

## Mary Ellen Jelenek Transcript

**Mary Ellen:** If we think about American Express, we think about ourselves as being in the business of membership rather than the business of payments. And so when I think about membership, it's really about when you show up, what does it feel like when you're with American Express?

**Matt:** To thrive in a rapidly evolving landscape, brands must move at an ever-increasing pace. I'm Matt Britton, founder and CEO of Suzy. Join me and key industry leaders as we dive deep into the shifting consumer trends within their industry, why it matters now, and how you can keep up. Welcome to The Speed of Culture. We're here live from the Barclays Center in Brooklyn. I'm thrilled to be joined by Mary Ellen Jelenek, who's just celebrated 24 years working at American Express. Today, she's SVP of Global Brand Marketing and Sponsorships. I'm so excited to dig in. Great to see you.

**Mary Ellen:** Thank you. Thanks for having me, Matt.

**Matt:** Absolutely. It's not lost on me that we're here at the Barclays Center and American Express is a big sponsor of the Brooklyn Nets. I live in Brooklyn, a big fan of everything you do to support the team here. And I know that you also support a variety of other teams, the NBA, the Bulls, the Lakers, the Heat, etc. Why is the NBA a property that's been so important for Amex as you continue to build your brand?

**Mary Ellen:** Well, thanks for having us here. And I'm so glad that you're a fan and that you're a local. That's so important to us. So, look, the NBA is an incredibly important partner. And we think about that at the league level in what we do, but also, to your point, in the team and the venue level specifically. And so if I think about here in Brooklyn, we make sure we want to offer our card members who are Nets fans the absolute best experience. And if I think about Barclays Center, Barclays has been a great partner for us, as has the Nets and the Liberty. We have a relationship with the Liberty as well as we support women's sports. But if I think about the venue, we have, just launched something called the American Express Venue Collection. And we want to make sure that when our card members show up at a venue, they know that they can sort of get something extra or special because they're with American Express. So we give them access to tickets. We make sure that when they show up, they can get to the action faster because there's a fast lane entrance. And then they get discounts on-site. And so that venue benefit is now consistent across nine venues in the U.S. And U.K., more to come, but we're excited to sort of give that consistency, whether you're at, a Nets game, a Liberty game, or Disney on Ice, as you may.

**Matt:** Right.

**Mary Ellen:** Exactly.

**Matt:** Yeah. And live sports have just gained power in the world of media. I mean, if you look at the top 100 watch programs on linear TV each year, I think 95 are live NFL games. And, when you look at linear TV, which is a channel that a lot of large brands have built their brand equity on, the only thing that's corralling consumers at scale is live sports, right?

**Mary Ellen:** That's right. In linear TV, that's really what remains. And I do think... There's so much passion in live sports, right? It's a really important channel for us in media, but also in that actual on-site experience.

**Matt:** Yeah.

**Mary Ellen:** Which, if we think about American Express, we think about ourselves as being in the business of membership rather than the business of payments. And so when I think about membership, it's really about when you show up, what does it feel like when you're with American Express, right?

**Matt:** And you've been at Amex for 24 years, so the business and the industry have changed so dramatically since you joined, talk to me about, I guess, what are some of the biggest highlights of your journey at Amex and how you think the business has changed the most from the day you walked into the door 24 years ago to today?

**Mary Ellen:** I started in the traveler's check division. So that pretty much-

**Matt:** What's a traveler's check? Right.

**Mary Ellen:** That's not at all, right? So I used them studying abroad and then I joined the company in that role. So I joined the company in 2000 and I was in what was called our traveler's check division. It quickly became our prepaid division because we realized those products needed to turn to plastic or metal in some cases. And so I think when I think back to that, I just really wanted to join a company that I knew I could grow at. And so I went to school in Boston. I moved back to New York. I was working in event planning. And I will never forget driving home from New Jersey when the phone rang with my hiring leader that I got the job to go work at American Express. I started as an advertising coordinator. And so when I think back to that, I was super eager and hungry to learn. I worked hard. And American Express has been good to me in that they have afforded me opportunities to do a variety of things, work in a variety of functions, be it marketing, or advertising sponsorships now. I've held P&L roles. I've worked globally. So for me, that growth has just been so fun. And it's the 20-plus years that have gone in a flash. So I've seen the business evolve from paper products to plastics and metal. But it's also a company that has a tremendous focus on growing talent. And I think that's been amazing too, for me. And then to get to lead teams and do that for them.

