of the time while onboarding, it's going to serve you so much better in the long run.

Selena: Well, it has for me. One of the mantras I challenged myself with at the beginning of this—and that has paid dividends—is *Be the calm in the chaos*. For me, that meant so much because it was for my team. My team was very uncertain about having a new leader. They were wondering, *"What is this person going to be about? How are they going to show up for us? How will they respond to the different challenges that come up?"*

The more I displayed to them, *"Okay, we'll figure this out. Let's take it one step at a time,"* the more I saw that calmness filter through the team. I noticed it was showing up at all levels and in all conversations. It just kept running through my mind over and over. I even had it printed at the back of my drawer, and every morning when I would pull out my drawer and pull out my pens for the day, it would be there. And I needed that daily reminder.

Mel: That's so good. See, and I love that—just being intentional about who you want to be, I think, is really important. We talked a lot about that in lots of different ways. And I talk about that with all my clients. First, we decide who you want to be, and then how can you intentionally remind yourself to show up that way? Whether it's every morning before key meetings, or key touchpoints with certain people, we need to be more intentional and thoughtful about how we're showing up versus just running constantly, right?

So what advice do you think you would want to give someone who is in a position where they're looking to either get promoted internally or externally or just be someone who is looking for more opportunities to come their way? What did you learn from this experience that you would want to share with people?

Selena: The top piece of advice that I would give is that you have to be your number one advocate. No one is keeping a tally of all the wins you are achieving and all the things you are taking care of for the organization. You have to be broadcasting those and broadcasting them to the right members, who are usually going to be your leaders.

And not just at the time when you're asking for that promotion or that increase—you need to be doing it on a regular basis. So that by the time you do get to that point, yes, you can bring in a summary. But that was a really difficult thing for me because I was the type of person who would just keep my head down and get the work done and think I'd be rewarded.

That's not actually how it works. Most people don't even know all the work that goes into it unless you explain it. It's also not just about explaining it, but it's about understanding your audience and then explaining it to the audience in the way they will best receive it.

I learned that you can't just assume. You have to ask. Over my career, I had a very big change when I went from reporting to the EVP of Human Resources, who consumed information in one way, to the CFO, who was very different in what they wanted to receive. I needed to pause in between and have the learning lesson of asking, *"How is it that you best receive this? What cadence works for you?"* Then I had to show up in that way and ask for feedback again: *"How is this going? What tweaks do we need to make?"*

When it gets to the point of actually asking for the increase or the position, being realistic about what makes sense is important. What is it that you're ready for? What is it that the organization is ready for? And then always

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positioning it in a way of: *"This isn't what I want because it's best for me, but this is what's truly best for the organization, for the team, for the bottom line, and here's why. I can demonstrate it with this backup of information."*

Mel: I love that. I think too, for everyone, I want to just add to what you were saying—it's a combination of, I want to say, implicit and explicit self-advocacy. Let's call it that.

In explicit terms, we're talking specifically about, *"Here's what I've achieved this week,"* or finding ways to make it natural in a way where it doesn't feel like you're just talking about yourself. You want to embed it in your conversations, whether it's one-on-one, following up on something, or talking with key stakeholders. You're planting seeds about what you've achieved, what you're doing, or what you're looking for. Those are more explicit ways of doing it.

But the implicit ways are about knowing who you want to be, like we talked about—what kind of leader you want to be, what you want to stand for, what your purpose is—and showing up that way consistently with your audience. Letting them see that over and over again helps them form a specific narrative about you, what you're helping them build, and what you stand for. That also goes a long way toward self-advocacy.

I wanted to share that because people always tell me, *"I don't know. It feels slimy, it feels sleazy, it feels so weird to talk about myself."* It only feels that way because when you notice other people doing it poorly, it stands out. But when people do it well, you don't notice it—it feels natural. That's why you probably haven't seen it role-modelled effectively because when people do it purposefully, it's subtle and seamless.

Selena: I admit, throughout all of these phases and stages that I've been working through—and continue to work through—I've had to fight the fear. The first way of doing that is understanding and embracing that I do have these reservations. So much so that I didn't give myself enough credit for what I have done and what I am ready for. But then you fight through that anyway. Sometimes the mindset I would go into was, *"Let me not even look for the goal to be the answer I'm looking for. Let me let the goal be the exercise itself."*

Mel: Yes.

Selena: And the more that I went from, *"Oh, I have to give this presentation,"* to *"I get to give this presentation, and I get to learn from this, and I'll take this learning into what I do next,"* the more I was able to relieve myself. I wasn't expecting the end goal quite yet. I was just looking for a step in between.

Mel: That is a pattern with everything you've shared today—about how everything was a practice, or you were trying, or you were learning as you were going. I think that's wonderful because a lot of the time we're too attached to the outcome. *"Did I get the job? Did I do the presentation well? Did someone give me a pat on the back?"* But as you've said, if you set the goal as, *"I'm just going to do my best, see what happens, and take some learning from it"*—a goal you completely control—it's easier to achieve. It's about adding value.

