



# CAREER LIFE STORIES

S2E2

Interview with

**Toni Bache**

First released November 2017

Presented and Produced by Nick Price

To watch the full episode, download the audio version and view additional content,  
please go to [careerlifestories.com](http://careerlifestories.com)

A Working Films production  
Copyright Working Films 2017. All rights reserved.  
[workingfilms.co.uk](http://workingfilms.co.uk)



## Interview with Toni Bache, hosted by Nick Price

**Nick:** [00:00:00] I'm joined today by Toni Bache. Tony is currently the Vice President of Human Resources for the Trauma and Extremities Division of Stryker, an 11 billion dollar Fortune 300 medical technology company with over 30,000 employees worldwide. As a senior business leader in a global role, Toni maintains a demanding schedule and does work with executive and leadership teams in over 30 countries. In this interview we learn how Toni's achieved success in her career, whilst dealing with many personal battles along the way. It's a pleasure to introduce: Toni Bache.

**Nick:** [00:00:35] Toni, you were born and brought up in Australia. What was that like?

**Toni:** [00:00:38] It was great. I love Australia. I miss it a lot. I was one of those kids that just did every extra curricular activity that you could do. So I spent my whole life at school: I would go to school early morning for cross-country training and then after school I would have netball, whatever other activity there was and spending my Friday nights out doing crazy stuff like debating. But I just loved doing things, I loved achieving things, I loved being involved and I wasn't the smartest student or the most athletic student, but I liked just giving things a go and trying things. So I did that a lot of my time was spent at school and when I was at home it was all outdoor playing, in the backyard, playing. We lived in a really nice neighbourhood where it was all acreage but a lot of kids all lived in the same area, so we would all play together and have a great time. And then on the weekends we would go down to the beach, which was Burleigh Heads is the best beach in the world, for sure.

**Nick:** [00:01:40] Why did you choose your choose HR as a career. Was it an intentional choice?

**Toni:** [00:01:44] Not at all. So it was interesting. I actually thought that I was going to do something in the sports arena and I really had my heart set on doing something to do with sports and outdoor and activity. And in my very last week of high school, I was involved in a serious car accident and that really changed the trajectory of my career, because I had in my mind this is what I was going to do and all of a sudden I had a lot of challenges with my neck and my shoulder, which meant that I couldn't be physically active as much as I wanted to be. So I started my degree and I did business majoring in sports management because I thought that would be a good way to, you know, once my back was healed I could I could get back into it. And I realized after a few months that not only was my back going to take a little bit longer to improve but that I was, I was actually enjoying this business stuff which I had had no exposure to before at all. And then while I was still studying at



university I got offered two jobs. One was in marketing and one was in HR. And the HR one was an organisation I was excited about working for and it was in a location I was excited about being in and that was really what drove me to take that role.

**Nick:** [00:03:05] What was your understanding of what Human Resources is or does?

**Toni:** [00:03:08] Do you know, back then I probably thought 'picnics and payroll' you know. I didn't really... a lot of what we learn at university was a lot about policies and about, the very simple side of HR and probably my first HR job was a lot of projects and policies and those types of things, so I probably didn't even have a full appreciation in my first HR job. My second HR job I got thrown into the deep end and I absolutely learnt what Human Resources was at that point.

**Nick:** [00:03:43] So that was back in Australia of course. And then you moved. Was that a career choice to move away from Australia?

**Toni:** [00:03:49] It was yes, so I actually had a few HR jobs in Australia and then I started with Stryker in Australia and I was there for just a couple of years and they asked me to move to the UK and to lead their European business. So I did that for a few years and then I progressed up the ranks in the European business, until just over 18 months ago when they asked me to lead one of their global divisions for them from an HR standpoint.

**Nick:** [00:04:20] So you've had quite rapid progress then really, was that rapid promotions? How have you got to your position now?

**Toni:** [00:04:27] Yeah. Rapid, rapid promotions, taking on additional projects. I like to solve problems so if I see a problem, solve a problem and I think that kind of taking that initiative has really given me the opportunity to being given these different promotions and different opportunities to do more within the organisation. But every single time it's been, I don't know if I can really do this and then, OK, say yes anyway and then jump in and make it work.