**Matt:** And when I think about Amex and just the heritage of the brand, one thing that hasn't changed, I remember the tagline, I don't know how long ago it started, but membership has its privileges, right? And when you talk about me walking to the Barclays Center and the fast pass into the line and getting all these perks, it sounds like that is kind of the constant, right? That you want to make your members feel like they're taken care of.

**Mary Ellen:** That's right. We call it powerful backing, right? We want to make sure that when you're with American Express, you feel like American Express has your back. And for experiences, that comes in the form of making sure that the experience is a little better with American Express. We give you access to enjoy your top passion, be it sports, music, and theater, and we can even ignite new ones, right? That you can try those new things. And then when you're with American Express, you know you're going to get that access, but you're also going to get something a little more when you visit on-site.

**Matt:** And of course, travel is another huge vertical in terms of having your back.

**Mary Ellen:** 100% travel, and dining as well. But travel is really like our origin in that having your back, in that powerful backing to make sure that your experience is safe, secure, special, all of those things. And that goes back to really at the core of membership. It is experience. It's being our brand mission is to be the world's most respected in providing an exceptional customer experience every day. And so it's really about that everyday part that across whether it's travel or entertainment or dining, that we make sure we're doing something to make the customer experience great.

**Matt:** It's interesting because when you think about a credit card and the actual product of a credit card, one could look at the product of a credit card like the physical card. Then the product attributes could be the interest rate the experience of paying for the card and things that have to do with the card. But over time, American Express has evolved into a lifestyle brand. You don't hear American Express talking about the same. We don't hear Apple talking about their chips as much, right? They talk about what the Apple devices unlock. And the key to being a lifestyle brand is what it unlocks. And for you, you're unlocking a lifestyle. And when you're talking about the backing of American Express. So in that strategy, it's a strategy that American Express has gone all in on. How do you know what your members care about? And doesn't that change a lot? And how do you evolve and make those decisions with the consumer? Yeah.

**Mary Ellen:** We are deeply rooted in customer insights, right? Our existing card member is at the core of what we do, and how we think about bringing to life different assets across sports, music, etc. But we're also really focused on the fastest-growing segment there. So we look a bunch at the millennial and Gen Z customers. There's 60% of the new customers who we bring in.

**Matt:** Wow. Is that through Amex Blue? Are they coming in?

**Mary Ellen:** Interestingly, no. A lot of them are coming in through our premium products where they pay a fee, but they see tremendous value.

**Matt:** They're more active and they're traveling a lot and they take the most advantage of all the perks that you provide.

**Mary Ellen:** Yeah. So whether it's a travel value prop on the Platinum Card or dining related to the gold product, they come in and pay the fee for those products and they see the value in doing that. So as we think about millennial and Gen Z customers, there's a lot in the experience space that we have in the portfolio that appeals to them. But we also just the end of last year announced a new partnership with Formula One. Formula One is close to having a billion fans.

**Matt:** Massive global movement.

**Mary Ellen:** Massive global movement. Right. And it's one of those partnerships where I think north of 70 percent of the fan base is millennial and Gen Z. So it's not a coincidence that we looked at Formula One as a new partner. We matched that up because of the growing card member base we have in that segment.