We talk about it in the context of lagging versus leading indicators of success, right? The lagging indicator of success is getting the job. That's the end goal, but that's what happens at the end of all the work that you do—it's the last thing that happens. Versus all the little leading indicators of success, which are: *"Oh, I had an interview, and I learned this," "I went to this meeting, and I did this," "I realized that I have this capability."* That's a win. Those are all the leading indicators that got you to the end goal, which was amazing.

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And your attitude in that—it's interesting that you said, *"This is the way I dealt with the fear,"* but it's almost like it took the fear away because the goal was in your control, and you took the pressure off yourself to achieve an outcome other than just trying and learning. So beautiful. I love that advice too. You're just full of great advice today.

One last thing I wanted to ask you about—well, two last things. I'll also ask if there's anything else I haven't asked you that you want to share. But what were the main benefits of working—not just with me (okay, even though yes, I'm amazing)—but working with someone through this process? Tell me.

Selena: Yes, I second that—you are amazing, and you were extremely instrumental through all of this. Having these thought processes is the fruit of our labour and our discussions together over this entire journey. You were at the very forefront of it with me.

There are so many benefits to working with a coach. They're able to identify blind spots for you. You constantly stretched me to a place that was very uncomfortable, and I had to take homework from that to decide, *"What am I going to do with this? Am I going to lean into this, or am I not ready for this?"* And this became a decision point for me. But that's the point of coaching.

For me, there were really two benefits to coaching. Not only were you stretching me, but I was always looking at it through a capacity of, *"How can I take what Mel is always positioning me to do and use it with my own team?"* How can I now use the way she's asking me questions? That was important because, as you brought up earlier, I was struggling with my team. I wanted to grow them in critical thinking. I wanted to prepare them to be the next leaders. I was building bench strength and succession within my own team and organization as a way of paying it forward. So, for me, there were just so many benefits to doing that.

I'll also admit that there were sessions that became quite emotional for me. We don't always realize that the fear we're fighting, the reservations we're fighting, come from a very deep place. And until you come to terms with those and give yourself the time and space to work through them, you can't accomplish your goals and truly move forward.

Mel: And you were so courageous through the whole thing. Even in those sessions that were emotional—you gave yourself the space to be emotional and process them. Sometimes we'd have sessions where there was no resolution. You'd leave emotional, and that's hard for a coach to see, but it's hard for you too. But you always processed it and then came back saying, *"Here's what I learned from that experience and our conversation."*

I just want to commend you because, even though having a coach is great—not only as a cheerleader but also as a guide, a mirror, a mentor, and even a therapist sometimes in small ways—if the client doesn't do the work, nothing happens.

It's my job to find ways to make things click with you and help you see things, but you are the one doing the work. You've created this wonderful, beautiful career for yourself. And you have these skills now that will last your entire career—not just for this job you have now, but as you move forward. How you continue to connect with stakeholders inside and outside your organization, grow your team, and help them shine a spotlight on themselves—these are skills that will serve you forever. I just want to congratulate you for all the work you've done.

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Selena: Thank you. I will say it's imperative that an individual chooses the right coach. For me, you continued to reiterate that it was the best and the right relationship for me. You would check in with me even after the session would close. There was never a time where it was just, *"This is our time; this is our time to talk."* Especially after the emotional sessions, you'd say, *"Are you doing okay? I'm here for you if you need to talk again."* You were my cheerleader, and knowing I had that level of support made me feel that I was in a safe space to be as vulnerable as I needed to be to break through and grow.

I will say that my growth—the point of it was to be a better professional—but I've also become a better mother. And to me, that's even more important than career growth. My relationship with my daughters is a relationship I never had with my mother. I didn't know how to create it for myself. But the more honest I became with myself about what I needed as a child, the more I was able to give to them. And now, the same feedback I ask of my leaders and team members, I ask of my children.

Mel: Oh my gosh, that's amazing. Congratulations on everything you've accomplished and what you're building. You are an amazing person. I really feel privileged to have been able to work with you, honestly, and to continue to work with you.

Is there anything else you want to share? I mean, you've just shared so many pieces of gold. I can't imagine there's something you haven't shared—it's been amazing—but I want to give you the opportunity if there's anything else you'd like to add.

Selena: I will just say to everyone that most of the time, we can be our own worst enemy with the thoughts we tell ourselves—that we're not ready. You will never know what your possibilities are if you don't try. Try, and if you fall down, take it as a lesson, get back up, and try again.

Mel: I love it. Your kiddos, your team members, your bosses—they're all so lucky to have you, Selena. Thank you so much for sharing all of that today. You're going to help so many people. Thank you for paying it forward.

Hey, if you want to simplify leadership while amplifying your value, then you need to get your hands on my free training. Head over to melsavage.com/simple for instant access to the training and get a taste of how I help my clients lead with ease and make more money in the process. I'll see you there.

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