**Nick:** [00:04:56] So growing up you had some difficult times, didn't you? What can you remember of that?

**Toni:** [00:05:01] So I am the eldest of three children and my sister she was born with special needs and also a heart condition. So growing up really, she and I were very close, both in age, but also very close and she had a lot of medical needs that needed to be taken care of. So from a very, very, young age I was kind of thrown in, in helping take care of her



medical situations. And I think that's you know my early childhood was taking care of her. And sadly she passed away, when I was nearly six and she was nearly four and that was a really tough time for my family. I think I was still very young and probably didn't completely understand what was going on, but for my parents it was huge. The pain of losing a child you just... it's just so incomprehensible.

**Nick:** [00:05:58] So even though you were six, those memories are still quite strong, aren't they?

**Toni:** [00:06:02] Definitely. I honestly, it's funny because there's talk about me having to grow up quickly and take care of her. But the reality is all of my memories are just really, really, happy memories of her and I playing together and she was just the most beautiful, joyous, person in the world, she always had a smile on her face. And she was inspirational. Doctors said she would never walk, she would never talk, she would never do anything and she, as you know we lost her so early but she did all those things, she proved them wrong and she time and time again would just get up with a smile on her face and try something else and just keep pushing herself at it. So she was a phenomenal, phenomenal person.

**Nick:** [00:06:48] And does that act as an inspiration to you, every day I guess?

**Toni:** [00:06:54] Absolutely. So for me, my purpose in life is to live vivaciously in every moment and to inspire others to do the same. When I think about why that's my purpose, why that means so much to me it's because that's what she is. She was vivacious every single moment. You know there's times when I don't feel so vivacious, I'm not feeling on top of my game and I think back to her and everything she went through. But she could always find a way to smile and a way to push through, to do really unpleasant things that she had to do medically and she would always smile and light up the room despite that and if she can do that, there's absolutely no excuse, I have nothing bad in my life. So there's no excuse why I can't show up and do that as well.

**Nick:** [00:07:42] You've got a brother as well, haven't you?

**Toni:** [00:07:44] I do. So my brother was born just over a year after she passed away and unfortunately he was born with the same heart condition, which was just devastating for my parents having not long lost a child and then having another child with the same heart conditions, though his early years were definitely very difficult for them and for him, I mean, he was so little and so sick. But he was a fighter and he had his surgery when he was really very small about two, he had his surgery and they fixed his heart and they thought it was fixed for good and he had a great childhood had after that. He was, we call



him 'the cat' because he seriously, he has nine lives because he has this heart problem, he also then falls in the pool and drowns and has to be resuscitated and going through all of that as a child you know, it just made me very, very, protective of my family. Having lost my sister, nearly lost my brother with his heart condition, nearly lost my brother with his drowning. It definitely made me very protective of them that's for sure.

**Nick:** [00:08:54] And for your Mum and Dad of course, that must have been really difficult. Can you remember what that was like?

**Toni:** [00:09:00] You know, my parents were amazing. It was so difficult for them but they just kept pushing through. No matter how hard it was for them they always kept showing up for us. And I know now, I can reflect back and just think of how hard it must've been for them to keep doing that and keep showing up every day. And being great parents to me with everything else they're going through, but they did.

**Nick:** [00:09:24] And has that experience, those experiences shaped the person who you are now, do you think?

**Toni:** [00:09:30] It has to have had an impact on who I am. I think, I do jump in and take accountability for things, I like to solve problems. I am very, very, protective of my family and friends. And I think all of those things have really helped shape me and push me to at a very young age have to take on a leadership role in my life. And I think that's what's sort of driven me to continue on a leadership path as an adult.

**Nick:** [00:09:58] So moving away from Australia that must've been quite difficult?

**Toni:** [00:10:02] It was at the time, it was such a big dream of mine to work abroad. It was it was a relatively easy decision to move abroad. When I moved abroad and it had been a little while, I realised how much more difficult it is in actuality. Australia's a long way from Europe and it really probably made me appreciate my family and friends a lot more back in Australia and it's definitely been difficult being away from them.