**Matt:** And Coachella is another example of targeting that younger generation.

**Mary Ellen:** That's right. That's right. A lot in the music festival space targets that millennial Gen Z population, as well as what we call our direct-to-artist partnerships. We changed up our music model, I guess, over the past 18 months where we used to be focused on providing ticket sale access, and pre-sales. And we still have that. And it's still part of what we offer. But we realized we wanted to do more to make it a little bit more special. So we started to partner directly with artists and their teams to build out a curated experience for our card members. We did this with Ed Sheeran. We're in the process of doing it right now with Olivia Rodrigo. So if I think about Olivia, we launched our partnership with the announcement of her last tour. And we had a card member concert in L.A. It was at a venue that she'd always wanted to play at. But she became so big so fast. It was a little bit of underplay for her. Right. But she wanted to go back there. That's where that co-collaboration comes in. Right. Learning from her team what's important to her, what's important to us, what's important to the fan. And so she did an acoustic concert with a Q&A. Our card members got to come and see her play some of her Guts album.

**Matt:** An experience in money you really can't buy, right?

**Mary Ellen:** Exactly right. Can't replicate it, right? They got to learn about the Guts album. They got to learn more about her. I was able to attend that one. It was special. And then that flows through to her on tour and we activate with her on tour. So there's several ways then that that flows through. And I think it's that hand-in-hand development with the artist team that has been differentiating for us.

**Matt:** It's interesting because the world's changed. It used to be that prestige brand. Didn't want to target a younger generation because there was a signal that it wasn't a prestige brand. Right. But now when I talked about this 10 years ago, when I wrote Youth Nation, which is like the young people are now driving culture and society, and you can be a prestige brand by leaning into these things because I think older consumers now are acting younger and they have access to younger things. They have Instagram. They could see what younger people are doing. So they're no longer disconnected. This means you have older people at Coachella too. You have older people like Olivia Rodrigo. So you can lean into pop culture in a way that doesn't denigrate the luxury and prestige aspects of the Amex brand.

**Mary Ellen:** That's a hundred percent right. And they're multi-generational is what I think you're saying. And I looked around that the Olivia Rodrigo concert and it is a multi-generational audience, which is a beautiful thing.

**Matt:** Absolutely.

**Mary Ellen:** I love her music as do my kids.

**Matt:** Yeah. So obviously a big role of any marketer in the modern age is data and understanding data. Amex has a ton of data across so many different, how do you use data from your consumer to drive your strategies and decisions?

**Mary Ellen:** We do. We sit on a lot of data, right? It's an amazing asset for the company.

**Matt:** Sure.

**Mary Ellen:** And it's a marketer's dream in many ways because you know so much about your customer. So look, I think across all of our experiences, we're looking at metrics, key indicators with the data that we have on how our card members spend or what the financial implications of doing certain programs are. We also leverage customer insights a ton. We don't do anything without talking to customers before we go to market, evaluating what customers think on the other side. And I think that is core to how we go to market, but then also continue to evolve and innovate once we are in the market. I'll give you an example.

**Matt:** Please.

**Mary Ellen:** We just took all of our experience assets, right? Sports, music, theater, and culinary experiences, and we put them under the umbrella of Amex experiences. It might sound fairly obvious, but we were calling it entertainment, internally. We're calling the category entertainment. And it's one of those things that customer research told us, people think of entertainment as streaming. It's more passive than what you have here. These are full-blown experiences. You have to take credit for what you're creating for your card members and fans. And so I think it's just an example of how, from the data that drives big decisions, like should we invest in Formula One because of the generation it appeals to and the scale, through to what are the right words we're using. We're incredibly, data and insights-driven. We're incredibly data and insights-driven.

**Matt:** We'll be right back with The Speed of Culture after a few words from our sponsors. And the word experiences is interesting because, by nature, experiences are very hard to scale, right? When you think about in real life and doing something where there are people and then, okay, sure, you can do something here at the Barclays Center. You have your headquarters here, but you're operating, I'm sure, events and activities all around the world at any given time. I mean, how much of that does that take over your job dealing with the headaches and the fire alarms of live events and experiences? You must have some stories.

