

Jerry: Hey, Patty. How are you? I- I am super excited about seeing you again. It's just like, uh, it's amazing to see you. How are you, Patty?

Patty McCord: I'm great, Jerry. Hello, and it's great to see you again too.

Jerry: Uh, before we get started, why don't you just take a moment and introduce yourself, tell us who you are.

[00:00:30]

Patty McCord: I'm Patty McCord. I'm the author of a book coming out in January ...

Jerry: Yes, yes, yes, yes. We're very excited.

Patty McCord: And- and I- I'm kind of a rebel. I've spent my whole career in human resources, going from being a good girl to being just absolutely tired of everything we do that doesn't matter anymore. So, I'm out to conquer the world now, and talk about a new way of working. That's who I am right now.

[00:01:00]

Jerry: I love that introduction, and I will ... I will, uh, note that the new book is called Powerful, and we're gonna be talking about some of the concepts in that. And- and it's due out January 8. And, um, I gotta tell you, I- I said this before we started recording, but I'll say it again. I really love the book.

Patty McCord: Thank you.

Jerry: I really, really love the book. Partially I loved it because, uh, my dear friend Patty is so evident in the book.

Patty McCord: Mm.

[00:01:30]

Jerry: And partially because you're funny as shit, and you tell the truth, and I'm a huge admirer of people who, um, kinda cut for bullshit and tell the truth. So I'm super excited about it.

Patty McCord: Right. We're peas in a pod, Jake. (laughs)

Jerry: We are peas in a pod. (laughs)

Patty McCord: Peas in a podcast.

Jerry: Peas in a podcast. I like that, yes. Very good. So, let's- let's have some fun. You know, there's a couple concepts that, um, really struck me, uh, in the book. And, um, you know, some of them remind me of some of the things that- that,

[00:02:00]

uh, I hold dear. Um, one is this notion of radical honesty. And I- I'll just give you a little context. One of the things that we do a lot at Reboot, and I use this phrase, radical self-inquiry, all the time.

[00:02:30] And the notion of radical self-inquiry, in a sense, reminded me a little bit of your radical honesty. In this way. I think of it as a way to cut through our self-delusional bullshit. You know, the bullshit that tells us we ought to have the answers, that we have the answers, that we ... that we are. A- you know- in a- in a- little exercise that I will do start a talk oftentimes, especially for first-time CEOs will be something like, well, who here in this room is brave enough to admit they have no fuckin' clue as to what to do?

Patty McCord: Mm-hmm.

Jerry: Right? And it usually cracks them up. So, tell me what you mean by radical honesty. What does it mean?

Patty McCord: It's- it's a way of talking to each other in- in somewhat of a selfless way, right? So when I talk about radical honesty in the context of work in the company, I mean that if you're speaking about something you disagree with on the basis of making the company better, making a customer happy, you know, uh, achieving something that you want to achieve, and that's your end game, then you can be really truthful. And the thing about being really truthful is, and you know this, I mean, it sets up ... If I tell you I think you're full of shit and I think you're wrong, and I have a reason why and I have a reason for telling you that, and I turn out to be right, then you trust me just a little bit more.

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

Patty McCord: And when teams of people really trust each other, they just get more stuff done. Because it moves faster. So- so part of the reason I started doing it was just for efficiency. It was just, I didn't have time to, you know, you know this, especially in a startup when things are so chaotic and everybody's crazy and everybody's running a million ways at once, when things get political, it just slows you down.

[00:04:30] And so the idea of practicing honesty in the moment just was an efficiency matter at the beginning. And then when it became like a way of being, I could see how teams formed faster, how they trusted each other more quickly, uh, how they got more done, because they just cut through the bullshit.

Jerry: You know, it- it- I'm having a, uh, peas in a pod moment here, because just the other day, I was leading an offset with a team of people, and we were talking in advance about, what are the outcomes that they were looking for? And they kept saying, we want to build trust, we want to build trust.

[00:05:00] Patty McCord: Mm-hmm.

Jerry: And, you know, I said to them, stop aiming at building trust. Start aiming at telling the truth. Right? And- and- and that's what ... and we're both smiling and laughing, because people- people will stand up and not tell each other the truth, and then call Patty or Jerry and say, we've got a trust problem in the org.

Patty McCord: (laughs)

Jerry: And they don't see it because they don't see this connection.

[00:05:30]

Patty McCord: You know, I don't know where it came from. Like, sometimes I think it's my, you know, hardscrabble Texas girl background, that girl, you just tell the truth, honey, bless your heart. You can always throw a bless your heart in ...