**Nick:** [00:10:35] What's been the most difficult time?

**Toni:** [00:10:37] I think the most difficult time was my brother he got very sick. He he was actually trying out for the police force. He decided he'd - for a long time he wasn't sure what he wanted to do - And then he decided he wanted to be a police officer and he got all the way through the process of becoming a police officer, was literally about to start. And they said to him, actually you know, you had this heart condition when you were a baby, we



just want a cardiologist to sign off on it. No big deal. Is that ok? No problem. Went and saw the cardiologist and the cardiologist said, 'Actually I don't like the sound of your heart'. And one thing led to another, led to another and they actually found out that he had a tear in his heart in his mitral valve and he was very lucky that he didn't just drop dead one day and so he had to very quickly go from living this very normal life to having open heart surgery and he had the first surgery which was a success. Very, very, complicated, difficult surgery but he was young and fit. I'll never forget, I had flown back from that surgery to look after him, to make sure my parents were ok. And then he was all ok, I'd had gone back home. I was in New Jersey for work and he had been sick again and they didn't know exactly what it was. And then they figured out that it was actually an infection in his heart. And the work that they just done in his heart and they inserted a little plastic ring had become infected. And so he had to go back in for surgery and he called me and my father was away travelling for business. My mother I think she was at work and he called me and said they've come in and told me if I don't have surgery right now, I'm going to stroke out and die. So I am going into surgery and I was in New Jersey. I had to make the decision do I get on the plane and sit on the plane for the next 20 odd hours not knowing what's happened to him, or do I sit here by the phone and wait for the phone call and I chose to sit and wait for the phone, for the phone call and you know thank goodness he was fine. But that's when it really hit home how far away you are, you can't just jump on a plane and be there tomorrow for your family and you know as there continues to be health scares in my family: my grandmother was recently sick; my grandfather's been sick; my father's been sick. It makes you think, this is a tough decision to make in terms of career. I love working abroad. I love the experiences I'm having, I'm loving my job, but it's difficult when you when you kind of having to compromise that quality time with your family to do that.

**Nick:** [00:13:25] When you think about your career how important is it to you?

**Toni:** [00:13:29] It's, it's not that I'm... so, I love achieving but it doesn't have to be in career, it can be in any area of my life, I love just checking things off my To Do list and making sure I get things done. So it's kind of fascinating, because I love my job and I love being challenged and I love making an impact on the organisation, but I've never been so career focused that that should be everything, but there's certainly been times in my life where I've let my career be so much in my life. It's been if you have a pie chart it's been 99 percent of the pie chart's being committed to work and I'm not sure not sure what drives that because I think it's just I feel comfortable, I'm in my zone there, I don't have to be an emotional person to be my best at work and I have the formula for success at work and I don't have the formula for success in every other area of my life.

**Nick:** [00:14:25] Do you think that is partly what's helped you in your career is that you can



compartmentalise, you don't get overly emotional about things, you can control that?

**Toni:** [00:14:34] Absolutely. I mean honestly in my HR career I've been through a lot of very difficult conversations with people, I've had to do a lot of large scale redundancies. And I think my ability to really compartmentalise has been a real asset in those situations, I think if I wasn't able to do that it would make my job so much more difficult.

**Nick:** [00:14:55] Do you think you've learnt those skills, or do you think it's something started off from an early age, or do you think some your experiences have helped you develop to a way of managing that?

**Toni:** [00:15:07] You know I've never thought about that before, but to be honest, very early on in my career I was able to get a grasp of that and I think you know maybe it does go back to when I was a child and having to compartmentalise away some of those emotional areas and keep pushing through and maybe I've figured out how to apply that in other areas of my life. I never thought about it before though.