**Mary Ellen:** Look, we've got an amazing team and there are stories.

**Matt:** You can't control it sometimes though.

**Mary Ellen:** Well, and I think the key is you have to plan, right? You have to have principles and a vision for how things are going to go, but you also have to be flexible. You have to be nimble and you have to react in the moment. And I think that's something that... We pride ourselves on being very principled, really keeping the brand at the center of everything in both making the brand relevant, and also in keeping the brand safe and thinking about that card member, right? Like what is the right experience for that card member? And if we have to pivot on site, it usually ends up being logistics related that we pivot to make sure that the experience is optimal, right?

**Matt:** Absolutely.

**Mary Ellen:** It ends up being small things where we're pivoting on-site, right? Like concessions and things like that.

**Matt:** Yeah. And how are you as a professional, you talked about Consumer Insights, which I'm sure is one piece of it, but obviously, it's incumbent on you and your role to make sure that you're kind of the arbiter of cool, right? I mean, I don't know if anyone's ever said that to you before, but you kind of are in that role. If you choose an artist or a franchise or something that is just out of taste with consumers, well, then they may not think that you understand them, et cetera. So how do you do that? Like, how do you understand what's around the corner to know to have conviction in something like F1?

**Mary Ellen:** Let me tell you, my kids do not think I'm in the Arbor.

**Matt:** Okay, well, give me their number. I'll call them. I'll tell them how cool their mom's job is.

**Mary Ellen:** So that's amazing. It's a great question. And so I do think we're incredibly data driven. Formula One is a great example. Right. And for me, I learned about Formula One in this job. So I saw Drive to Survive. I could look at the numbers on paper and say, like, the growing fan base is incredible. This is a hot place, right? Like, we should look at this. But I hadn't been to a race. So if I think about that early evaluation, I first did the number side of it and what's on paper, the viewership, the growing fan base.

**Matt:** It was everything.

**Mary Ellen:** I was quite young. But knowing I hadn't been to a race, I said, I couldn't fully evaluate this until I saw it in real life. And so it was actually towards the end of the schedule. There were three races left. And it meant I either looked at the schedule and I said, I guess I'm going to Mexico in five days. So the team and I pulled together a trip. We went to Mexico City. And I have to say, seeing it in real life, you always have to see something in real life.

**Matt:** Yeah, for sure.

**Mary Ellen:** Mexico City happens to be an incredible race. But I could just see then the way it would come together of like, this is an amazing experience in and of itself.

**Matt:** And it allows you to activate the right way, because how can you drive activation if you've never been there as well?

**Mary Ellen:** Of course, you have to walk in those shoes, right? But I could tell once we got on-site, I could see the ways that our card members want access to this. But then we can also find ways to make it special for a card member. An example is, we play quite heavily in tennis as well. And we've-

**Matt:** US Open?

**Mary Ellen:** Yes, the US Open and Wimbledon.

**Matt:** Yeah.

**Mary Ellen:** And we've always provided radios there so fans can hear the match. Well, Formula One, we said, wouldn't that be great? It's really loud. You don't aren't always able to hear any broadcast or announcer but need a different radio than tennis.

**Matt:** Sure.

**Mary Ellen:** But that was something we were able to then integrate that like our Amex card members could get that radio and have an amazing experience on site where they're following every moment of the race. You throw in a fan experience for card members, a lounge. And you start to have our playbook of assets that the Amex card member goes there and knows they're getting something extra special because they're with us.

**Matt:** Yeah. And something contextual to the event that they're at.

**Mary Ellen:** That's right.

**Matt:** Right.

**Mary Ellen:** And, you know, then fast forward, we worked with Formula One over many months to come to the right partnership. We launched in Austin and then Vegas was a very big deal for them. We were more than 50% of the tickets sold for Vegas, which was another like...