Jerry: (laughs)

Patty McCord: You know, you're full of shit, bless your heart. Uh, and then, or- or did it come from all those years I spent with engineers who don't see nuance. They- they don't, you know? That's good or bad, it's right or wrong, it's black or white, it's zero or one, right?

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

[00:06:00]

Patty McCord: So, whenever they hear anything that's nuanced or subtle, they think it's bullshit.

Jerry: Yeah.

Patty McCord: Because it's not, you know, it's not digital in that way. And the other thing is, people, we're- we're conditioned to be nice.

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

[00:06:30]

Patty McCord: And that we have to tell the truth in a nice way. And our conditioning has made that niceness, um, obliterate the truth. So ...

Jerry: Well, it- it- it leads to like, you know, uh, and I know you know this phrase, the shit sandwich.

Patty McCord: Yeah, that's right. That's right. Yeah.

Jerry: Right? You know ...

Patty McCord: Yeah, you're a really wonderful guy. You sure fucked up, but you won't ever do it again.

Jerry: Right, right. And- and- and, you know, and- and on the receiving end of the shit sandwich, if you're at all emotionally honest, you walk away going, well, that was fucked up.

Patty McCord: (laughs) Yes, that's right.

[00:07:00]

Jerry: You know? Can I trust anything that this person says to me going forward. Um, and I think it ... I think you hit upon a really important point. There's a socialization that starts to occur with us as children, I think. Which is, if you have nothing nice to say, don't say it.

Patty McCord: Right.

Jerry: Well, how about the truth?

Patty McCord: Yeah. You know, and I think that, what I've realized over time is that it's a- it's a learned ... it's a skill that you learn over time, and it's a skill that we can teach. I mean, I think you do it and I think I do it. Which is, I can say hard things to you, with kindness and respect, and you keep your dignity, and I'm not cruel. And those are not ... having to do with being nice. Right?

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Jerry: That's right ...

Patty McCord: Nice is a shit sandwich.

Jerry: That's right. And- and- and I think- I think you're right, because what we often see is in opposition to this shit sandwich patina ...

Patty McCord: Mm-hmm.

Jerry: Is actually an overly aggressive ...

Patty McCord: Yes.

[00:08:00]

Jerry: Maneuver. Right? So I'm gonna say to you that I disagree with you by trying to annihilate you and decimate you.

Patty McCord: Yes. Yeah.

Jerry: And by winning that way. So, yeah.

Patty McCord: I have a- I have a Reed story. Um, Reed is the CEO of Netflix and we worked together for years and years. And, um, over time, you know, we knew each other really well. And I remember conversations where I would say to him, oh, [00:08:30] we're about to go into debate mode. Okay, let me describe to you what debate mode means. Um, you are going to now come up with as many facts and figures as you can to disavow my argument. And so when we go into debate mode, you win, I lose. So let's concede the fight right now, right?

Jerry: (laughs)

Patty McCord: You will win...(laughs) Because when we go there, you know, you- you are going to out-manuever me, because you're better at this than me. So, let me concede right now that whenever this conversation ends, you will be factually correct. And you'll also be wrong. And there's, you know, and that nuance of, because you deliver facts does not mean you deliver truth as the other person sees it. And that- that- that ability to put yourself in the receiving end of the message's shoes, if that makes sense ...

Jerry: Mm.

[00:09:30]

Patty McCord: That's- that's the skill. That's the skill of radical honesty, is being able to say the truth so that the other person hears it. Because your point, you know, so, shouting out anger, even if it's truthful, doesn't achieve your endgame, which is for the other person to understand what's happening here.

Jerry: Yeah.

Patty McCord: Right? For the other person to be able to act on your honest feedback. And you know the other thing that's weird about this kinda stuff is, we always go to the negative, right?

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

[00:10:00]

Patty McCord: We always say, like the word feedback has become the, you know, the word that means telling you shit you don't wanna hear in a nice way, right?

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

Patty McCord: That's feedback. And we forget the most effective feedback for us as humans is the positive ones.

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

Patty McCord: Right? You ... and it's much easier to start practicing radical honesty when you start with saying, hey, it's great to see you again, I really love working with you, and this thing you did was amazing, right?

Jerry: Yeah.

[00:10:30]

Patty McCord: And that builds trust too, right? So, there's that- that tension ... I mean, I'd love to have that not shit sandwich, whatever it is, maybe it's a macaroon, right? It's like ...

Jerry: (laughs)

Patty McCord: (laughs) You're- you're amazing. We've- we've got to work on some stuff to make it better, because then we'll be amazing together. I don't ...

Jerry: Yeah. Yeah.

Patty McCord: You know what I'm saying?

Jerry: I do.

Patty McCord: I just, whenever- whenever I get in these conversations, I find myself
[00:11:00] defending telling people hurtful things. And that's not what I mean at all. I just mean telling people truthful things. Good- good truthful things and bad truthful things.