**Nick:** [00:15:32] What about work life balance? Do you have work life balance? What's your view on that?

**Toni:** [00:15:37] Oh, work life balance, it's my favourite topic! So I really struggle with the words 'work life balance' because I feel like 'balance' it means that there has to be equal on both sides. I feel like then every time that balance is slightly out of equilibrium then you're not achieving work life balance. So for me I really had to figure out like work life integration and how do I integrate my life into my work and my work into my life in a way where I feel like I am doing a great job at work, in achieving everything I need to achieve at work and doing the best job that I can do at work, but also in a way that I'm not compromising the relationships I have with my family and friends. Compromising my own health. And I've worked in global roles now for the last 12 years, so I've never had a 9:00am to 5:00pm, show up at 9:00am at your desk and leave at 5:00pm, it's always been having to support people around the world and that's meant that I've had to figure out how to integrate it. Really over the last couple of years, I had a few health scares that made me realise the importance of taking care of myself first. It's kind of that old adage or view, you have to put the oxygen mask on yourself before you put it on to somebody else, so you've really got to take care of yourself first. Because if I am not showing up as my best self then I'm not going to be my best self at work, I'm not going to be my best self for the people at home, so I need to figure out how to be my best self. And also I have to figure out that there is more to life than just work and it's not healthy, working 20 hours a day that's not what success looks like. Success looks like figuring out how you can, doesn't mean you



don't work at all, but you have to figure out how do you how do you do the most effective work you can do, but also have that other parts of your life in check, so that you're showing up at your best self at all times.

**Nick:** [00:17:38] So what you do to unwind? How do you relax?

**Toni:** [00:17:42] It's a good question. I don't know if I've got that completely figured out still. I'm definitely over the last few years exercise has taken a much bigger part in my life. I really recognise when I was younger that was what I was all about was fitness, fitness, fitness, everything I did was fitness, that's what I wanted to do as a career. I distinctly remember saying 'I'm never going to work in an office behind a desk I'm going to work outdoors'. Well it didn't quite turn out that way but I think I realised, I needed to get back into that and have an outlet because that gives me not just like physical, physical like health benefits, but also kind of that mental that focus, helping you kind of distract yourself from the work day. So I've been focusing on that a lot and it might sound really simple but just sleep. There was a time where I was really compromising sleep to get everything else I wanted to get done in my life. I'm definitely working on sleeping more. Yeah. The benefits have been huge.

**Nick:** [00:18:45] There was the time you fell down the stairs, broke your back and you still went into the office. Is that right?

**Toni:** [00:18:50] Yeah. So when I was living in the UK, we had some very steep stairs and I took a tumble down the stairs and fractured my back in four places and was in hospital for a few days, literally two weeks after it happened I was on a plane to Spain because it was so important to me not to let my team down that I had to be there and present at this meeting. I was in so much pain I don't even remember half of that meeting. And my team was thinking I was crazy for being there and it was - And at the time it didn't feel crazy, but it was, probably six months later when I was looking back at hindsight and saying 'Am I really that important? Could they really have not managed without me that day? Would it have really been the end of the world if I had to cancel that meeting?' and the answer was 'No' and I think it's still something I'm working on is, trying to put myself first. But at the same token, I think I am definitely improving in realising that you don't have to sacrifice everything else in order to be successful.

**Nick:** [00:19:55] Would you do the same thing now?

**Toni:** [00:19:57] No. Definitely no.



**Nick:** [00:19:59] What's changed?

**Toni:** [00:20:00] I think that perspective that the only person I would - I had this view that I was going to be letting down all of these people if I didn't go to this meeting. But in reality the only person I let down was myself by going, because I needed more time in bed to heal. I needed more time to see a doctor. I ended up having surgery a few weeks after that because it wasn't everything wasn't quite in the place it needed to be and I really shouldn't have been travelling, but I was so committed to putting everyone else's needs ahead of my own needs that I did that. Now I realise that I do have to put my own needs first and not to be selfish, not to not care about the people at work because I care about them so deeply, but because I have to show up as my best self - they didn't get my best self that day. They got Toni that was in agony and taking painkillers. And that wasn't me being my best, performing my best and that I could have been a much better experience for them if I was a few weeks later, when I was feeling better, after I'd had the surgery.

**Nick:** [00:21:07] You've had lots of things to deal with, haven't you? But you still maintain very positive driven attitude when, I think it's fair to say, a lot of people may have started to get a little bit despondent. Do you have to pick yourself up, or are you constantly at a level where you're positive?

