

Episode 51: Insights and Series Wrap Up

Elizabeth:

We thought it would be fun to share insights and learnings from the entire team at Women in Product that worked on the series. Of course, Rashmi, who has been in it from the beginning with me, but also our marketing team, Jessica and Mia, as well as Cyronne Counts, our Director of Programs who put together all of the executive content at the conference and just launched our new Executive Edge program. Rashmi, what was the most memorable about the podcast series for you?

Rashmi:

Yeah, the most memorable aspect of this podcast series was really the post-interview conversations that you and I used to have. We were consistently awestruck by the women we interviewed, and we would engage in lengthy conversations and discussions about the interviews often close to an hour each time. And the timing of this podcast couldn't have been better. I sensed a strong desire within the community to ascend and establish themselves as leaders, and the podcast fulfills that purpose. And personally, I feel that it was very well thought out and meticulously planned in terms of its content, our featured guests, and the value it provided. I'm going to cheat here a little. I know you asked for one memorable moment, but I did want to completely call out that I really underestimated the time and effort that goes into producing a podcast, and it truly was a team effort, and I genuinely enjoyed working with each and everyone associated with this.

Elizabeth:

Yeah, I love that you told people that we had those long conversations. They're probably now asking themselves, what did they talk about? It'll be our secret actually. It was probably all of the things that they talked about after they listened to them, how amazing the women were and what interesting insights they had. So I want to bring in Jessica and Mia who are our amazing marketing team, and ask them what were those moments for you two? Jessica, maybe you'd like to go first.

Jessica:

Yeah. So when I first saw the brief about the Path to CPO topic that Rashmi brought to us, I initially felt like it was a slam dunk, and this was a topic that would really resonate with our community, but you don't really know how the community is going to respond to it until you put it out into the world. So the thing that was really exciting for me is when we launched the very first episode with Alex Hardman, the CPO of The New York Times, we were all anxiously waiting to see how it would do, and in the first 24 hours, it had the most plays of any episode of our podcast that we've ever had. So it was really, really exciting to see that this topic deeply resonated with our community.

Mia:

In addition to just listening to all the captivating stories that our CPO shared on the podcast. You don't really know how a social media post is going to do once you post it. You can think, oh, this episode is going to do well. It has this person from a notable company. It is remarkable to see that the CPOs had a phenomenal impact on the product community itself.

Elizabeth:

So Mia, talk a little bit about that first time that you put a social media post out about this.

Mia:

When the comments started rolling in for Alex's podcast, it was just astounding to see that there are women on her team supporting her women from the product community, loved hearing her feedback, even the executive dinner that she was a part of in New York City. People were engaging the post on that.

Elizabeth:

So I want to bring in Cyronne Counts because Cyronne is our Director of Programs, and she really took this series and kind of the spirit behind it and kind of took it to a whole nother level by incorporating it in small dinners that we had in a variety of places, but also probably most visibly at the conference. And Cyronne, maybe you can talk about what was memorable about this for you.

Cyronne:

I think the most memorable thing for me was just the openness and the vulnerability and the transparency of all of the CPOs and how they spoke just so openly and honestly about their journeys. And they didn't seem to hold anything back. And I think it was just very relatable for everyone in the community. The women could see themselves and they could see their own journeys in the journeys they heard about. And it really came to light when I attended the executive dinner in New York and Alex Hardiman was our guest, CPO there, and you could just look around the table and see the smiles and the head nods as she talked about different aspects of her journey. And it was very heartwarming to see that, to see the community, to really respond in that way. And the conference, the overwhelming response, not only of those that attended the conference, but when I reached out to the women to volunteer to do different sessions at the conference related to Path to CPO, and even for the promotion roundtables for our vice presidents of product, it was overwhelming. I had to keep adding sessions because there was such a huge amount of interest in the women sharing with each other and making sure that they had a say in how the women heard about what they could be doing in their own careers to keep progressing.

Elizabeth:

Yeah, I have to say, one thing that's really fascinating to me is it's like the series uncorked to this huge discussion that everybody wanted to have, and that all of a sudden they were able to have that they heard other people speak, frankly, and so then they felt like they could speak frankly about what their experience was or what they thought about a particular role. And it was really interesting because that conversation happened both on the podcast but also in the social media realm. And then Jessica, maybe you want to speak briefly to the women in the community who then listened to them and wrote blog posts about it. So there was another place where people engaged and then definitely at the conference all over the place, it felt like there was just such a strong dialogue. I dunno. Jessica, do you want to talk a little bit briefly about the blogs?