Jerry: I- I- I think- I think you're spot-on. And I'm gonna bring your attention to a truthful, uh, thing that, you know, you tell an anecdote in the- in the book. And I think a lot of folks still have trouble with this. Especially first-time leaders.

[00:11:30] You tell- you tell a story about how, um, senior teammates gathered in a conference room. Somebody was relating, um, the fact that Netflix at that point had now accounted for about a third of the traffic on the Internet in the United States.

Patty McCord: Mm-hmm.

Jerry: And everybody was just sort of in shock about this, and somebody asked, how are we gonna manage that? And this is the line that I bring your attention to.

[00:12:00] "He answered with the honesty we'd all hoped for." Quoting him, you say, "I don't know." And I love that. I love that.

Patty McCord: Yeah.

Jerry: Because the radically honest thing that leaders in my mind don't say enough of, and therefore undermine trust, is that simple phrase, I don't know.

Patty McCord: Yeah. Here's another one. I wanna respond to that and another one. I often hear leaders, particularly first-time leaders, talk with incredible pride about how they admit their mistakes, right?

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

[00:12:30]

Patty McCord: So it's kind of the opposite of what you're saying. I'll come back to it.

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

Patty McCord: And they say, you know, I stood up in front of my team and I told them I fucked up. And I'm like, well, um ... Like one CEO told me, I like mistakes so much I give people who make mistakes a bottle of champagne every time they make one. I'm like, well, that's fuckin' stupid. (laughs)

Jerry: (laughs)

Patty McCord: So your group here, you know, so everybody's gonna be drunk and screwing up. That's a perfect solution. But- but the thing about the- the honesty of saying, I made a mistake, is that the sentence that should follow it is, I made a mistake because this is the information I had when I made that decision, and I was wrong. And here's the situation now, and here's what I know now that I didn't know then. And so looping back to telling the truth at the beginning, right, saying I don't know, is that you can change the I don't know ... and I remember that moment in the book, because I remember we all looked each other and- and it was like, whoa, another really hard problem to solve. How cool is that, right? Because you can change that I don't know from a desperate, oh my God, I don't know and nobody knows, but, well, we get to figure this out. (laughs)

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[00:13:30]

Jerry: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Patty McCord: Because it's on our doorstep.. And that- and that admitting that you don't know can be an invitation to explore solutions with other people. The other beautiful thing about admitting that you don't know is at the same time, it admits that you can't solve it alone.

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Jerry: Yes. Yes. Well, see, I- I love that, and- and, you know, my own experience to that is I often say to- to a client, like a client will say, well, if I say something like that, then everybody's gonna get afraid, right? And I'll say, well, there's ... hold on here, there's two ways that you can convey I don't know. You can go, I don't fucking know, what are we going to do? Right? And that's actually not being radically honest. That ... what that is, is passing the baton of your anxiety to somebody else, and saying, you figure it out.

[00:14:30]

Patty McCord: Yup.

Jerry: Whereas if you say, I don't know, but I feel really good about the team we have. We'll figure it out. 'Cause you know what? You guys are fuckin' awesome.

Patty McCord: Yeah.

Jerry: And let's get to work on this hard problem.

Patty McCord: Yeah, and I mean, a great follow-up might be, not only don't I know, we don't know.

Jerry: Yeah.

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Patty McCord: Nobody knows. Right?

Jerry: Yeah.

Patty McCord: So somebody's gotta figure it out, it might as well be us. Right?

Jerry: Yeah.

Patty McCord: And, um, and those invitations to go to that scary place instead of admitting your fear, the example you were ...

Jerry: Right.

Patty McCord: Is that ... I think it comes from those of us who've spent a lot of our time innovating, right? If you, when you go to that place that no one else has gone before, it's really scary.

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Patty McCord: I think that's a real tension in the workplace of the future. Because ... I think it's a real tension in the workplace we have now, it's just that if I talk about the future, then people don't get so weirded out about it, because the tension, we've always fucking had. (laughs) But, like, you know, the, um, people tell me, you know, if I- I follow your way of thinking, all my employees are gonna be afraid, and they're gonna feel like work isn't a safe place. And when I dig deeper into what they mean by work isn't a safe place, they mean the promise that I'll always be here might be violated.

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Jerry: Yes.

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Patty McCord: And that promise is a lie. The premise of the promise is a lie, right? And so for me, it sometimes goes to those really fundamental assumptions that we walk into organizations with that we kind of need to clarify, right? That you're not

gonna be here forever, and we're in it for an adventure. And during this adventure, if we can solve problems nobody else had solved before, that's gonna be a great thing to have done.

