

Intro/Outro ([00:03](#)):

Welcome to supply chain. Now the voice of global supply chain supply chain now focuses on the best in the business for our worldwide audience, the people, the technologies, the best practices, and today's critical issues. The challenges and opportunities stay tuned to hear from those making global business happen right here on supply chain now. Hey, good morning,

Scott Luton ([00:32](#)):

Scott Luton here with you on supply chain. Now, welcome to today's show. Hey, on this episode, special episode, we're talking with a leadership dynamo that helps companies create an army of problem solvers, a culture of problem solvers, and much, much more. She's a sought after executive coach strategy consultant and keynote speaker, and she hosts her own podcast series, the lead lean podcast. I think I've got that right. So you're in store for a treat today, a repeat guest, which we love here at supply chain. Now let's welcome in crystal Davis, crystal, how are you doing

Crystal Davis ([01:04](#)):

Thank you so much for inviting me back. I love it. Love it, love it. And I'm so excited to be here today.

Scott Luton ([01:10](#)):

Oh, we're glad to have, you know, this has been, uh, getting you back. We had to go through your agent and your, uh, your agents, agent and email agents. That's right. Well, you've been, you've been busy and it was neat to catch up at the end of 2020. And, and finally get you back on here. Cause we didn't, we didn't talk enough. I guess it was, um, was that May, 2019? Does that sound about right? I think it was, yeah. When you were, you were in Atlanta or are you, I know you, you, you hail from Atlanta, but you were, Amy came to Atlanta.

Crystal Davis ([01:42](#)):

Amy came to Atlanta, they had their regional meeting here.

Scott Luton ([01:44](#)):

That's right. And you keynoted, I think Mark Braun also keynoted, uh, so good stuff. So,

Crystal Davis ([01:51](#)):

And then he somehow influenced me and now I have a podcast. I don't know what happened.

Scott Luton ([01:56](#)):

Well, and we're going to talk about that too. Uh, I'm not surprised in the least bit as we talked about, so we're going, we're going to chat about that in a minute. So first off for the handful of folks that don't know you and for some of the folks that maybe weren't listening to our podcast, when you first came on, let's get know crystal Davis a little better. So tell us where you're from and, and tell us about your upbringing a little bit.

Crystal Davis ([02:15](#)):

Absolutely. So I'm crystal Evette Davis. That's what the Y stands for. I hailed from Jackson, Mississippi. So I'm a country girl. I, uh, I'm a Mississippi state Hale state bulldog. So I always get into fights about, you know, who's the real bulldog, you know, over here in Georgia,

Scott Luton ([02:38](#)):

We just lost half our audience.

Crystal Davis ([02:40](#)):

I know, right? No, I play fair. I play fair. I love all the Bulldogs and I love the sec. So, you know, we're good there we're good there. And as long as they beat Alabama, well, you know, I just have to put that in there. I have to represent the Bulldogs here.

Scott Luton ([03:02](#)):

So, um, you were you graduate with an industrial engineering degree from Mississippi state, right?

Crystal Davis ([03:07](#)):

You're from Mississippi state. Yes. So,

Scott Luton ([03:09](#)):

So that's well above my pay grade and every time I've taught with a professional engineer, that's, that's too much math for me, but what, what was it, you know, why did you choose R E

Crystal Davis ([03:19](#)):

You know, what was interesting? I went into winning in college, thinking that I wanted to be in computer science and computer engineering. And while I love technology, I felt like there was a side of me that was just, I felt like that was, that was going to it. Didn't represent my personality. That's the best way to say it. So I actually went on a hunt to every engineering school and talk to the deans, talk to some students. And when I landed in the IP department, what I loved about it was the interaction with the human being and that fit my personality. And so that's how I, how I landed up there, you know, and being able to impact change.

Scott Luton ([04:00](#)):

We all need folks that want to impact change. I love that. Hey, one more question. Before we talk about more of your professional journey, kind of after college. So Jackson, what was it like? Give me one thing about what it was like growing up in Jackson, Mississippi. My, my brain always goes to food and, and like the places that you grew up loving to eat at, you know, I think southerners, we enjoyed that, but what's one thing that was special about growing up in Jackson.