Elizabeth:

So we wanted to expand the conversation. So we had community members at all levels in their career reflecting on this podcast series and what the CPOs had to say about their journey and the different paths that they took to get to being a CPO. And so particularly after the conference when we had the keynote panel and there were so many heartwarming comments about it and how candid all of the CPOs were in the discussion, so many of the community members were starting to raise their hand to be a part of this blog series, which is where we were to compile different reflections from people in different parts of the industry and at different career levels, and share those reflections with community members so they could start thinking about the next steps in their career toward advancement.

Elizabeth:

Mia, do you want to talk briefly about that discussion on social media? Right. It seemed like it started with the very first post in the very first episode and then really continued to build momentum all the way through the conference and maybe even beyond.

Mia:

When we first started putting out the first blog post, it seemed like a very interesting way for community members to have an open conversation and dialogue about what does it mean to be a CPO and having our guest writers write the takeaways from each episode allowed for a grant or conversation on social media.

Mia:

When I posted about an episode, we would get feedback, oh, this is amazing. it just allowed an extra layer of inspiration to the women listening. And I was able to see, each time we put out an episode the analytics grew each week.

Jessica:

Yeah. One thing I want to add to that too is that Mia grew the social media following on LinkedIn and I think the last six months from about 40,000 to 50,000 followers. And I think a lot of the podcast content was a big contributor to that.

Rashmi:

One thing, Elizabeth, the aha moment I received. There's no really one path to CPO. No straight line, no formula.

Cyronne:

I think the aha moment for me in the podcast was actually in the name of the podcast path to CPO, because the thing that was the constant thread for me was that there is no one path to CPO. I think when you think about a path, you think it's a straight line from point A to point B. And what these women shared in their stories is that there is no straight line, and all of their stories were different and unique and fascinating in that where they started was not necessarily where they saw themselves ending, but they got there. So that is something that I know will resonate with our community because the one thing you hear from product people all the time is that they sort of fell into product and their path into product was different, and it's not the same for everyone. So I think understanding that you don't have to do it the same way or the same way that Alex did it or the same way that Yu-Ying did it is an important thing to understand because the women can see in themselves that they can actually get there as well.

Elizabeth:

Yeah, I think that that's such a great point. I think that every single one of those nine women had a different pathway, and I'm sure that there's lots of other pathways that aren't necessarily represented there.

Elizabeth:

I want to take a minute and project forward as we wrap up this series, we have other things going on, and I know that you just launched an important program that kind of builds on all of these pieces that we've been talking about. So maybe you'd like to just briefly talk about Executive Edge.

Cyronne:

Yes. The Executive Edge program is our inaugural program where we're partnering with the Athena Alliance. That's an organization that historically has been able to take different groups of women with various backgrounds and help accelerate and give them a comprehensive program that they can take part of to get them to C-suite and board positions. So we looked at this program and thought, wow,



wouldn't it be great if we did something like this for our women, but gave it a little bit of a product spin, because that's the one thing that we felt might be missing in their program. So this is going to be a one year program. The participants will have access to the Athena Alliance, so everything that they offer as part of their offerings, they have a path to C-Suite pathway or journey that the participants will have access to. They have successful members in their, that's part of their program that the participants will have access to for coaching, for networking, that will be presenting various very content rich sessions to them.

Cyronne:

And then Women in Product will come in with our amazing Executive Edge Council, which is eight women that we put together that are leaders in our own community that they themselves, they themselves are chief product officers. We have a couple of CEOs and one senior vice president at a huge company. These women will act as mentors. They will help us to curate the content that we bring to the participants. They were instrumental in helping us promote the program. They recommended women for the program. They helped us to vet the applicants because we want to make sure that those that are coming into the program are ready for this. This is the step in their career that will get them to the C-Suite. So we have over 40 participants. We have 47 participants right now, and I'm cheering at that, and we're looking forward to having 47 great stories when the year is over.

Elizabeth:

I just want to kind of end with that note that not only were we able through this series to really peel back the onion and show people what it takes and what those many pathways are to Chief Product Officer, what it takes in terms of skills and change in your mindset and a number of things like that. But we're kind of taking that next step to provide programs that will help women that are sort of on that cusp, move up to that level, move up to the C-Suite, move up to senior VP, those types of roles, and we're really excited about that. So great job. I just wanted to say thank you to all of you. You are really the team that you're like the dream team that made this all happen, and I think it was a great series, and I know I learned a lot and really appreciate all of the great work that you guys did. Thank you.