

Title: How story can make your goals and resolutions stickier in the New Year and beyond!

Episode: 226

Show Intro:

Laura Cox Kaplan ([00:06](#)):

Building influence is something anyone can learn. It's an investment you can make in yourself and it can hold the keys to achieving your dreams and having the life and impact you want to have. I'm Laura Cox Kaplan. I've learned a lot over three decades about building and sustaining influence and how using it and using it effectively can make a big, big difference in your life and career. Here on She Said/ She Said Podcast, we're digging into the different dimensions that help us build and sustain influence. If you thought being an influencer was just for social media, think again. Whether you're starting a business, raising money for a cause, negotiating a promotion, running your household or trying to connect with those who don't share your views, understanding and using the different dimensions of influence will increase your chances of success. Whatever your goals may be, listening to She Said/ She Said Podcast is a smart, efficient investment you can make in you. I'm really glad you're here and I'm excited we're on this journey together.

Episode

Laura Cox Kaplan ([01:19](#)):

Hey friend, happy New Year to you and happy first She Said/ She Said Podcast episode for the year 2023. This is episode 226. I am really excited to kick off a new year with you. Maybe you've been listening for a while and if so, thank you. I am incredibly grateful for your continued support, but if you're new, I'm also delighted that you are here and that you found us. There are a number of things that make this podcast a bit unique in the personal and career development space and perhaps the most unique aspect is our focus on those micro habits that help you build and sustain influence. That theme of influence has run throughout my career and my personal story, and that was true cause of the nature of the work that I've done around communication and policy and advocacy. But it wasn't until I spent time really thinking about my own story as part of creating this podcast that I actually saw this thread of influence much more clearly.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([02:35](#)):

And then I began to see how the different dimensions that make up influence have come together, not just in my own story but in the stories of the incredible women who join me on this podcast to share what they've learned with you. One of the most valuable things that I've learned about influence is that it has a lot, lot more to do with micro habits that are practiced

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consistently and over a lifetime than it does with any single thing that makes someone truly influential. As I have had an opportunity to really think about my own journey when I've engaged in those little habits fully, those are the times when I'm at my best both personally and professionally. As I listen to the conversations with the amazing guests who join me on this podcast, I hear those little building blocks run through those conversations with these women who have built amazing careers and whose journeys are packed with insight and advice that you can put right to use.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([03:49](#)):

I am often asked why did I start this podcast in the first place? And there are a few reasons for that. I was inspired to do so because of a friend, but on a deeper level, what I really wanted was to share what I had learned because I am so grateful for the many lessons and the perspectives that so many others have imparted on me, and I also wanted to develop a much more creative outlet for myself, but one that hopefully would provide use and value to others as well. But in addition to all of that, when I went looking for career and personal development advice, especially around career pivots, I didn't find exactly what I was looking for.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([04:39](#)):

Often what I found actually leaned too far in one direction or another or it was too chatty and didn't seem to value my time or it wasn't particularly thoughtful and deep enough to give me some real food for thought. So my aim here became and remains to create something that is consistently smart and thoughtful and challenging, action oriented, empowered, and that's designed specifically with your personal and career development goals in mind. Now friend, obviously I do not have all of the answers and I'm often learning right alongside you, which is a big part of what I love about this, but I also love that I'm able to offer some what I think are some pretty rich perspectives from some 30 years in business and politics and communications, and now <laugh> as the mom of teenagers, I also have that perspective as well. Talk about a place to use skills of influence, okay, that's a topic for another day.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([05:46](#)):

I also often have a chance to dig into my network, a network that I built over those 30 years and in three or four different sectors, and I can get great perspective from these amazing folks who I think you'll enjoy and appreciate and that again hopefully can add value to your life. So if that is what you are looking for, friend, you are absolutely in the right place, and again, I'm so happy that you're here. There are lots of career podcasts for you to choose from, but I think you'll find a consistently unique perspective right here. But obviously, please be sure to let me know what you think I'd really love to hear. Now, before we get into today's topic, I wanna share just a bit about what you can expect from the next few weeks and months here in this season. As She Said/ She Said Podcast, every week we talk about a dimension of influence.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([06:47](#)):

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We talk about how elements of a guest's story, even when they may not be the primary focus of the conversation, can actually have a significant bearing on the influence that she's built in her life and career. I then will supplement those conversations with some perspective of my own. So every week you get either an interview or a deeper dive into a topic that's resonated with me or that you've shared as a problem or a potential topic to discuss. As we kick off the new year and this new season, we'll be looking at the intersection of personal brand and influence, and boy do I love this topic. We'll be diving into how you can improve or develop as the case may be your personal digital brand, and we'll be looking at some key considerations for using the various social media platforms to build your credibility and to showcase your brand and your expertise.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([07:51](#)):