Crystal Davis ([04:26](#)):

You know what, one thing that I found special, so I'm a seventies baby giving my age away. But one thing that I found special was it was peaceful and it was rich in family and friends and culture. And then there were just, for me in particular, my family had very high expectations and we just, we loved family time. Most of my friends were family. Right. And cousins.

Scott Luton ([04:55](#)):

Mm LaVar. Yeah. Did you come from a big family? Lots of cousins. Like I did. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Nothing like it,

Crystal Davis ([05:02](#)):

Nothing like it. And Sunday dinners, Sunday dinners, homemade things from scratch, homemade biscuits and Oh gosh. Yeah. Yeah.

Scott Luton ([05:11](#)):

You got to stop Chris out. I'm about to starve now. Well, Hey, one more. Oh, culture. You mentioned culture because that seemed like an early lesson learned on an early value, strongly associated with culture. That, that seems like it would, it would play out with the rest of your career. And we're going to start, we'll probably circle back and talk about culture here in a minute, but let's talk about your professional journey. So after college, you kind of walk us through, you know, a couple of key roles that helped shape your worldview.

Crystal Davis ([05:38](#)):

So after college, I landed at a tier three in the automotive industry and made my way up to, to a tier one. And so I went, I spent 17 years in the automotive industry and that really shaped my

Scott Luton ([05:53](#)):

That's like 57 years in any other industry. Right. It is. And people don't

Crystal Davis ([05:58](#)):

Understand that they used to talk about the life expectancy after you retired from automotive cars, just high stress, very fast paced, high volume. Uh, but the, the blessing in my automotive journey was it took me around the world. And so you've got this little country girl from Jackson, Mississippi that ends up in working in Spain and working in Portugal and Germany and you know, all around the world working four and a half years in Mexico. So, you know, I learned so much and I, I think going back just briefly to the culture piece, that my family always just focused on treating people. Right. Okay. And I think that helped me be able to learn and be open to all of these cultures that I, that I experienced in moving around. But the automotive industry probably, uh, was for me the most prevalent part of my career, because that is where I learned lean before I learned six Sigma lean and six Sigma, um, both in the automotive industry, but really cut my teeth in lean in the automotive industry.

Scott Luton ([07:04](#)):

Well, if I am familiar with their bio accurately enough that you, you had some time spent with Toyota, sensei's, we're really learning.

Crystal Davis ([07:13](#)):

Now you talk about the big Eureka moment, those two gentlemen, uh, Rick Harris and Mr. Yamada, they taught me so much, very tough teachers, but I wouldn't trade the experience. Um, Scott, because I learned the true essence of, you know, what we were doing before my encounters with both of them. I was more of a person that was really just focused on tools and tactics and process improvement. I learned so much from, from Rick about under seeing, understanding the whole business and understanding the connection between everything. And then from Mr. GMR, I learned about corporate responsibility, community responsibility, understanding the financials, understanding where the business was going and how all of that plays into continuous improvement. But prior to both of those experience, I was just like, you know, I was happy learning tools and implementing tools and didn't understand the principles.

Scott Luton ([08:14](#)):

Well, you know what, what's interesting though, going back to, um, what you learned from your family about, you know, treating people, right. You know, that early lesson learned in a role where you're driving change and, and you're working with people to drive change. That's gotta be a critical early lesson learned to impact your career as well. Right?

Crystal Davis ([08:31](#)):

Oh, absolutely. Because, you know, although I had that lesson as a child, you come out of college drives you. You're supposed to be this hot shot engineer and people are looking to you for answers. And what I learned was that, you know, before I went to Mexico, I was working in factories where people had, they, you know, they were at 45 years in and still working. And so I had to learn respect that the people who have worked there all this time are truly experts. Right. Right. And, and although I might know some engineering and some math and science, I needed to learn how to respect, show, respect. And that's how I started to learn that you essence of what that means.

Scott Luton ([09:12](#)):

I love that, you know, we're gonna have to bring you back. Cause I bet you could write several books on your 17 years in automotive alone. And then there's so many big issues facing that industry here today. But we'll have to, we'll have to bring you back to, to address some of that. Let's talk about one of my favorite topics, which you're touching on already as leadership. All right. We were, I'm a, I'm a big old leadership nerd. All right. Um, so let's the pandemic. You can't overstate it enough. Of course it's changed life in so many different ways. It's also helped. It's also whether we like it or not probably shaped most people's views on what real, no nonsense practical leadership is all about. So any, any, any thoughts on how your view on leadership has, has evolved a bit in recent months?