**Matt:** Wow.

**Mary Ellen:** Going back to your data question, you then have the validation on the other side, that you know we-

**Matt:** And acting at the business results.

**Mary Ellen:** That's right.

**Matt:** That's all about.

**Mary Ellen:** You know it was the right thing.

**Matt:** And obviously, experiences are such a big part of people's passion points. But the other thing people love is their phones, and they're staring at their phones 24-7.

**Mary Ellen:** Me too.

**Matt:** And the way to reach them on their phones, as we know, is through content. So what role does content creation play as an extension to all these events? Because I would imagine it creates a massive, way more scalable opportunity to take the power of these events and drive the business result.

**Mary Ellen:** That's 100% right, right? And we think about that content creation as expanding that reach, to your point. We expand the reach of the event. It then tells other card members, but also our prospects. I think that content of, I was an Amex cardholder. I got my tickets through Amex. I went to the US Open. There was an incredible fan experience. I was able to go to the card member lounge when they needed a little respite. I got this radio. All of that can be broadcast through. And then the prospect who, maybe they're at the event and they see that, or maybe they're looking at it on social and says, oh, that's pretty cool that Amex does that. And they realize then that we do it at Tennis, at golf, in racing.

**Matt:** Oh, the passion point.

**Mary Ellen:** They start to realize those expanding concentric circles of places where we show up that way.

**Matt:** Sure.

**Mary Ellen:** That content is hugely important for us.

**Matt:** And are you working closely with folks in like, say, card member acquisition to be able to retarget people based upon the passion point interests to take that content as sort of like a carrot to bring them into the portfolio?

**Mary Ellen:** We think about the full funnel of marketing, right? So we think about experiences and things like that, content media being the upper funnel, but then flowing through eventually to acquiring that new customer.

**Matt:** Absolutely.

**Mary Ellen:** We even sometimes let customers sample things on-site. If you think about showing up at the American Express fan experience, we will let a prospect come in and take a look at that. So they get a little taste of membership too.

**Matt:** Yeah. So looking forward in terms of how quickly things will change with the consumer, are there new trends and habits that consumers are adopting that you have your eye on as a marketer to keep things moving forward?

**Mary Ellen:** Definitely. I mean, I think that in the music space, we're always focused on what's next, that next artist. I think that gaming is an interesting space that we're evaluating. I also think that further integration between the physical experiences and the digital experience is increasingly important to us. We've done some of that. If you think about it, I'll go back to Wimbledon. We had a Fortnite game integration with that activation. So customers could experience the real-life match, but then also play in the game. I think that there's also an increased integration, one for that interesting gamification that customers are looking for, but also there's a practicality. As you said, everybody's on their phone, and an ease that we want to make sure we deliver. So most of the events that we activate at, we are starting to integrate into their app. If you think about somebody's going to Coachella, well, before they get to Coachella when they download the app to see the lineup, we make sure that we're integrated into that app. So that they know what they can get with their American Express. They know where the card member lounge that they can go to, the fan experience that they can go to. And this past Coachella, we also made sure that we pushed out a merchandise offer on their app before the event even started. So it also starts to extend the period with which the event is relevant, which is, we think, an important thing.

**Matt:** Yeah, I mean, a few things came to mind as I heard you talk. One in which you talk about gaming, and you can't mention sports these days without mentioning sports gambling, which is now legalized in many states here in the U.S., for better or worse. The NBA has embraced it, as well as fantasy sports. So those are things that have gamification that have driven a deeper fan engagement and brought the casual fan into the fold of sports.

**Mary Ellen:** That's right.

**Matt:** Yeah. So it's going to be interesting to see how that evolves. The second thing, I was at a dinner with a group of marketers the other night talking about the Apple Vision Pro. Have you gotten to try those on yet?

**Mary Ellen:** I have not.

**Matt:** Okay.

**Mary Ellen:** Though I just had a meeting about it the other day.

**Matt:** Okay, there you go. Because that to me is something where I'm not sure how quickly that's going to be adopted and gain widespread adoption. But when you talk about bringing the experience to people and the access and the content you're able to create, I would imagine there's a world in the future where VR/AR could have real applications to your card members and your business model.