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So- so I was just talking to somebody, Jerry, yesterday, but I was talking to them about the epiphany that I had when I realized that I wanted to build a company that was a great place to be from.

Jerry:

Mm. I love that phrase.

Patty McCord:

And it changed everything. I mean, it changed this holistic system of how I thought about work, right? I wanted every person we hired to know exactly what their part of the ... solving the particular problem they came to solve would be. And that when they did it, it would be something they would be proud of being part of that they could take with them.

[00:18:00]

Jerry:

Hmm.

Patty McCord:

And I ... It's just, I didn't articulate it when I was working. I've only thought about since I've been gone, right?

Jerry:

Mm-hmm.

Patty McCord:

Because I realized how much that's what I'm doing now, right, is I'm going back saying, I was at this really great place, and here's some stuff that I learned, and I wanna pass that wisdom on to you. So, it- it's not exactly on the question, but, you know, it's part of the ... how my philosophy has become deeply rooted. And that ... And when- when you go into a work situation like that, which is, we're gonna create a place that you're gonna be proud of being from, then that fundamental honesty changes the whole conversation.

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Jerry:

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I lo- I actually love it, uh, because you- you get at, um, the false premise that's implicit in the wish that you named before, which is, make me feel unafraid that I might actually have to change my job, pivot, learn a new skill, be without the safety net ...

Patty McCord:

Yeah.

Jerry:

[00:19:30]

That seemed to be there. You know, um, what comes to mind is being a boy, and watching my father lose his job when I was ten. A job that he began working at when he was in high school. Took a break to go off to World War II, came back, continued to work at the same company. And there- there is a kind of implicit wish-fantasy that we have about our relationship to work, which is that we're always going to be taken care of in that way.

Patty McCord:

Yeah.

Jerry: But it's paternalistic and it's infantilizing.

Patty McCord: Yes.

[00:20:00]

Jerry: Right? And what I actually hear implicit in everything that you're calling for, in saying building a company where ... a great company to have been from, is calling forth adulthood, on the part of the people that you're with. You're laughing 'cause you know what I mean.

Patty McCord: Yeah, and I just keep thinking about all the things that could be better if we just did that. You know, I was thinking about the words that you were just using around safety, a- about a safe place, work being a safe place. Wouldn't it be great if that meant that nobody's gonna harass me, and people are gonna give me feedback to my face, and I'm gonna be respected by the people that are around me, and I'm not gonna have, um, you know, I'm not gonna be judged by my title or my position, right? What if that was safety meant at work?

Jerry: Safety. Yeah.

Patty McCord: Yeah.

[00:21:00]

Jerry: Yeah, I mean, we're not ... What I just wrote down, what if it meant a safe place to grow? What if it ...

Patty McCord: Yeah.

Jerry: Meant, like, a safe place to challenge myself?

Patty McCord: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jerry: What if it meant a safe place to learn new skills? What if it meant a safe place to encounter diverse people and different ways of thinking, in such a way where I'm not expected to judge nor am I expected to be judged?

Patty McCord: Yes, because if you're there for security, and we're- we're messing with it a little bit here, but if you think safety means job security, then it not only is, um, demeaning, but it puts you in, um, a constant combat zone. You have to protect yourself. Right? You have to ... you have to constantly make sure that nothing bad happens so that it cracks this illusion that you have of safety.

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[00:22:00] (laughs) It's just weird, right? And- and the thing that makes me crazy about all of that stuff is that it's just a lot more fun to be doing great work with other people when we get stuff done. It's just more fun and all than all that worrying about all that stuff.

Jerry: You know-

Patty McCord: Because-

Jerry: Go ahead.

Patty McCord: I just wanna say, I- I'm a recruiter, that's my deep background.

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

Patty McCord: And I know from hiring people over the 30 years that I've been doing it, that what makes you an A player, what makes you really valuable, what makes you have an absolutely, you know, up and to the right career trajectory, is to have done great things with other amazing people. That's it. It's really it. You know, you have a track record of being on teams of people that got incredible shit done, you're golden. It's that simple.

[00:22:30]

Jerry: Yeah. And- and to loop it back to the conversation we're having, it does not mean being in a quote "secure" position forever. It means being in a risky, innovative place of growth, where you're safe to grow.

Patty McCord: Yeah.

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Jerry: Where- where you're in this amazing team, challenging yourself, learning, failing, if that's what happens ...

Patty McCord: Yeah.

Jerry: Telling the truth about what happens, but also recognizing the ways in which I would argue, the way in which your own perhaps unprocessed bullshit shows up and stops you, uh, from- from succeeding, or from stepping on your own air hose before you go scuba diving.

Patty McCord: Yeah.