Crystal Davis ([09:56](#)):

Yes. Let's see. I could talk forever on this, but I'm gonna, I'm gonna identify couple of things here. One thing that I've noticed is that I think that a lot of people in leadership roles are being tested and on, in a number of facets from the pandemic one I've seen actually more micromanagement than I've seen in years. And I, and the second thing is busy-ness so with zoom or, well, I won't call zoom specifically, but with virtual meetings, I think that they've lost sight of, you know, there are people that make decisions have made decisions when, when they were physically on site, that they've now taken that power and that autonomy away from them because of the micromanagement and constantly being in meetings and needing to be informed about every aspect. So I think from the perspective of some, some organizations, the crisis of being able to deliver to the customers, having, you know, poppy supply chains has led a lot of organizations to where they're managing down too much.

Crystal Davis ([11:11](#)):

The second thing that, um, has that kind of surprised me, I don't know why, um, is that we've lost a little bit of human, the human appeal and respect. So working virtually now means that the boundaries of work and home are blurry. And a lot of people don't recognize that. And I know early on, and this may have softened some I know early on, you know, there were lots of things, lots of questions around, well, how do I know that people are working? How can I measure productivity with people working remote? And again, you know, thinking very tactically instead of thinking about the person and thinking about the strategic elements of what actually needs to get done, what are milestones that are important? Not

what tasks are you doing every day. So those are two, two things that have really stood out on the negative side.

Crystal Davis ([12:03](#)):

On the positive side, I've seen some very beautiful things happen, not only as a result of the pandemic, but some of the social things that had happened because we were all steel that people started to pay attention to. And so I've seen a lot of good human, kindness, uh, empathy, desire to learn and connect more with people at a human level. And I love it when I see people in their kids or run into the shop, you know, and they'll get embarrassed and I'll say, don't be embarrassed. Why don't you introduce your child? Like this is an opportunity that like, none other, this, these are normal work now. So, so those are some of the, some of my views. Um, I do think that it's a, it's a precarious position for leaders because there's so many uncertainties. I mean, the environment is so volatile. How it, how you make decisions, how much risk you take, you know, how you hold people accountable to performance metrics, all of that's changed. I think people are still figuring some things out.

Scott Luton ([13:03](#)):

You know, I imagine, uh, one of the things that helps you successfully navigate and help organizations navigate you, you've got a variety of experience in different sectors is that as I recall from our last couple of conversations and, and so kind of seeing a unique and common challenges in different ways, organizations and leadership teams have tackled that. But you know, also I knew you do executive coaching and then certainly I can tell you from a supply chain now standpoint, we've relied on advisors, key advisors that have been there and done that and helped us navigate these times when everyone is surprised to some degree, some folks, more so than others, but really leaning on that, that, that internal or external expertise and talent and leadership has been really important. We can talk about leadership. I feel like probably you and I for, for, for hours on end.

Scott Luton ([13:51](#)):

Um, but I love that the, uh, the human element each speak to, because there, there is, if you really go looking for it, there's lots of good news and there's lots of learning, taking place. And there's, I think folks are leaning in leaning into some of the conversations that they have shied away from for a long time. And that's when we re we all can tackle things together that need to be. So let's talk about, uh, let's shift gears a bit. We'll talk about continuous improvement. Uh, I can hear the angels singing when I bring up that, that phrase, continuous improvement. So let's, let's um, I've got two questions. I'm gonna, I'm gonna ask you one thing that you see that works well, and one thing you see time and time again, it doesn't. So for starters, when it comes to continuous improvement, what's one thing that you see leaders or organizations do. That's really just a core, best practice.

