The Visibility Factor

BREAK THROUGH YOUR FEARS,
STAND IN YOUR OWN POWER
AND BECOME THE AUTHENTIC LEADER
YOU WERE MEANT TO BE

SUSAN M. BARBER

Overview

IF YOU HAVE EVER WATCHED a reality-based performance TV show like American Idol or The Voice, you have seen the performers up on the stage. For a few of them you will hear the judges make comments to the effect of "that performer just has it, they have the X factor!" Even for the judges it is hard to describe what is meant by that term, but in general, it could be described as that person or group has the talent and everything else it takes to make it to the next level.

Cut to the Business World. Hundreds of thousands of workers are all trying to move up to the next rung on the ladder in whatever size company they are in. So why do some rise faster than others? Just like the X factor that many performers have, there are some individuals that just know what is needed to get ahead and are willing to put themselves out there. For the rest, they believe that they just need to follow the rules, work hard every day and they will make it to the next level. This group of high achieving people gets stuck and doesn't know why they can't break through to the next level. (Who knew that coming in and staying late just isn't enough?) What they are missing is The Visibility Factor.

Much like the X Factor or The Voice, these leaders may have the talent, but they aren't putting themselves on the stage to be visible enough and promote what they are doing. The author, Susan M. Barber, knows how this feels because this is the experience she had as a corporate leader and now as an executive coach, she has clients who suffer from this same challenge in one way or another. Putting in 10+ hours of work every day and on the weekends trying to do the right things, but they never get anywhere. Barber thought she was being visible, but instead her management saw someone who held herself back and played small. She now knows that it was because of fear and a lack of confidence that she chose not to stand out. Barber characterized herself as an over achiever, but she had no idea that she self-sabotaged when opportunities came along. Fear is such a powerful force, and it prevents people from getting on that stage at work and in life. A leader who wants to get to the next level must find a way to stand out and be visible, so they are kept top of mind for new opportunities. The bottom line is that you can get results and try hard, but it isn't enough if leaders want to be successful, they need to raise their visibility and use their voice.

So why is this a big deal? Make some presentations, set up time with your manager or network with people and then you have created some visibility, right? It isn't as easy as it sounds. Depending on the leader's mindset, they may believe that their hard work is enough, so why should they have to "brag" about it? Many of them see "bragging" as negative and don't want to be that person. What they don't realize is that they are holding themselves back at work, but they are more than likely also doing the same thing in their personal lives. They have opinions but don't share them, they avoid conflict and experience disappointment, frustration, and anger inside until they can't anymore. They don't think that they are good enough, compare themselves to everyone else and avoid asking others for help. They tend to stay in the background at parties, avoid networking events and they don't stand up for themselves. They stay in the background because they don't feel like they fit into "that group where everyone has it together." Being visible is a challenge for them in all areas of life.

Barber experienced these same challenges. She had so much self-doubt and fear that she sub-consciously sabotaged herself to stay at a lower level and avoid visibility. A mentor helped her see that she had more to offer, and that her management wanted her to speak up. She began the journey to learn about how to be visible in a way that worked for her. She could see how others were holding themselves back too. Barber watched her team and even her own daughter do the same thing. It was time for her to share what she was learning. She needed to set a better example for all of them and demonstrate what it meant to show up in your life and stand up with your own authentic voice.

The challenge is that a leader with self-doubt and a lack of confidence won't succeed without a mindset shift. They can change their role or go into a new career, and it will just come right back. Barber experienced this when she left her corporate role to become an entrepreneur. She had figured out how to be more visible in corporate, but she had entered unfamiliar territory as she created her own business. She had never run her own business and those same doubts and fears came right back. The patterns will remain if there isn't a shift to leverage new habits. Barber had seen this happen to her and some team members, but now it was happening with many clients too. That is when she knew that she needed to create The Visibility Factor to provide the path for them to follow, so they didn't have to suffer with this issue in silence anymore. Readers can take the lessons that Barber shares as well as complete the framework to help them build a blueprint that gives them confidence to speak up with their authentic voice and share their value with others. The Visibility Factor is the guide that readers will leverage to work on the specific focus areas where the shifts need to occur. These include introductions to the ways to be visible, strategies to create a customized plan, mindset shifts, managing impostor syndrome and building confidence. Barber has

personally used these strategies herself and with her clients. There are so many people who don't realize that they need to do something different to reach their potential. The Visibility Factor will help people see what is possible for them. It will help them make the shift and break these patterns. The readers will see that they can easily make these changes so they can bring their value, show up in their careers, their lives and reach their potential instead of hiding.