**Toni:** [00:21:29] I think, I think I've definitely had to pick myself up at times. I definitely remember when I broke my back, just being in so much pain and I just felt so out of control in that situation. My family was far away. I was literally bed bound. I couldn't even go to the bathroom without my husband helping me. It was it was a really horrible time. And that was tough and I think even though I say that I would do things differently in the future, in terms of like going to a meeting a couple of weeks later in Spain. But at the same time I think that focus on work and not wanting to let people down at work that's dragged me back and really brought me quickly to a position where I can put my focus on something else and really find that positivity again in doing work that matters again instead of focusing on the pain that I had. I also remember, I went through a pretty tough time earlier in my career when I when I worked for Electronic Arts I actually hadn't been there even quite a year and I had some medical issues. They thought I had endometriosis, so they went in to do some investigative surgery. During the surgery, things seemed to be fine, but a few days later I actually contracted a deep vein thrombosis in my leg and then that ended up within a couple of days moving to my lungs and I was in a very, very, very, sick state. And I honestly I remember at that time thinking 'Gosh like I am I never going to make it out of this - and do I even care if I make it out of this', because it was just really tough. Yeah, I can't even describe like the, just the feeling of feeling so sick and not being able to breathe properly and just bleeding from everywhere, because they put you on blood



thinners and it was a really, really difficult and unpleasant time. Just as I managed to kind of get over the deep vein thrombosis and the pulmonary embolism, the doctor came in and said, 'Oh by the way, we found early stage cervical cancer, so we're going to have to deal with that. Sorry I didn't mention it, I didn't think you were going to make it, so I didn't want to put any additional stress on you, so now that you kind of just pulled through I'll throw you that through that one as well' and that was tough. But I think, I think the fact that I was a positive person and I had work to distract me and I just jumped straight back into work and instead of letting it get me down the fact that I had this near death experience and then not long after that I found out that I had to kind of deal with treating cancer as well, instead of letting that bring me down I just threw myself into work and thought you know I'm going to actually do some of the things that I always wanted to do and wasn't courageous enough to do and so I bought a house and did all the sorts of things that most people would shy away from when they have an experience like that, but I just thought I'm going to throw myself in with both feet and embrace life and you know really live every day, because life is short and you know you have to really make the most of it.

**Nick:** [00:24:53] I mean, how did you feel when you have been given that news that after everything else you'd been through?

**Toni:** [00:24:59] I just thought I'm just going to push through like at the end of the day I feel like I'm strong enough, I can get over this, I'm just going to push through and I honestly I never really gave it much thought and I remember, maybe a year later, a doctor saying to me 'You realise how serious this is right? You realise how serious this is?' And I'm like yeah I know, but it's been dealt with now and I remember him being shocked that you should be more freaked out about the fact you had this cancer scare. And I'm like well, it's been dealt with, we're moving on. And you know I have to have a lot of checks all the time to make sure it hasn't come back and that's not pleasant, because I have to kind of go into surgery and have that done. And certainly my life's changed, I now every, every time I fly over four hours with my job, which is a lot, I have to give myself an injection and I have to wear compression stockings, it changes your life. But then I look at my brother, my sister, so many other people that have been through so many more painful, more horrible things and in the scheme of everyone else's life, it's, it's nothing. So you just gotta pull up your big girl trousers and move on with it.

**Nick:** [00:26:14] One of the things you seem to do very well is, you focus on the present, what do I need to do to get this done. Let's keep looking forward. Would that sum up the way you deal with things?

**Toni:** [00:26:24] Absolutely. And it was interesting because I probably didn't realise how



much of a future focused person I was and I had a 360 done recently and it was a lot about energy management and how the person manages their energy. And a lot of the feedback I got was about being so future focused and I thought, well am I? Then I did a stock take and thought actually I am very future focused and I am always thinking about the future and not kind of dwelling on what's happened in the past and in the present, it's more about what do I do to get me to that great looking future as opposed to, eating cat food from a can or something like that.