[00:23:30]

Patty McCord: Well, that's where the radical honesty comes in. Right?

Jerry: Yeah.

Patty McCord: The thing about our own air hose, (laughs) whatever we're gonna call it, is it- it's usually behind us and we don't see it.

Jerry: Right.

Patty McCord: Right? I mean, it's not because people aren't, um, self-reflective, or they don't
[00:24:00] wanna be better, or they don't want to be, you know, uh, terrific leaders or
better humans. It's because usually the flaws that we have, we don't see.
Right?

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

Patty McCord: It's always funny when people will tell, um, uh, I wish he'd be less insecure. It's
like, you know, or, I- I wish this person would be more self-aware. It's like,
okay, well, they're not. (laughs)

Jerry: Right.

Patty McCord: So like, if you're good, so let's just ... let's just unpack that phrase. They are not
self-aware. So they're not gonna wake up one morning and be self-aware.
(laughs) So you have to hold up a mirror and go, this is you.

Jerry: Right.

Patty McCord: This is ...

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Jerry: Right. Well, that ...

Patty McCord: Recog- recognize this person that's you. And that's where the radical honest
comes in, because when I say, this is you, here's what your hose looks like, if I
walk behind you and there's this big hose full of bullshit. So let me show it to
you, so now that you know it's there, now you can be aware. Because, the ... I-
[00:25:00] I mean that's the other part about great honesty and feedback, is ... good
feedback, is that it gives people knowledge that they didn't have.

Jerry: That's right. We can't see what we can't see. Right?

Patty McCord: That's right. (laughs)

Jerry: I mean, it's really that simply. And- and we are all ... we all have our blind
spots, right? And if the culture is powerful and safe enough ...

Patty McCord: Mm-hmm.

Jerry: Where it's okay to look at my blind spot, right? Because sometimes, there's
[00:25:30] this collective wish to pretend that we all are infallible.

Patty McCord: Yeah.

Jerry: And- and ...

Patty McCord: Yeah.

Jerry: That's insane.

Patty McCord: (laughs) Well, come on, the superhero myth is a wonderful one. You know, I keep giving reporters that call me, the latest premise is, doesn't this star culture of technology create and reward sexist behavior? I'm like, boy, we are just missing- mixing all kinds of metaphors up here. However, I think we all wanna feel like stars, and we all wanna be superheroes, and the thing about, um, our journey that comes together as teams, and dispart- you know, departs as teams, it comes together as new teams, is all about that constant learning and journeying on how to work with other people.

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[00:26:30] And the other thing is, it's hard. Like, this kind of work isn't easy, but if you, you know, when I talk to the- the happy face HR people that I meet these days, the ones that are really worried about craft beer and, um, chefs and t-shirts ...

Jerry: And track employee engagement?

Patty McCord: Yeah.

Jerry: (laughs) I wish I could see your face.

Patty McCord: (laughs) I say to them, okay, here's your assignment. Find five people in the organization that you know are extraordinarily successful, and have done an amazing job here that everyone looks up to. Not by title, but by reputation. And ask each one of them to describe a situation here in the company where they did something that they're really proud of, that was really meaningful. And I'm telling you that 100% of the time, they're gonna describe something hard. They're not gonna say, oh, that day, like we were eating sushi and knocking back the sake. (laughs)

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Jerry: (laughs) And the company provided dry cleaning showed up. And so therefore ... (laughs)

Patty McCord: No, I mean, because it is- it's- it's those, you know, it's a little bit of no pain no gain, a little bit, right? And it's almost always, when I go back ... and I kinda do this now that I'm out of the company, right, now that I'm out in the big world talking to people, when I say, tell me about, you know, were you ever on a great team? Tell me about something that you accomplished. Tell me about what, reputationally, your company is really proud of. There's always a ... there's always a struggle in there. And there's always a sense of like, wow, we didn't know until we did this what we know now, right?

[00:28:00]

And so, you know, your story about your dad, I mean, you know, you and I have been on the planet a long time, Jerry. I mean, we're talking about your dad. So, the lie that your dad believed was in the '50s.

Jerry: Right.

[00:28:30]

Patty McCord: You know, I- I talked with this reporter in the UK, and he says, you know, this phenomenon you're talking about, the lack of job security in companies, I think it's a relatively new phenomenon. When did you start to see it? And I said, I don't know, all my working life. I'm old. Maybe it started in the '70. No, no, no, no. I- I think it's much more recent. I think it's more of a mid-'80s phenomenon. Like, dude, it's 2017.

Jerry: Right. Right, right.

Patty McCord: Let's say every four decades or so, we mix it up.

Jerry: Right.

Patty McCord: I mean, so they ...