What Makes The Visibility Factor Different?

THERE ARE MILLIONS OF BOOKS on the various leadership challenges that prevent leaders from having success. There are also mindset books to help people shift the way that they think. This book is focused on both areas to help leaders see themselves differently, address confidence challenges, and teach the reader the ways that they can be visible in an authentic way for them. Barber supports the reader as their own personal virtual coach who has been through similar challenges.

The Visibility Factor helps leaders stay true to themselves and adapt their current styles to be more visible for success. This is especially true for the underrepresented groups who may have to work harder than others to be seen. Readers will learn how to self-promote in multiple work situations without bragging or being egotistical. The Visibility Factor helps people better understand their mindset, stop sabotaging themselves and gives them a path to be more visible. Stories, examples, and reflective exercises are also included to help them transform their thinking and be able to promote themselves in their own authentic way.

Chapter 1

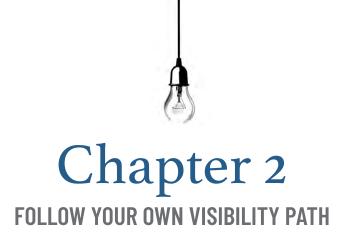## WHEN THE STUDENT IS READY THE TEACHER APPEARS

KEY POINTS:

- Hard work is important, but to elevate, you need to be visible to your management, so they think about you for opportunities.
- The feedback from a mentor changed everything about how Barber viewed performance, her image, and the importance of exposure.
- Introduction of the RISE framework to help leaders design their own visibility blueprint for career success.

IN THIS CHAPTER READERS WILL learn that many leaders work hard, but struggle with how to best demonstrate their value. Barber shares her own story of a pivotal moment when she was given feedback that her lack of visibility was preventing her career progression. Her work ethic was incredible, but it was a tough moment to realize that she was no longer considered a top talent. As painful as the message was, it was the catalyst that set off a series of events to change her perception. She had to learn what visibility was and how to take action to show her value. Barber hired a coach to help her learn how to shine a light on her strengths and talk about what her and her team were doing. The support of her coach helped her work through the limiting beliefs that she wasn't good enough and gain confidence to move past them. She learned the importance of mindset and how fear can impact your actions. Barber took what she learned during that time to create her own visibility which eventually formed the basis of the process that she teaches clients today. She has proven to clients that increasing their visibility is easier than they think. The research shows that your

management will make decisions on the next opportunity based on who stands out and consistently demonstrates value. This chapter introduces an overview of the four step RISE framework that guides readers through the process of creating their own visibility blueprint and so they can take the actions to be seen. Barber is encouraging the readers to step out of their comfort zone and take this journey to raise their visibility.

Chapter 2
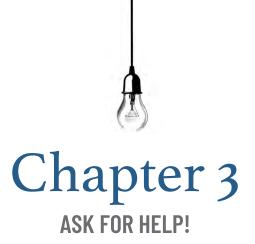
FOLLOW YOUR OWN VISIBILITY PATH

KEY POINTS:

- Is bragging the only way to get visibility for you and your team?
- You may have a loud self-critic in your head and be an introvert, but you can still be your own advocate and take risks.
- Ask for feedback so you learn what is needed, leverage actions to play bigger and move out of your comfort zone.

This chapter is for those leaders who compare themselves and feel like they need to be like everyone else. It begins with a story of an introvert's worst nightmare, a huge networking event, that requires small talk and conversations with lots of strangers. Is it true that networking is hard or is that a story that you tell yourself to stay out of those uncomfortable situations? The exploration of bragging vs. visibility was important for Barber to learn where she had made assumptions that they were the same things. She observed others to see how they found ways to be visible which allowed her to adapt some of what they did into her own style. These initial actions allowed her to experiment with new approaches to speak up for herself and on behalf of her team. The self-critic in your head can take over your thinking if you let it but pay attention and recognize that it is happening to avoid that trap. Barber shares ideas to help leaders be prepared for the opportunities that may present themselves. She encourages the use of mentors to help readers decode the feedback that they may receive so they can understand how to act.