**Nick:** [00:27:01] You got your career, you've still got family back in Australia. Where do you see your life going now? Is there a destination point?

**Toni:** [00:27:14] You know, it's so difficult. I mean in an ideal world I would live in Burleigh Heads, next to my family and have this amazing, global position that I'm doing all the things that I do today and having a huge impact and being constantly challenged. The reality is that that doesn't exist in Burleigh Heads.

**Nick:** [00:27:31] Describe what Burleigh Heads like, is it a small village/town?

**Toni:** [00:27:35] So I guess you would call it a village. It's on the Gold Coast in Australia. It's this beautiful, I mean it has the most beautiful beaches. It's where I have my house is, it's where I was married, it's where my family lives. We have an amazing surf club there and I was really involved in the surf club which is like surf life saving. I was very heavily involved with them and honestly I think it's rated one of the top three beaches in the world. It's a beautiful, beautiful beach and it's my happy place for sure, for sure. I love it so much.

**Nick:** [00:28:14] We talked about out side of work. I love that, what you've just said about your happy place. Where do you go to relax?

**Toni:** [00:28:21] Honestly I probably wherever my husband is, he really mellows me out. He's very good at getting me to not be so intense and so I think it's wherever he is, he helps me get to my happy place and to to chill out even if I can't get to Burleigh Heads. He's, he's kind of my little place to go for sure.

**Nick:** [00:28:43] So when we were talking beforehand, you were saying that children were unlikely to be in your plans. But, actually it's more awkward you find for other people talking about it than you talking about it yourself?

**Toni:** [00:28:54] Definitely. For us, we're very comfortable with the fact that that's not in our future. But we're very pragmatic about it. I guess we knew from a young age that that



was definitely a possibility that that wasn't going to happen and we really realise that we can live a very happy life with just the two of us. You know we love having other people's children. But it's great to be able to hand them back at the end of the day. But it's very funny because I get asked that question a lot and when people, when I say, 'No we're not going to have children, probably won't work out because of medical reasons'. People get super awkward and it's a very awkward question for them, but for us it's very natural. It is what it is and our life doesn't have to be defined by the different things that have happened and we can find fulfilment in ways outside of having a family.

**Nick:** [00:29:45] You've achieved a lot in your career so far. What do you want to achieve that you haven't achieved yet?

**Toni:** [00:29:51] There's not like there's a specific career goal. I think for me the big goal for me in life is how can I continue to inspire more people? How can I help more people achieve everything they want to achieve in their lives? How can I make a difference in whatever organisation I'm working with and how can I, how can I really have a huge impact, whilst I'm still being challenged and helping other people? I think that's that's the big thing for me is just inspiring more people to be able to do what they want to do and to live their life in the way they want to live it.

**Nick:** [00:30:28] Is that a big driver for you?

**Toni:** [00:30:30] It is I think, it's only been recently that I've kind of decided to be a bit more conscious about it. I think in the past it was something I was more passively doing and not really recognising that people that I had anything worthwhile sharing or inspiring people with. I actually took on mentoring a few people and realised all the things that I'd already had all those life lessons all the mistakes I'd already made. I could actually share those with them and help them and that for me I really realised, actually I can help more people, I can help people not make the same mistakes I've made. I can help people not make mistakes in their businesses that they're they're about to make, I can help people do that and that to me is inspiring people if I can help them do what they want to do in a better way, that's that's inspiring them.

**Nick:** [00:31:25] Are there mistakes you've made that you would say you would do things differently?

**Toni:** [00:31:30] I have made so many mistakes in my career, in my life. I mean too many to list off. But in saying that I don't think I would actually do anything differently in hindsight, because those mistakes that number one, I have learnt so much from them and if I hadn't



made those mistakes and lived through the consequences of those mistakes myself, I wouldn't probably have learned my lesson. But secondly they've shaped who I am today, making mistakes, the experiences that you go through, the lessons that you learn, the challenges that you have in life. That's truly what shapes you as a person and what helps you to be the person you are today and at the end of the day there's still so much I can do in my life that I'm reasonably happy with what I've achieved and I wouldn't be here today, if it wasn't for mistakes and challenges and everything else that's happened.