Crystal Davis ([14:39](#)):

So a little off script of my normal answer. So I'm only in the framework of, of the pandemic. One of the things that I have really appreciated, I know in the beginning, right in crisis, when things are so unstable people kind of relaxed, they're calm, they're CIA initiatives. But one of the things that I'm very excited to see, and I think has been done right, is that in the same way that leaders are trying to figure out how to deal with people working remote. They're also trying to figure out how to continuously improve when you have a hybrid organization, when you may have people on site and you're centralized functions like supply planning, remote. And so it's not the CII way that we are traditionally accustomed to, but I'm very

delighted that people still recognize the importance and the value that continuous improvement can bring to an organization.

Crystal Davis ([15:36](#)):

And I am. And what I said in the beginning, because I'll be honest with you. A lot of, a lot of my colleagues felt like, Oh no, you can't do, you know, you can't do it the right way if you're not on site. And so we had to learn to evolve right. To, to figure out what tools and techniques could work virtually because here was my pushback to them. If ever there was a time to solve problems, it's now no kidding. It is now businesses are struggling to try to figure things out, you know, just think about from a supply planning perspective when we're accustomed to, depending on forecast, no matter how unreliable or inaccurate they are, that's our lifeblood. We look at the forecast. Well, the forecast means absolutely nothing now, because behaviors have completely changed. Right. Right. So is that kind of stuff that I'm, I'm very appreciative of that the companies that were true to continuous improvement have continued to try to figure it out. They have, they have shifted, but they have continued to try to figure it out.

Scott Luton ([16:39](#)):

So just a follow questionnaire. Do you think it is given the current environment with, with some of those dynamics that you're speaking to and I'm speaking to, is it, is there any difference in terms of the difficulty of driving change pre pandemic to hopefully soon post pandemic, but this current environment we're in, can, can you compare and contrast that for a minute? Is it about the same? Is it a little bit easier since there's so much pain folks are looking for solutions or is it, is it tougher?

Crystal Davis ([17:05](#)):

So it's a great question. I would say that it's a little bit of both. So it's tougher for organizations that try to stick with, with their, their normal CIP plan instead of making the pivot. So I call that, uh, you know, we have this plan, we may have a three-year plan of the things we need to go out and do, but you need to be able to pivot to the just-in-time challenges that the organization is having. So the organizations that, that were able to pivot effectively they're fairing well in that aspect, the organizations that try to stick to the plan, they're struggling somewhat from a PR perspective

Scott Luton ([17:48](#)):

In retail, we've seen with tons, of course, sadly have lots of bankruptcies, however, own that list. And all of them chalk it up. We hear leadership teams chalking up to the pandemic, but I don't know about you, but I knew some of those companies that I had interacted with pre pandemic and the priorities were not right. And, you know, so they were already struggling. It that the pandemic and, and these, these shifting consumer patterns, as you're speaking to, which is, is amazing, such an incredible study on, I guess, psychology human behavior. But that, that was like the, you know, the, the straw that broke the camel's back in some cases. Yeah. But, but to your point, this, this, the pivoting, you know, we've heard, we've heard that and resilience and, and, you know, whatever words we w w we've also heard a lot of in the last 12 months, but those companies that boldly shifted gears, despite the challenge, despite that there was no certainty that it was all gonna pay off. Um, and it's really, there's been some to your earlier point. It's been some really amazing leadership stories out there that we're going to be probably studying and writing about a lot more in the years to come.

Crystal Davis ([18:52](#)):

Oh, absolutely. I think, you know, for, for you and I, this will probably be the most VUCA environment we will ever experience in our lifetime, but, you know, volatile, uncertain, right. Complex ambiguous. We got it all all at the same time.

Scott Luton ([19:09](#)):

Uh, sir, these business schools, they're going to have content for decades to train folks on, which is good. You know, several linings. There's always good, several linings. And, and, and you know, some of the empathy you brought up and the human element, all that, certainly as part of the several linings here. So you spoke about one of the things that you've seen that folks get, right. When it comes to continuous improvement, let's go the opposite. Now what's one thing that you've seen countless times, or a couple of times that you should not do if you want to drive good, successful change with your people,

Crystal Davis ([19:41](#)):

Focus on the tools. Only on the tools. I think, you know, the tools are the tools and they are, you know, a core element or aspect of, of both lean and six Sigma. I think that the mistake though, is to only focus there and not do two things, have the principles that align with the core values of the company and connect the CGI strategy or plan to the business. Those are the two biggest mistakes because when most of the time they focus on the tools,

Scott Luton ([20:13](#)):

Thinking tools are or magic ones. Right?