Introverts are highlighted as a group that can struggle with visibility since their natural tendency is to avoid the spotlight. The research shows that people want to belong and certain groups of people (women, introverted, underrepresented) who don't fit into the perceived mold may feel left out. As an introvert herself, Barber shares some of the strategies that she used and is now using with clients. She provides scripts and suggests ways to be proactive instead of reactive. The role that risk can play is also discussed when a leader decides to put themselves out there or not. The reader will begin to learn some key messages in this chapter. The first is to understand how the stories in your head can impact what you do or say in certain situations. It is important to spend the time
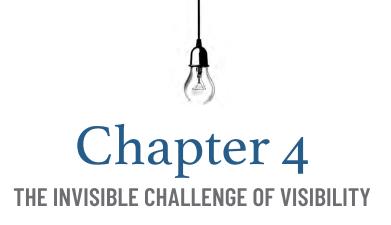
to examine the beliefs, stories and assumptions in your head and determine if they are still valid. The second is that you always get the choice on how you want to do things and you don't have to do what everyone else is doing. You have a lot of value to add so don't hesitate to share it. Your management needs to hear what you know to help them make the best decisions. The third message is don't wait for someone to advocate for you and your team. Take the power into your own hands so that you can do this for yourself and your team no matter who you work for and regardless of organizational changes. You are the voice for your team to support them in public and private to help them gain visibility.

Chapter 3
ASK FOR HELP!

KEY POINTS:

- The importance of asking for help as you take your visibility journey.
- The difference between sponsors and mentors, how to leverage them and what to look for when selecting one.
- Create your own trusted advisor group to help you with challenges and tough decisions.
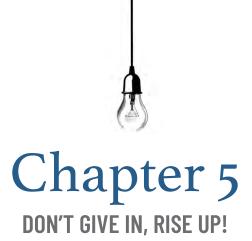
This chapter is focused on guiding leaders who struggle to ask for help. There are different resources that a person can leverage to ask for help. These suggestions are shared, and client stories are included to illustrate why it is important. The moment that Barber learned that she could ask for help without risk to her career and perception was a turning point for her. Although some see others as weak when they ask for help in a tough situation, Barber advocates that it is a sign of strength and can help to accelerate learning to achieve results and reach success.

The author and speaker Byron Katie is introduced to help readers understand how their thinking and past experiences can play a role in their current circumstances. Another focus area in this chapter is to help leaders check in to see if they are craving external validation. Barber shares how this can become a need as children, and it can continue even as an adult. The self-doubts and insecurities can arise again when you move into a new role or something completely out of your comfort zone. The critical messages show up and imply that you are out of your league and that people will find out you can't do this role, so you self-sabotage to avoid failure. Readers will see the ways that proactively reaching out for help accelerates what they learn and propels them to accomplish results much faster.

Chapter 4

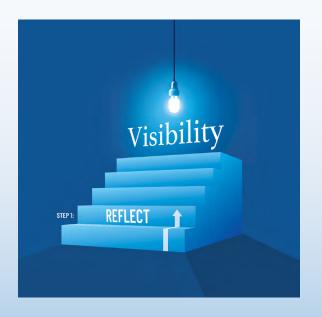## THE INVISIBLE CHALLENGE OF VISIBILITY

Key Points:

- Self-sabotage can show up in an unconscious way when you don't want to do something that may be challenging or hard.
- The power that fear and resistance can have over you to prevent you from taking action.
- The importance of seeing the value that you provide so you can share it with others.

Self-sabotage is powerful and is the way that your ego protects you to keep you safe. The ego is smart, and it knows that you are about to do something that scares you, so it creates a way to help. Brad Yates defines "self-sabotage as mis-guided self-love." The stories that we tell ourselves can help us or hold us back. It is unfortunate that so many people live on automatic pilot and have no idea that they can make a choice to do something different. They don't realize that the stories they tell themselves creates the reality that they live in each day. How do these stories start? A study on the messages that women learned as children and carried into adulthood show how these beliefs and stories get started, even though that are no longer true. Breaking down the internalized messaging and patterns of behavior are necessary to help each person recognize the value that has been hidden away. Gender roles based on old stereotypes are used to set expectations that start at childhood and continue into adulthood and into the workplace. What happens when people don't fit into those stereotypical norms? It is important to find the best way to be visible and not feel like you have to be classified in a box that others may place you in. Leaders who suffer from self-doubt and insecurity may have their actions misconstrued or without realizing it, they project those challenges unknowingly onto others. A manager needs to recognize that a direct report may be operating with a false narrative of old beliefs in their head and needs help to shift towards new beliefs and achieve a more positive self-perception. Leaders who have a coaching style of leadership can use questions to uncover the hidden stories that may prevent team members from reaching their potential.