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Jerry: Right. Well, how- how about my father's generation? My father was born into the Depression, right? How much job security was there then? How about- how about, I mean, the fact is the myth has been there all along.

Patty McCord: The myth has been there all along, but we keep doing it to this very day. So ...

Jerry: That's right.

Patty McCord: I gave a talk to 800 HR people, uh, a couple of months ago. And I said, raise your hand if you're in the job that you had when ... the year you graduated from college. And if you're an intern, abstain. 800 people. Not one hand goes up. And I said, are you kidding? Every one of you worked for a couple that couldn't retain you? There must be millions of shitty HR people out there in the world if 800 of you couldn't be retained. And like, this is stupid. (laughs)

Jerry: Right.

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Patty McCord: What- what a thing to measure, what a thing to care about, right? It's ... So, it's kind of back to, and I know we're gonna get to this, but it's why I named the book Powerful, why I talk about power. Because ...

Jerry: Yeah. And I- I want to really reflect back to something. You say, people have power, don't take it away.

Patty McCord: Yeah.

Jerry: What do you mean by that?

Patty McCord:
[00:30:30] So, it's the same conversation, you know, the words that we use at work now just kind of nauseate me, and my favorite least-favorite word is empowerment. And it- it's now the job of management, it's the job of trainers, it's the job to- to empower people. And I think, oh, bullshit. You know, why do we have to empower them? Because we took it all away, right?

Jerry: (laughs)

Patty McCord:
[00:31:00] And it's like, I know you're a very powerful person, but you're gonna have to ask that girl over in finance who's a summer intern to approve your expense report, because it's over \$5,000, and she knows that \$5,004 is more than \$5,000. Of course, you're a PhD in engineering, you also know that, those two numerals. It's insane.

Jerry: Right, right.

Patty McCord: Uh, and I ... and that's what I wanna do, that's how I wanna change the world. We all have power, right?

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

Patty McCord:
[00:31:30] We own our careers, we own our lives, we make decisions. And the sooner we can start talking about those decisions we're gonna be making for the rest of our lives early on in our lives, then I think it can help change the dialogue. I mean, y-you know, I'm frustrated at what's happening for women at work, and I'm completely elated about what's happening for women at work right now.

Jerry: All right, let's go there. You- you know ...

Patty McCord: I feel empowerment.

Jerry: Tell me, tell me ... So, tell me what's going on. Tell me from your perspective, what do you see going on?

[00:32:00]

Patty McCord: I ... Well, to personalize it, because I've been a ... I'm a second-wave feminist, as my daughter reminds me. (laughs) Which means I've been one my whole life, and like, we've had it. We've had it. Okay, we've been nice. We've been polite. We've done, you know, inclusion classes. Uh, it's like, okay, get out the checkbooks and make the pay right. That'll help.

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

Patty McCord: [00:32:30] I'd rather see that than any inclusion class that, you know, all these ... And don't get me wrong, I think it's important, I think unconscious bias is real. Um, I think that people do things unknowingly at work that are hurtful and painful and sexist and harassing. But start with pay. Make it equal.

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

Patty McCord: Right? The power goes directly to status, and status directly to title, which goes directly to pay. You know?

Jerry: Um, right.

Patty McCord: [00:33:00] The reporter that called me the other day, she said, about this star thing, she's like, yeah, you know, like, the star individual contributors in Silicon Valley. And I'm like, who are all men.

Jerry: Right. Right.

Patty McCord: Ask everyone you know to name a star individual contributor in any company, I'm not talking Silicon Valley, I talk ... I just got back from Australia, talking to a bank.

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

Patty McCord: Their stars are sales men.

Jerry: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Patty McCord: [00:33:30] Men. Right? So, and- and, you know, you get the rewards that go along with stardom, and you get the respect that goes along with stardom. And so for me, there's just some deep fundamentals that need to be addressed there. And then ... and then I think women have, at least for this tiny moment in time, gotten so frustrated that they're gonna tell the truth with ... regardless of the consequences. Because they just can't take it anymore.

Jerry: [00:34:00] So- so, thank God they can't take it anymore. There's a kind of like, it's- it's about ... it- it ... this is a moment that we have all needed. I'm going to link back to this discussion of power, and I want to introduce a word that, uh, Konda Mason, who was a guest in the podcast, um, maybe two years ago, gave me, um, uh, uh ... Kanda is a, um, Buddhist teacher, but an entrepreneur as well, um, based out of Oakland. She's been a leader in the, uh, impact hub movement, the social impact hub movement.