**Nick:** [00:32:25] So what what advice would you give to somebody just starting out in their career?

**Toni:** [00:32:29] First and foremost I think, be very determined, you know, make sure that you show up, that you achieve what you want to achieve and that you figure out how to make the most impact that you can make in whatever role it is. Because you never know where what you're doing today is going to lead you to tomorrow, you never know the relationships you're going to make, the people you're going to meet. So I think that's definitely very important. The second thing is to believe in yourself, because like you alluded to earlier, there has been a lot of times where I have been thrown in the deep end and roles have maybe been bigger than what I thought I could manage, or there's been other challenges that have come up that I didn't know if I could handle. But you have to have that courage, have that belief, have that confidence, that you can do it. And if you mix that with the determination, it's pretty impactful what you can achieve in your role and in your life and in your career. And I think the one thing I've learned is I'm a massive believer in talent. So everybody has different talents and it's about figuring out what your talents are, what your strengths are and figuring out how to leverage those strengths and talents. But the one thing that I've learned is that hustle beats talent when talent doesn't hustle. So if you're somebody that's really talented, but you're not showing off in doing the work, in putting the work in, there's other people that aren't as smart as you, aren't as athletic as you, aren't as whatever as you, that are going to overtake you and that doesn't mean you have to work like a dog. I've made that mistake. I'm trying to improve that as I've progressed through out my career. But it means that you do have to really show up and do your very best every day and show up as your best self every day.

**Nick:** [00:34:18] What qualities do you admire in other people?

**Toni:** [00:34:20] I definitely admire people that are willing to take a risk. I am definitely somebody that's more in the risk adverse side, so when I see people that take risks and do something differently that always really inspires me. It definitely inspires me seeing other females in leadership. You know the image that they can present to our future leaders



both male and female. But I think seeing those leaders and the charisma they have and the presence they have and how they manage to actually have that impact and that influence and inspire people that really, really inspires me.

**Nick:** [00:35:01] Do you think there's enough business leadership in HR?

**Toni:** [00:35:04] I don't. When I'm recruiting for HR people it's always a challenge because I really want HR people that have that business acumen that are really true partners, they're thought partners, they're strategic partners and that's really difficult to find.

**Nick:** [00:35:20] Why do you think it's so difficult?

**Toni:** [00:35:22] I think it's difficult to find HR leaders that kind of see themselves as business leaders first, because I think people do still see HR as the keeper of policy and the protector of people, instead of that strategic partner that helps drive the business forward. And I think it's really a bit of a cultural shift in the way that we're educating our future HR leaders. And also there is still a lot of businesses that see HR as a transactional function and when people have grown up in environments where HR's transactional it's just a very difficult cultural shift to make into that more strategic business partnership.

**Nick:** [00:36:00] What frustrates you?

**Toni:** [00:36:04] I get frustrated easily. So I think it frustrates me when I see people wasting their talent, when there's people that are capable of doing so much more than what they're doing and they really want to wallow in their self pity and not get up and push through and find a way to be the best they can be. That really bothers me because I think everybody on this earth has an equal opportunity to do something with their life. It might be different but you see stories of people that have come from nothing that have made something phenomenal and you've seen from people that have come from everything and have actually created nothing. You want to be that person that create something phenomenal in this world, no matter where you come from or what you've been through, that's who you want to be.

**Nick:** [00:36:52] We were talking before about legacy and saying how that's quite an important thing and something you think about.

**Toni:** [00:36:59] Absolutely.

**Nick:** [00:37:00] So tell me a little bit more about that?



**Toni:** [00:37:04] So I think about legacy all of the time because I want to make sure that I leave the world a better place than when I joined it. And I put a lot of pressure on myself to try and do something that's actually going to have an impact, that's going to inspire people, that's going to make me be remembered for helping people change their lives, not for you know getting off in the morning and going to work, like I have to do more than that. I haven't figured it out yet. That's for sure. There's a lot of work I have to do in terms of actually figuring out what my legacy will be. But I think for now I'm just showing up every day and being the best that I can be and helping as many people as I can to be the best that they can be and hopefully that transacts into somewhere where somebody is grateful for what I've left behind.