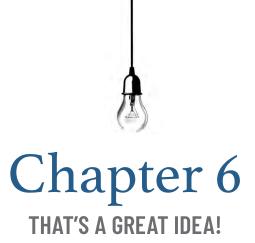# Chapter 5

DON'T GIVE IN, RISE UP!

Key Points:

- Introduction of Reflect, the first step of the RISE process and the Leadership Success Scorecard.
- A client of Barber's named Nicole walks through the list of reflection questions and answers for this step of the framework.
- Review the importance of setting up a 90 day short term visibility goal and a longer term 12 month goal.
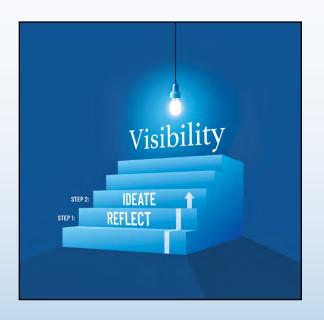
CHAPTER FIVE HELPS LEADERS LEARN how to apply the first step of the visibility framework as Nicole, a client, applies this step to a real live situation. Nicole is frustrated because she feels that she is ready for a bigger role, but her manager disagrees. The feedback from her manager is that she needs to be more strategic and visible in the organization. She reaches out to Barber to help her raise her visibility. The RISE process was created by Barber to help clients create their own plan for visibility. She explained how it works to Nicole and suggested that it could help her. Her client agreed to use this framework and agreed to share her responses with the readers of The Visibility Factor. This chapter helps the leader go through coaching questions in the first step of RISE. The questions are there to help the leader think about why they want visibility, what they will do to get it, how they will approach it and who they will need help from to accomplish it. The last part of the chapter focuses on setting 90 day to longer term visibility goals. If leaders need ideas, they have the option to select goals from a list of tried and true visibility outcomes that have been reached by Barber's

clients. This step helps readers learn the importance of creating a strong foundation of clarity for themselves as they identify what is important to them. The answers that they identify will serve as guiding principles when they move on to the next steps in the process to create their plan.

Chapter 6

THAT'S A GREAT IDEA!

KEY POINTS:

- Introduction to step two of the RISE process called ideate which provides an opportunity to generate a list of ideas to increase visibility.
- Readers are encouraged to look at ideas that allow them to be authentic and play to their strengths.
- Validate the ideas that are identified to see if they align with visibility goals.

READERS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY IN this chapter to focus on step two of the RISE process known as ideate. The client, Nicole continues her plan through this step to show the reader how they can generate a list of their own ideas and leverage what others are doing to fast adapt to their own style. Once the reader creates a list of their own, then they move on to review ideas used by Barber's clients that are included in the chapter. Each idea that is considered should be validated against the goals that were identified in chapter five. If there are any misalignments, then those can be rectified in this step prior to moving on to the third step in the process. The reader should choose ideas that push them out of their comfort zone, but still allow them to be authentic to who they are. This is a marathon, not a sprint. Every action is an experiment and if it doesn't work, then they can try other ideas on their list. It isn't the final selection process yet, so the reader shouldn't feel pressure to choose the perfect idea. Be compassionate of themselves as they go through this step and be open to the ideate process. The reader will see so many options for actions to implement to help them see how easy it is to create visibility and that they can do this for themselves if they are consistent.
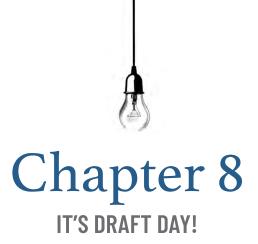
Chapter 7

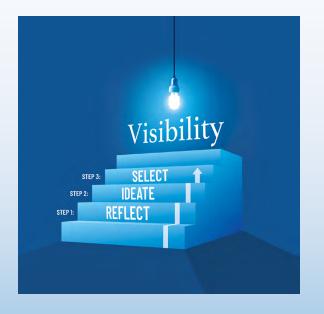## THE ULTIMATE BATTLE: IMPOSTOR SYNDROME

KEY POINTS:

- Prior to continuing the next step in the framework, the reader learns about impostor syndrome and how it can hold them back from success. A review of what the different traits of impostor syndrome are, how they start, who they impact and how they can hold the reader back.
- A review of the way resistance can impact a leader and keep them from acting due to fear or limiting beliefs.
- Each trait uses a client coaching session to demonstrate how it can show up. A list of strategies is provided for readers to leverage when impostor syndrome impacts them.