Crystal Davis ([20:16](#)):

Exactly, exactly. You know, and, and, and, and the value to the business is that it needs to align with the business problems and the business strategy. Right. I can take any of those tools and go out and make something grand, make an improvement, see a productivity hit, but if it doesn't serve the businesses for not, if it doesn't help this grow or save customers or expand, why do yeah,

Scott Luton ([20:48](#)):

I love that along the same lines when it comes to tools, I think of professional development. And I think of, um, you know, all the training that really, you know, companies seemingly pre pre pandemic had cut corners on training and, and new investing in, in workforces in some cases. And I bet they really bid them here in the last, you know, 12, 15 months. But on the other hand, uh, I was counting your credentials. As I, as I told you, appreciate crystal, I was trying to figure out, okay, what's, what's the best way to introduce that. And I've got 18 pages to pull from, you know, certified leadership development coach by the John Maxwell team certified lean six Sigma black belt course. You've got your MBA from Sanford and all be on top of another things on top of your, your degree, right before we talk about your radio, you got your podcast. Can you just speak to our community here about the value of really investing in yourself, regardless pandemic or no pandemic?

Crystal Davis ([21:44](#)):

Oh, absolutely. This is, again, going back to my Mississippi background, my father used to say to me, he's like, you know, uh, as I was growing up, he would say, read a book, saved money, read a book, save him money. And those, those messages were ingrained in me. And the one thing that I say about, you know, the read the book part is that whatever knowledge you acquired, no one can take it away from you. And

as long as you are figuring out how you can apply that in what you love doing it, I find it to be a beautiful marriage. Now I'm a, I'm a, probably more of an aggressive learner. I feel I'm a fact finder. So my, my Colby is, I'm a high fact finder. So I love information. I love learning. I love, um, data, but for just, you know, anyone else who learn about who you are, your personality, and again, those skills, as long as they help you do what you love doing, you can find another book. You don't need to have a degree. You can get all sorts of certifications or take webinars. Their plethora of information out there

Scott Luton ([22:47](#)):

Agreed and less prestigious organizations have been offering up for free. That's been a neat development in recent years, but read a book, saved money, words, lip balm, read a book, save money. What's your father's name? James Davis. James Davis, Rita books saved money. Love it. Okay. All right. So now let's talk about it. I can only imagine I'm like, w when you're getting sleep at night, crystal, you launched the lead lean podcast. I want to say in the last six months or eight months or so, is that roughly

Crystal Davis ([23:20](#)):

October timeframe, October.

Scott Luton ([23:21](#)):

Okay. So tell me why, why did you launch it and, and tell me just how much, how much fun it is and why do you do it?

Crystal Davis ([23:29](#)):

Great question. So I wasn't, I wasn't podcasting was on my bucket list at some point in the future, but, um, I actually had someone reach out to me about this opportunity, and it's a unique opportunity. One, like I've never it before. So I bgr.network is a business talk radio. And it's about helping entrepreneurs and business owners that want to eventually grow and possibly sell their businesses. I've never had someone from a business angle, reach out about lean and operations. And so, uh, a friend of mine recommended me, we talk, and it just became a perfect marriage that I'm able to talk to. C-suite leaders, small business owners about the things that I help, you know, large organizations be able to implement around lean. I don't talk a lot about six Sigma because that's the statistical part. The data part is probably it's way heavy for radio, but to be able to help people understand operations and make it sexy and fun and help them grow their businesses. I love it. I love it.

Scott Luton ([24:43](#)):

I can, I can tell. And, and I, I'm looking forward to tuning in, you mentioned six Sigma. I, I, I've got some of that in my background as well, and it can be, you know, especially if you're not, if you're like me, I'm not a mathematical genius by any stretch, and it can make your eyes roll, but it's funny how certain things stick with you. Uh, I was interacting on Twitter with, with one of my friends and she was writing invitations. I can't remember what it was for. And after 37 straight correct ones, she messed up the 38. And I say, and she was bemoaning the fact that she's got to, you know, get, get 600 knocked out or something. I said, well, you're not quite operating at one Sigma Bay. Well, we'll get there. We'll get there. Alright. So how can folks connect with you? How can folks tune into your podcast?