**Mary Ellen:** Quite possibly.

**Matt:** Yeah.

**Mary Ellen:** Right. And I think that there's tremendous scale in that.

**Matt:** Yeah, exactly.

**Mary Ellen:** It's incredible to think about, right? The way that could scale something is almost a real-life experience. Now, what I counter that with is that I do feel like the growth and desire to experience something that is actually in real life.

**Matt:** Yeah, I don't think it's going to replace it.

**Mary Ellen:** It's there, right?

**Matt:** I agree with you.

**Mary Ellen:** I think two actual forces on the customer side have pushed that forward in the experiential space. One is that there was a post-pandemic reaction of, I want to go to in real life experience. I want to feel alive.

**Matt:** I think they call it travel rage or something.

**Mary Ellen:** Travel rage, right? Revenge travel.

**Matt:** Revenge travel, right, right.

**Mary Ellen:** And I think they just want to feel alive.

**Matt:** Yeah.

**Mary Ellen:** Go to a sports event. You're screaming for your-

**Matt:** Or a concert. Sure.

**Mary Ellen:** Exactly. You're singing along with the artist. You feel so alive.

**Matt:** Yeah.

**Mary Ellen:** And I think that's here to stay.

**Matt:** A hundred percent.

**Mary Ellen:** The other piece is that the millennial and Gen Z population if we ask them when they join American Express, they're 60% of our new cards. Experiences are a big driver of why they signed up. And we also know that that's a population that is willing to pay. I think it's nearly 80% said they'll pay up, for the right experience. And also, they're willing to travel for those experiences. A little over a third are saying, not only do I want to have these amazing experiences, I'll travel to see that sports team, to experience that incredible event. So, I do think the real-life piece is here to stay and will always remain important.

**Matt:** Yeah. It's interesting as I think about the role of Amex in my life. So, I signed up, I think, for my first Amex when I was at BU.

**Mary Ellen:** Oh, awesome.

**Matt:** Like a table. Like during spring break, I got a free t-shirt, right? And I'm still an Amex card member today, but now my business uses Amex. So, I also would imagine that you target millennials and Gen Z who are entrepreneurial by nature, there's a crossover impact to your business side of your consumer application.

**Mary Ellen:** That's, look, we have a huge focus on small businesses, right? And businesses of all sizes. So, I think we're focused on meeting the needs of businesses at any level in both the payment side of things. As well as if they're an accepting merchant. And I think that's another, having been at Amex for 24 years, I spent a good amount of time also working on our shop's small programs, which was an incredibly rewarding one. Did that in the pandemic. But I think we have a keen focus on making sure that we're helping businesses as well as consumers.

**Matt:** Absolutely. So, shifting gears as we wrap up here to you and your career. Great run at Amex, and it sounds like you continue to just drive incredible innovation to the brand. When you look back at your career, you decided to stay in one place your entire career, which is rare. And a lot of people now, I think, that come into the workforce think that they need to move every two to three years. And I guess in some ways there are benefits to that, but there's also benefit to understanding a culture and a business and feeling comfortable and working your way up. What were some decisions you think you made right along the way, besides just sticking it out there, that allowed you to put yourself in the position that you are today?

**Mary Ellen:** Sure. So, look, I have a left-brain answer to this and a right-brain answer to this, right? I think on the left brain side. I've had an amazing range of experiences. So, I've worked in

B2B businesses as well as B2C businesses. I always tell marketers, you want to work across both.