[00:34:30]

And we had a long discussion, not just about diversity, not just about inclusion, but she said, Jerry, do not lose sight of equity. And by equity, what she means is power, right? And- and- and there's power, structural power over, and then

[00:35:00] there's power. And the conversation, uh, in which there is shared equity, and that means ownership, that means compensation, that means, uh, uh, um, uh, openness to opportunity, that means, um, all of the things that come along with a shared sense of equity. We are in this together. What ... I don't know that we will shift culture until there's truly an equitable sharing of power. Because equity's ...

Patty McCord: [00:35:30] Yeah, I think she's right. You know, that makes a ton of sense, but it loops back to radical honesty in some ways. Um, we all have to learn how to have these real conversations. So someone else asked me the other day, I get interviewed a lot, and this reporter said, oh my God, companies must be just shaking in their boots, that their employees are gonna go renegade, and take to the Internet with their complaints. What should companies do to stop employees from doing this? I said, (laughs) you mean, expressing themselves on social networks? That's anarchy, like, oh my God, we'd better make a policy that says you can't do that.

Jerry: Right.

Patty McCord: So this is not a policy issue. People are going renegade, right, they're going outside of their companies to tell their stories, because they don't think anybody inside is listening.

Jerry: Right. They- they're going out-

Patty McCord: [inaudible 00:36:26]-

Jerry: Go ahead.

[00:36:30] Patty McCord: Because there's more power in the collective community than there is in the- in the place that they work. So what I mean is that one of the ways for us to have equity is for us all to realize that it's not just about speaking the truth. It's about hearing it. Right? It's about the other side listening to it as if it were true.

Jerry: Yeah. Well, you know, I'm- I'm- I'm gonna take my seat at, you know, uh, at- at- as someone on the other side of it, someone who's had power. Quite honestly, as a consequence of the genetic lottery.

Patty McCord: Yep.

Jerry: Not- not because I necessarily ... Yeah, did I do things to earn certain things? Absolutely. Was I given opportunities to earn those things because of certain conditions? Like my white skin and my- and my, uh, cisgender identity? Sure.

[00:38:30]

Okay? I think one of the ... To be radically honest, I think one of the mistakes that those of us who have power hold is the belief that power is a zero-sum game.

Patty McCord: Yeah.

Jerry:
[00:39:00] And if I actually create conditions where I acknowledge that you know fuckin' shit ton more than me, that somehow I am diminished.

Patty McCord: Mm-hmm.

Jerry: And that's insane. When I say it out loud, it doesn't make any sense. Right? And so- so the carefully-constructed persona that I know more, which is bullshit, prevents me from creating conditions where I can shut the fuck up and listen to someone who actually knows more.

Patty McCord: Yeah, I ...

Jerry: Because I might lose my power.

[00:39:30]

Patty McCord: Yeah, and I think a way to bring us back to the better conversation, and I said this earlier in our talk today, um, if we can focus on why we're having the conversation, right? If we can start almost any conversation, particularly inside of a company with, you know, why does this matter, uh, to the customer, to the, um, the client that we serve, to the world at large, to our daughters, to whatever it is, then we're more willing to speak and hear.

[00:40:00]

Jerry: Mm.

Patty McCord: Right? And if I feel like you and I are gonna get into a debate about, you know, men have more power than women, and that's the premise of it, you know, we've got to prove it one way or the other, we're never gonna get anywhere. Right? If we're gonna have a conversation that says, you're right, Jerry, that's true, and here's another thing, um, not only did you have to work ... believe that you had to work hard on those opportunities that you got given just because you're you, you didn't have to work as hard.

[00:40:30]

Jerry: Amen.

Patty McCord: On it. You know, I know that to be truth. I know it.

Jerry: I know that to be true too.

Patty McCord: Yep. So, and- and when you do that, when you can have that conversation, that creates that awareness to look around you, and say, how hard does she have to try to prove something?

[00:41:00]

Jerry: Yeah. I'm gonna make a meta statement about our relationship in this moment that feels really true for me.

Patty McCord: Mm.

Jerry: We met a few months ago at ... down in New Orleans, we were doing a, uh, talk for Gemert Media at South by Southwest. And, um, the thing that occurred to me early on, which just got reinforced when you said what you just said to me, how I didn't have to work as hard.

Patty McCord: Uh-huh.

Jerry: The thing that occurred to me was that I trusted you.

Patty McCord: Mm.

[00:41:30]

Jerry: Almost from the get-go. And so when you said to me just now, you looked at me, and I- I'm imagining this is true, but you weren't sure how it was gonna land with me.

Patty McCord: Mm-hmm.

Jerry: And when I said that's ... when I said amen, part of what I wanted to my friend Patty was I trust you.

[00:42:00]

Patty McCord: Thank you. And that's ... and that's how real dialogue happens, right? That's how we really change things. And- and I think you said it eloquently too, Jerry. It's like, you know all those unfair advantages you have, but it's human nature to want to protect yourself.