**Nick:** [00:37:57] What are you not so good at, what have you had to work most hard at?

**Toni:** [00:38:02] I'm not actually good at anything. That that might sound crazy but I've never been, you know when I was at school I was really into sports, but I was not the most athletic person. It came down to heart - like really wanting to do it and really putting myself into it. And at work I'm definitely not the smartest HR person at work but I think it's a matter of adding value, doing important projects that actually make a difference to the company, so I feel like I have to work hard is maybe the wrong choice of words. But it's not, it's not like everything comes easy for me and I just wake up in the morning and I'm amazing at everything. I really have to work hard at a lot of things in order to be successful in them.

**Nick:** [00:38:47] But what's really important to you now in life and has that been something that's changed?

**Toni:** [00:38:52] My priorities have definitely changed from being all about career to being much more about spending quality time with my family and much more about taking care of myself first. So you know really making sure that I'm nourishing my body with the right food, making sure that I am exercising, making sure that I'm doing everything I can do to be as well as I can be, so I can show up as my best self. And that's really where I've put a lot of my focus now is on my relationships and on taking care of myself and what I've found is actually by doing that, I'm actually more effective at work because when I am feeling good because I'm taking care of my body and when I have really great relationships, of course then, you show up to work more engaged with yourself and which helps you to show up more engaged and even better work so you achieve more and you do more at work, despite the fact that you're actually focusing less on work.



**Nick:** [00:39:53] If I was to speak to your family and friends, how would they describe you?

**Toni:** [00:39:57] That's interesting. I think they would definitely say loyal. I think that comes back to that me being very protective about my family and friends and making sure that I take care of them. I think they would say that I'm driven, I'm organized. They'd probably say I'm intense from time to time. I like to think that they would say I'm kind or generous. I think that's probably the main things...

**Nick:** [00:40:29] Pretty good qualities to have.

**Toni:** [00:40:31] I hope so, I'm only telling you the good ones, I'm not telling you the bad one's that they would say.

**Nick:** [00:40:32] But I guess sometimes, when you are that driven, there are things that sometimes fall by the wayside aren't there?

**Toni:** [00:40:43] Yeah, for sure, for sure. I think I try. I definitely want to be there for everybody, but I think it's almost that pace of being driven and I never feel like I'm quite enough for anybody. So whether that's work, or my husband, or my family, or my friends, I never feel like I'm totally enough for everybody, I never really feel like I'm fully present for everybody and that's why I'm working really hard on trying to improve that, because I would love to feel as though I'm not letting that determination and that need to do everything get in my way of just being me and just being with my friends and family and being able to relax and just be fully present with them.

**Nick:** [00:41:25] When you look ahead to the future, when you're relaxing, wherever that may be, what's going to make you feel happy and fulfilled?

**Toni:** [00:41:36] I think definitely the people in my life. I think without the people in my life there's nothing and I think you can have career success, you can have success in so many different areas of your life, but unless you really have strong relationships and you value the relationships you have with people, you have nothing. And I also think taking care of my health first, because again, if you're not healthy and you're sitting on a beach retired but you can't get out of your beach chair to go for a swim that's not really life, is it? So I think those are probably the two most important things.

**Nick:** [00:42:10] So generally then, what does the future hold for you now?

**Toni:** [00:42:15] You know I really have to wait and see. I'm somebody that's a massive



planner and I like to have very clear plans and everything laid out. But the one thing I've learned about the future is you can't fully predict it, all you can do is take steps to try and achieve goals that are this far in the future. But when you look much longer in the future, it's really, really, hard to predict. I'm just going to have to wait and see.

**Nick:** [00:42:41] Toni, it's been a pleasure talking to you.

**Toni:** [00:42:42] Thanks Nick.



## **About Career Life Stories**

Career Life Stories is a series about people, their lives and their work. The format was created and produced by Working Films Ltd, a UK company founded by the producer and host of the series, Nick Price.

To watch the full episodes, view more content and sign up for future updates, please visit [careerlifestories.com](http://careerlifestories.com).