THIS CHAPTER GIVES THE READER a pause before the continuation with the RISE framework to help leaders build awareness of impostor syndrome. When behaviors are shifted or there is a focus on something new, it can bring up feelings of insecurity and self-doubt. This is when impostor syndrome shows up. The irony of the name "impostor syndrome" is that it impacts the people who are high achievers, not actual impostors. The high achievers accomplish so much, but still don't believe that they are successful. They don't feel like they are good enough or they fear that someone will find out that they don't know enough for the role they are in. Lack of self-trust and comparison to others continues the cycle of self-doubt that they aren't good enough. These feelings of self-doubt show up for everyone at one time or another, but most often when you are doing something new. Resistance to take action, and fear of failure will prevent any forward motion towards a goal. Impostor Syndrome impacts famous people like Maya Angelou and Tom Hanks even though they would appear to have everything.

Research began in 1978 on impostor syndrome and has continued to evolve over the years. Initially only thought to impact women, it has now been shown that it clearly impacts both women and men but in different ways. Each of the impostor syndrome traits have impacted Barber and her clients at one time or another. As each trait is discussed there is also a coaching conversation, strategy to build awareness and suggested actions to address them. Readers will learn that even if they are impacted by impostor syndrome that they have easy actions that can be used to help them move forward.

Chapter 8

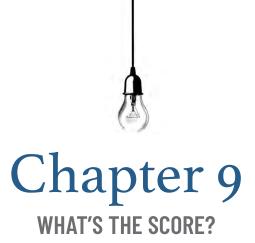## IT'S DRAFT DAY!

Key Points:

- Step three of the RISE process, Select, is introduced. In this step, ideas are selected, along with approach, measurement and how often you will measure progress will be decided.
- Blind spots may be identified in feedback from others, so the reader will learn how to build awareness to see them sooner and begin to address them.
- Motivation is key at this stage as the plan is put into action. The leader will need to stay motivated and focused to accomplish the steps of their plan.
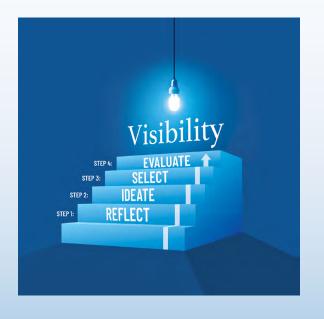
THIS CHAPTER GETS THE READER back on track with step three of the RISE framework which is known as select. A football analogy that shows how teams select the best players is used to compare how important it is to select the best ideas for the visibility plan. Once the ideas are selected, then decisions need to be made on how to execute the ideas, ways to measure success and how frequently to measure. Nicole continues her journey to make these same decisions and answer these same questions. Feedback from others can uncover some blind spots. Barber reviews how to handle them and build awareness as a key step to proactively address them. Motivation is also important in this step. The actions are new for the leader and there is uncertainty about whether they will work. Helping the leader stay motivated throughout these experiments is key. As they try new things it will challenge them, but ultimately help them show up in a new way. Leaders who stay on the path and are consistent will change their perception of themselves as a leader.

Chapter 9

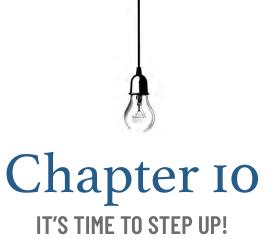## WHAT'S THE SCORE?

Key Points:

- Introduction to step four of the RISE process where the reader begins to review the feedback that they have received and evaluate themselves as well.
- Learn how to evaluate the information from both an art and science to make decisions on next steps.
- The reader will need patience as new steps are taken and they continue to persevere to see the results of the actions that are being taken.

This chapter takes the reader through the final step in the RISE process called evaluate. An analogy is used to compare a football score to the results that a leader may receive on their progress. A football team does the very best it can, but the scoreboard may still show a loss, it can feel that way to a leader as they implement their ideas, but nothing feels different yet. It takes patience and perseverance to continue to execute these new actions. As the feedback starts to come in from other people, an evaluation of progress needs to be made. It is necessary to look at both the art and the science of the results. Not only is the feedback (science) important to review, but also how you feel (art) about your progress.

Nicole reviews her feedback to see what she can learn about her own progress and any changes she wants to make. Barber leveraged some key coaching questions to help her analyze the results. The leadership success scorecard is also revisited to evaluate Nicole's progress. Barber shared some situations where she saw a shift for herself and one of her direct reports when she was going through her own visibility challenges.