Jerry: Yes.

Patty McCord: Right? It's human nature to want to say, and I realize that's true, and so by just admitting that it's true, is that enough? Because I said that.

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

Patty McCord: You know, but the willingness to give it up, ooh boy.

[00:42:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm. So ...

Patty McCord: So- so what I mean by powerful is that I want of us to recognize that no matter how you feel, it's there inside of you. And it's back to that theme of, if you ... if you live your work life by doing amazing things with other amazing people, then that gives you the ability to choose where you're gonna work that's gonna be able to be a place where you could contribute and continue to do amazing things with other amazing people. And that's ... 50% of that choice is yours. It's not up to the company. And I think that at work in particular, kinda going back to that paternalistic, they'll take care of me thing, um, that puts us all in a victim place, but I think it puts women in particular in a more victim place. Right? I don't believe that they really have the choice to pick up and go somewhere else, right? I'll just wait, you know, I'll just wait and hope they notice that I'm unpaid ... that I'm not paid fairly. Like, they know it.

[00:43:00]

Jerry: Mm.

Patty McCord: It's just the way it is.

Jerry: You know, my wish is that the folks who listen to this podcast come to know you. Um, because, yeah, yeah, so Patty McCord is the author of The Culture Document, blah blah blah blah blah. She's so well-known, she's a superstar, she's a rock star. But she's a ... she is a real, authentic, um, fire-breathing, um, loving human being.

[00:44:00]

Patty McCord: You know, it's, uh, people say to me sometimes when I do talks, afterwards, they'll say to me, particularly men CEOs ...

[00:44:30]

Jerry: Mm-hmm.

Patty McCord: Why, I don't know. They'll say to me, are you like this for real?

Jerry: (laughs)

Patty McCord: Like, is this ... like, is this how you live your life? Do you really say shit like this out loud? Have you really said stuff like this at work? And, you know, how do other people take you? And, you know, didn't the engineers at Netflix, didn't they fear you, didn't they hate you, weren't they afraid of you? And I said, oh, God, no. You know, maybe sometimes when I would get on ... all on 'em. But they knew that I loved them, right? They knew that I cared, they knew I did it for the good of the company, for their own, you know, to make a better place to be, right? And it was out of respect. And, you know, that... If you stick with respect and dignity for your fellow worker, you're golden. It ... And it's just those things don't come natural all the time, they don't come natural under stress. They don't come natural for leaders when you're insecure.

[00:45:00]

[00:45:30]

Jerry: Yeah.

Patty McCord: I mean, you know, I ... This is the part where you and I have the Vulcan mind-meld, Jerry. Because we've seen so many leaders, and we know that people misbehave, and they do the wrong thing, for what they believe to be the right reason, which is protecting themselves from something they're scared of.

Jerry: That's it.

Patty McCord: Right?

Jerry: That's it.

[00:46:00]

Patty McCord: It's just, again, um, and I ... There's that channeling ... When I was 23, I was the youngest person in my organization. I was the only woman in a group of 150 people. And I wore pink one day and they sent me home, because those days, we wore pinstriped suits. And I- I happened to ... They sent me to, uh, a speech-giving class, and I was the only woman, of course, and 50 men, so I happened to get my own coach. And, um, she said, first of all, stand with your feet apart, your hands at your side, you project how strong you are, no matter how you feel. And the other thing was, she said, you know that tingling on the back of your neck, and the sweaty armpits, and the- the high voice, the fear? She's like, that's your strength, that's your adrenaline.

[00:46:30]

Jerry: Mm.

Patty McCord: Right? Channel your fear and make it power. And, you know, she told me that when I was 23, and I haven't forgotten it ever. It's like, how to turn that scary ... that scary feeling into like, I can do this, right? And I think that's where ... That's what I wanna help people understand. You can do this, even if it's a little thing.

[00:47:00]

Jerry: Well, Patty ...

Patty McCord: If you do a lot of those little things, you can do a big thing.

Jerry: Well, Patty, I- I can't thank you enough.

Patty McCord: Mm.

Jerry: As I said before, I learn from you every single time we have a conversation. And we laugh, and you challenge me in ways that I want to grow. And your book, um, is one of those books that so sticks with me, and, um, stays with me, and, you know, I'm a huge reader, voracious, and I just highly recommend this book. Um, and I'm super excited to get you on the show and to be able to talk. And you have to promise me to come back. I have a recording to sell.

[00:47:30]

Patty McCord: (laughs) That's honest. I promise that.

Jerry: Oh, thank you. Thank you.

Patty McCord: Yeah. You're welcome. Yep.