Crystal Davis ([25:28](#)):

So two ways, one, you can go to any podcast provider and just search for the lead lean show. And if I made the lead lane show, it's intentional, because normally we talk about lean leadership and I believe



that leadership is an action. It's a verb. And so I flipped it we'd have to lead lane. Okay. So that's the essence of the name of the show lead link

Scott Luton ([25:56](#)):

Crystal.

Crystal Davis ([25:58](#)):

Yeah.

Scott Luton ([26:01](#)):

So

Crystal Davis ([26:01](#)):

They think about it this way. When you think about lean leadership, you think about an individual or people or a group of people, right. And leading can be from anybody at any level. Right. John Maxwell says leadership is influence, right. Not a position or a title, right. So when you think about what, when you think about leading, you want to think about what's the action that I want people to take. So whether that's a team lead a supervisor, a manager, a director, what's the action that I want them to take, not just tactically, but how do they lead? Others love that. So that's that's, but you can find it at IBG, our.network. You can find the podcast on any podcast channel, and then you can also find it on the app. There's an app for the radio. So,

Scott Luton ([26:54](#)):

And, uh, we'll include links in the show notes to help make it really easy. We're after one click here for, for what folks hear about. So, you know, uh, as we thought, before we kicked off the conversation, I'm not going to have enough time to ask all the questions I would like for you to, to speak to crystal. But, but Hey, we got to leave folks wanting a little bit more. We'll bring you back next time and hopefully live next time. I'd love to get some, the Q and a from, from our audience. And one of our favorite things is live streams. All right. So we've already kind of talked about how folks can find your podcast. How can folks connect with crystal Davis?

Crystal Davis ([27:29](#)):

Yes, absolutely. So the best way is LinkedIn. LinkedIn is the new Facebook, and it's easy crystal with a C crystal. Why Davis, you just searched for me there and you'll be able to connect. And, um, we can inbox there as well.

Scott Luton ([27:48](#)):

You know, as we conduct this interview, you're speaking on a panel at an event this week. I know you do a lot of keynotes and panel sessions, just like we met when we first met, you were a candidate for the association for manufacturing excellence. So I would just add to that, uh, if you cannot find a crystal through any of those methods, she just shared keep your social radar own. Cause you'll see her on the keynote circuit very regularly. Uh, so a lot of good stuff there. All right. So one big final question for you. So we have got football when a baseball right on the corner, but you know, football year, round football down here, right? So what is Mississippi, Mississippi state? How many games are going to win in the 2021 six?

Crystal Davis ([28:30](#)):

I'm going to be fair here. You know, I want to say all of them, but I'll be fair. They're gonna win. They're gonna, they're gonna win. I want to say eight,

Scott Luton ([28:42](#)):

We'll roll with it. Eight wins, and we're going to hold you to it.

Crystal Davis ([28:46](#)):

I'm manifesting it right now, Scott.

Scott Luton ([28:51](#)):

Well, crystal, such a pleasure to connect with you, um, uh, really have enjoyed your perspective here. There's so many more questions with that, that we'll get to next time. But, uh, we've been talking with crystal Davis, the lean coach, Inc. And of course, check her out, check her podcast out, lead lean podcast. Be sure to connect with her on LinkedIn and other social and, and, uh, crystal. We hope to see you again really soon. Thank you so much. You bet. All right. So to our audience, hopefully you've enjoyed this as much as I have. This is really neat. You know, we all see those, ask me anything sessions and some folks are, are good at good at it. And some folks aren't as good at it. I'll throw myself in that latter camp. I got a sneaking suspicion crystal. We could ask you anything and we can take it to the bank. So we'll have to, we'll have to test that theory down the road. Hey, be sure to check us out@supplynow.com on behalf of our entire team here, Scott Luton wishing you nothing but the best. Hey, do good. Give forward. Be the change that's needed on that note. We'll see you next time here on supply chain. Now. Thank you.

Intro/Outro ([29:53](#)):

Thanks for being a part of our supply chain. Now, community check out all of our programming@supplychainnow.com and make sure you subscribe to supply chain. Now anywhere you listen to podcasts and follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram. See you next time on supply chain. Now.