The end of the chapter provides an update from Nicole six months after she completed the plan. She shares some great news about her amazing performance review and that she was given a new high profile program to lead. She had done the work to show her value and it changed her perception! Readers can see that it is possible to have an intentional focus with their actions and if they are consistent, it will pay off so they can reach their goals.

Chapter 10

IT'S TIME TO STEP UP!

KEY POINTS:

- Visibility under normal circumstances has been shared in previous chapters. Now it is important to understand how to be visible in unusual or unexpected circumstances.
- Visibility in remote work environments requires more intention and consistency.
- An interview with leaders who moved to new companies and what they did to establish their visibility and progress in their careers.

THE READER LEARNS HOW TO be visible under more challenging circumstances in this chapter. It begins with a metaphor of how to design systems for both everyday circumstances and unexpected situations that may happen. Visibility follows a similar path where leaders may have to step up in extraordinary circumstances like acquisitions, divestitures, mergers, or company spin-offs. Barber shares one of her own stories when an unexpected situation occurs and how she had to lead her team to solve the problem. Stepping up to be visible in these circumstances is more challenging but necessary to maintain morale and productivity for the team. This chapter also looks at the way work is evolving. Working in a remote setting brings positives for the employee who can work from wherever they want to live but requires focus to stay visible for future career opportunities. A coaching session with a remote client is shared to review the challenges that remote leaders face and how to deal with them. The unexpected situations that organizations go through impact all employees, but especially leaders who are on the front line and need to keep projects moving forward and maintaining morale. The last scenario is the transition into a new organization. Two leaders share their experiences of raising their visibility in a new organization to build their network and personal brand capital. They had to be intentional with their visibility plan as they went into these new companies. It was an opportunity to demonstrate capabilities, build relationships and deliver results. They did the work to show their talent and they were ready when opportunities were available. Change is a constant in organizations and this chapter encourages leaders to prepare so they are ready to step up.

Chapter 11

IT'S YOUR TURN TO SHINE!

Key Points:

- Visibility isn't only important in your professional life, but also in your personal life.
- Nicole shares her experience of using the RISE framework.
- The reader has everything that they need to create their visibility, so it is time to make it happen.

This chapter is intended to help the reader understand how important visibility is for their professional lives, but also their personal life as well. The chapter begins with a story about Barber's daughter who had minimized her voice much like Barber had done for so many years. It was a pivotal moment that made Barber realize she had not been visible in her personal life. She had not recognized it before, but she had set the example for her daughter to follow. Barber had shown her daughter how to play small and let others come first instead of choosing herself first. This moment was a catalyst that pushed Barber to shift how she showed up both professionally and personally.

This chapter includes feedback on what the experience was like for Nicole to use the RISE framework to increase her visibility. Nicole successfully changed the perception that people had of her and was awarded with a high exposure new role. Highlights of the top take-aways are shared for the reader to see what they have learned. Barber shares encouragement for the reader to know that they have everything that they need to create their own visibility. It is now time for the reader to shine a light on their strengths, show the value that they can bring to a role and step into becoming the type of leader that they knew deep inside they could be.

Final Thoughts

It is each person's individual journey to create the visibility that works best for them. The Visibility Factor and the RISE framework allows for a customized approach so each leader can design a visibility blueprint that is authentic to them. Barber's hope is that every leader can learn from her stories as well as the stories of clients to see that they are not alone as they focus on their journey.

It is a peek inside the experiences of real life leaders and how they navigated their own career journey. Everyone has their own path to get the visibility that is needed to reach career success. The leader gets to make their own choices, trust themselves and know that they have so much value to offer. There is no need to hide behind other people or compare themselves to other people anymore. Barber encourages them to step into the spotlight and be the leader that they were meant to be.

About the Author

Susan M Barber, Former Fortune 500 Director, turned Executive Coach helps business leaders who want to play bigger, increase their visibility and finally, shine a light on their leadership strengths so they can elevate their position in the workplace. She brings strong business knowledge to her coaching from 25+ years of experience at Kraft Heinz where she successfully held multiple leadership roles before leaving to marry her love of people development and her passion of helping companies solve business challenges. In her book, The Visibility Factor, she shares stories, actionable advice, and an easy-to-follow process for readers to create authentic visibility for themselves. Susan lives in the northern suburbs of Chicago with her husband and their three children.

Check out Susan's website at https://SusanMBarber.com
Share wins with Susan at hello@susanmbarber.com!