We will also be diving into how our work, our actions and our interactions can create a ripple effect, will bring that topic to life as part of our upcoming collaboration with women founded business owners who are part of the Southern CIE or the Southern Sea. Now, she said said podcast is once again, I'm happy to say the official podcast sponsor for the Southern Seas Annual Summit, which is coming up February 1st through third. I'll be posting about that on my social media channel, so I hope you'll follow along both with the content here. I'm going to have some incredible guests as well as on my Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. Now also this season we'll be talking about improving our communication strategies to make sure that you're getting recognized for the work that you're already doing or the work that you've done, and we'll also be talking about how collaboration, as great as the benefits may be to collaborating, is actually much more difficult than we often talk about.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([09:01](#)):

One of my upcoming guests has written a terrific new book. It's not out yet, but will be later this spring, and I love the title, it's called Collabora Hate <laugh>, and I love that, and that is just a quick taste of what's coming. We will have all of that and lots more. So I'm really, really excited to launch this season, but today as we kick off this new year, we're going to dive into an important way that you can frame your goal setting to not only help you stick with your goals for longer, but also potentially to help you have an even bigger impact by helping you gain more clarity and more intention. Now, as we get into this, let's first quickly level set the practice of setting resolutions. We all know about this practice, right? You're inundated with it everywhere you turn, whether it's social media or television or magazines or talking to your friends, everyone's talking about it in January, and this practice dates back some 4,000 years all the way back to the Babylonians.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([10:13](#)):

They believed that if they kept their word, the gods would look favorably on them for the year ahead. And this practice of New Year's resolutions actually continued in ancient Rome, and the first written documentation found here in the US dates back to an article in the Boston Globe

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from the early 18 hundreds. So we've been doing this and engaging in this practice for a very, very long time. Despite all of that history and presumably all that we have learned about why goals and resolutions succeed or fail. A majority of us set some type of goals or resolutions for the new year and all, but about 8% of the folks who set those resolutions drop them before we even hit February. Why is that? Why do most of us fail in our resolutions and goals? Okay, there a number of reasons for that. We're not going to get into all of them, but the most likely is really a disconnect between true intention and then specific benchmarks to help the person stay on track.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([11:30](#)):

There are tones of materials on how to set goals and how to make them stickier, and I am not going to rehash all of that great advice here today, but there is one area that sticks out to me because it overlaps with one of the most important elements for building influence. It's the power of story, the story you tell yourself about who you are and what you want out of your life and the story that you curate and edit and share with the world about who you are and the unique and distinctive value that you alone can bring. Now, story when you think about it is a funny thing. It can be somewhat elusive because it does change and evolve as you change and evolve. It can also require some real effort to distill the most valuable nuggets that differentiate you, so it can be beneficial to have someone like a coach or a mentor, maybe a trusted friend who can help you dig through the different dimensions of your life to find those nuggets that you might be too close to see as clearly.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([12:47](#)):

I also think that listening to podcasts like this one can be helpful. As you think about your story as you hear other women's stories, you'll undoubtedly be reminded of your own story and journey, and I personally have found incredible value in that particular aspect of hosting this podcast. But friend, as we think about setting goals for the new year, story also helps us address one of the best kept secrets for effective goal setting. It's the importance of understanding and getting to the heart of why you're setting the goal in the first place. If it's a weight loss goal, which is really common this time of year, why are you setting it? Is it to fit into your skinny jeans or because you wanna feel more confident and to have more energy to tackle other goals? Maybe it's to have more energy and better health for your children or for a big project or a big client.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([13:51](#)):

Maybe it's to land another big client so that you can increase your quality of life for your family. Whatever it is, it almost always, if not always boils down to something much bigger and much deeper than just the outcome of the goal itself. But we don't always set goals with an awareness of that deeper motivation, but when we do our goals take on a more powerful meaning and they tend to become stickier because we've not only established the goal, but also the motivation behind it. One of the experts I was reading as I prepared for today's podcast actually

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shared this perspective that I thought was really helpful. Ken Sheldon is the author of a book called *Freely Determined* What The New Psychology of Self Teaches Us about How to Live, and he says it's easy to get distracted or to get out of touch with the things that we really care about.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([14:57](#)):

Sometimes he says it's because we spend years living out other people's dreams for us maybe going to law school even if we hate it and don't plan to practice law, but it's, it's something that our parents or family members wanted us to do. Sheldon says, you might have the grit to plow through to the end of your goal, but you probably won't be as happy or as fulfilled as when your motivation is focused more on pleasing yourself and living life as you want it versus living out someone else's dream or intention. You'll ultimately be less satisfied in the end, he says, and it's much more likely to impact whether you ever reach that end goal at all. So to tie it together, resolutions are much more likely to stick when they're anchored in something that's deeper and more meaningful to you and to fully understand that often boils down to how clear you are on your story.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([16:05](#)):