**Matt:** Yeah, I agree.

**Mary Ellen:** No matter which direction you end up going in.

**Matt:** You want to cross over too, but I agree.

**Mary Ellen:** But I think the depth of customer insights you learn from working in a B2C business is unparalleled. And I think the complexity of a B2B business is really important to understand. And so, I feel grateful. And that was one thing that's afforded me in several roles where I've been able to do both. The other I'd say is it's a truly global company. And so, I've been able to work across a variety of geographies and a variety of business lines which was a good experience. And that sort of helps me flip to the right side brain of it, right? Like, I think I have colleagues, friends, and mentors from all around the world having worked at this company. And I do think the people at the company are special. I do think it's a company where there is longer tenure, perhaps a little abnormal in this day and age.

**Matt:** Yeah.

**Mary Ellen:** But I think it's because there's an open-mindedness to growth. And I think about the variety of roles Amex has offered me to play at the company, be it across levels, obviously, but also across functions. I've worked in marketing. I've worked in product roles. I did a stint in M&A. I've managed P&Ls. It's been a nice range of activities that I felt like I was always growing. And so, I think it's that combination of the business having multiple businesses within that allowed me to grow. I always felt like there was something new.

**Matt:** Yeah.

**Mary Ellen:** Right? I think there's a-

**Matt:** That's when people leave if they don't feel challenged.

**Mary Ellen:** That's right. And I think there's a strong culture of innovation that makes things feel fresh, right?

**Matt:** Yeah.

**Mary Ellen:** So, 24 years can just go by in a flash.

**Matt:** I know. I know it all too well. And when you think about the next generation of leaders at Amex and building your team, what do you look for in bringing new people onto your team? And what makes an entry or newer-level employee successful at Amex?

**Mary Ellen:** I've always said there are two things you want to do. You want to make sure that you're driving results and that you're building strong relationships. And if you do those things across any body of work, I think your likelihood of success is strong.

**Matt:** And how are those strong relationships built, in your opinion, in a corporate environment?

**Mary Ellen:** Look, I think it's largely about listening. I think it's about both, you know, to what somebody's saying, to what they're not saying. I think it's about asking probing questions. I think it's about finding mutually beneficial solutions. And that's with internal partners as well as external partners. I think it's probably the most important thing in my job right now, right, is listening and making sure that I can solve problems in a way that it works for all parties involved.

**Matt:** Yeah, you never stop listening no matter how long you've been in the company, there's always more to learn.

**Mary Ellen:** That's right. And it's never a zero-sum game, right?

**Matt:** Absolutely. Cool. Well, to wrap things up here, I mean, it's been so amazing to hear about your journey and everything you've accomplished at Amex. Is there a mantra or saying that you like to live by that you think could embody your career and your journey?

**Mary Ellen:** I actually, I often say to people is enjoy when the wind is at your back, right? And like success can be glorious and enjoy that. Don't enjoy it for too long. I think you have to keep moving on and keep delivering. And on the flip side of that, what I always say is that things will go wrong. Particularly, I say this to younger colleagues, right? Who perhaps haven't had that experience yet of something going wrong. And I say what matters in that situation when something goes wrong is how you handle it. I think you want to be honest. You want to look at it objectively. You want to stay calm so that people tell you what's happening. Keep your head about you. And I think the way you handle something going wrong is indicative of character. And I think that's what's probably the most important thing in how you manage your career.

**Matt:** Absolutely. Couldn't agree more. Awesome. Well, thanks again for joining. On behalf of Suzy and the Adweek team, thanks again to Mary Ellen Jelenek, SVP of Global Brand Marketing and Sponsorships at American Express for joining us today. Be sure to subscribe, rate, and review The Speed of Culture podcast on your favorite podcast platform. Until next time, see you soon. The Speed of Culture is brought to you by Suzy as part of the Adweek Podcast Network and Acast Creator Network. You can listen and subscribe to all of Adweek's podcasts by visiting [adweek.com/podcasts](https://adweek.com/podcasts). To find out more about Suzy, head to [suzy.com](https://suzy.com). And make sure to search for The Speed of Culture on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and Google Podcasts, or anywhere else podcasts are found. Click follow so you don't miss out on any future episodes. On behalf of the team here at Suzy, thanks for listening.