Mindset is another incredibly important dimension in how we think about story and goal setting. Mindset is critical to how we think about our potential to achieve the goal, but also to the story and the narrative that runs in our head when we fall short. The failure soundtrack might be the more powerful of the two, and it may have an even bigger impact on your ability to dust yourself off and give it another go. Now, here's a really important piece of advice that I love about falling short. Rather than allowing the inevitable slipups to derail you, a good counter approach is to actually plan for the slip up or failure in advance. This was the advice that was offered by Sue Kenerson Cassidy in our conversation in episode 202. Now, Sue Kinder joined me to talk about her terrific book, which is entitled *Choose Possibility*, and while we were talking about risk taking, I think her advice applies here to goal setting as well.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([17:11](#)):

Now, Sue Kinder's career journey has included stints as CEO of StubHub and now CEO of cloud-based accounting software Platform Zero, and her path has been one that has been filled with incredibly big risks. Her advice plan to fail or rather plan for what you will do when you fail, not if, but when in the story that you craft about your goals and what you wanna achieve and the person who you wanna become or to become more of Plan for contingencies. Assume that you will fall off the wagon in mid to late July since most people do, and then write down what your action plan will be to get yourself back on track. Think about the story that you'll tell yourself when not if, but when that happens, you are not a failure. Remember, you made it X days or weeks. So celebrate those milestones and think about what you've learned so far about what's worked and incorporate that into your story.

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Laura Cox Kaplan ([18:26](#)):

Celebrate those milestones and show yourself that you are making progress toward that bigger goal and the story that you are creating. Another great tip that I love is something that Wharton behavioral psychology professor and author Katie Milkman shared in our conversation here on this podcast in episode 169, build in a day into each week in which you'll skip your goal. Maybe use the day as a little reward if you're sticking with your goal the other six days by assuming that you'll need a break. It actually works somewhat similar to SK strategy in that you're building in a little pause and you're planning for it upfront. The bottom line more broadly is this, spend time thinking about your story, the one that you tell yourself and the one that you share with others. Are they aligned? Are they a positive and growth oriented reflection of who you actually are and who you hope to be?

Laura Cox Kaplan ([19:35](#)):

Are you creating the version of yourself that you'd ultimately like to see? Not a made up version, but a version that takes all the good, the bad, and the downright ugly. We all have them and mixes them into the uniquely distinctive human that you are and whose gifts and perspectives, no one, but you can really offer that aspiration of being the best version of ourselves is what New Year's resolutions are all about. Now, personally, I've always focused less on fixing everything, and instead, I try to focus on areas for growth and really think about growth as the mindset in which I approach my goal strategy. One of my strategies is to use a document that I created a number of years ago that I call my personal year in review. It's essentially where I dump all the good, bad, and ugly as well as all the amazing milestones, including both the micro ones as well as the macro ones, and I then reflect on what I didn't manage to achieve that I had planned to and why I think about the reasons why I didn't achieve those things.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([20:52](#)):

And I try to be really honest with myself. Was it lack of bandwidth, which is always a good excuse, or was it actually fear maybe being afraid of the person I was becoming or the evolution my life was taking? These are important considerations when we're growing and pushing ourselves, and it's important to take some time to ask ourselves these questions and to reflect on them and to think about how our story is ultimately unfolding. I use this year in review process to set my intentions for the next year and to write my story for the year ahead, and also to set some new challenges and benchmarks for growth. My process does not take the place nor should it, of a more formal goal setting approach, but instead, it gives an additional dimension for how you can engage your mindset as you set those goals and resolutions, and it can give you a clearer understanding of your own motivation for why you set this goal and who you really want to be in the end when you accomplish it.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([22:03](#)):

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Now, back to my point about story. Story is one of the most important building blocks for influence. It requires a deep focus on our personal narrative and an awareness of how we have shaped and retell that narrative in our own heads. And to anyone who asks, as you think about and reflect on your own story, does it reflect who you really are and who you aspire to be? And most importantly, does it reflect the talents and gifts that you bring to the world? If not, consider making it one of your goals. Edit your story. Go back and look for ways that you can sift through all the learning, all the experiences, good and bad that have helped you to grow and pull those nuggets and incorporate those things into your story. Reflect on how far you've come, how you haven't allowed setbacks to crush you because you're still here and that is amazing.

Laura Cox Kaplan ([23:05](#)):

Use those experiences and what you've learned as fuel and momentum. Friend, I wish you an incredible start to the new year, and I hope you'll be able to find some time for reflection as you consider your story and update it for the year ahead. I would love to hear about your process. I'd also love to hear any great goal setting processes and tips that work well for you. As always, you can reach me via the contact link that you will find in the show notes for this episode, episode 226. You can find those show notes on my website at [she said she said podcast.com](http://she-said-she-said-podcast.com), or you can direct message me on social media platforms, LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter. You will find me at Laura Cox Kaplan. Until next week, friend, you take care and I'll talk to you again real soon. She Said/ She Said Podcast is a weekly production of She Said, she said Media.

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