

EPISODE 50

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:06] ANNOUNCER: You're listening to 10,000 Swamp Leaders, leadership conversations that explore adapting and thriving in a complex world with Rick Torseth and guests.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:20] RT: Hi, everybody. This is Rick Torseth. And you are with 10,000 Swamp Leaders. The podcast where we have guests who made a decision to lead in some very difficult, challenging situations. They come to us from all over the world taking on all sorts of different challenges that matter to the common good.

Today I have a cool opportunity because I get to reconnect with a person that I met a year ago, Anne-Fleur Goll, who is here to discuss a journey she's been on related to climate change. I met Anne – I think, Anne, we met a year ago in Oxford. You came and presented at a conference that I was organizing. You're back again. Thank you very much for coming back on in this platform.

Anne is a climate and finance consultant at Deloitte. She also has a bit of a side effort that she is involved with around climate change. And we're going to talk about both aspects of that and a little bit.

First of all, welcome to the podcast. Thank you for coming.

[0:01:19] AFG: Thank you very much for inviting me. Hi, Rick. Very nice to reconnect with you and very honored to be on that podcast amongst other inspiring people.

[0:01:27] RT: You can definitely hold your own. All right. Let's get people a little bit oriented here. What do you want them to know about you that you think is important before we get into the details?

[0:01:38] AFG: I guess you will talk about the professional details. But, I'm a, yeah, climate finance consultant. Working on those aspects in the finance sector. I'm also an activist on those topics. I have been for a year and a half or so, I guess. And also, I play rugby a lot. I train three times a week. And so, that's kind of my main hobby. But to me, it's super important in the way that I manage my life and the way that I think also about our relationships in the workplace and outside of it as human beings.

[0:02:09] RT: A note on your LinkedIn page – you call yourself an activist. On your LinkedIn page, you call yourself a militant. Is there a difference between militant and activist in your mind?

[0:02:20] AFG: To me, it's about translation. In French I guess you say more militants than you say activists. I think I've read something about what people put behind those two words. But I don't remember them specifically. And also, I don't think they're the same in French and in English. I say activist in English because I don't even know militant is a thing in English. But, no. Nothing specific.

[0:02:45] RT: I don't think so. Okay. Okay.

[0:02:46] AFG: It's just that my title is in French on LinkedIn. That's all.

[0:02:50] RT: All right. The first place I want to start is to ask you what were the experiences you were having that were resonating or calling you that cause you to invest and use yourself in this initiative around climate issues? How did it start? Where did it come from?

[0:03:06] AFG: Yeah. It came from a very rational place, actually. I started – I chose my university, my education, my upper education based on I'm not sure about what I want to do. So, I'm going to keep an open mind and try to learn as much as I can and meet as much people as I can regarding different aspects. And also, get the highest education then I can get, that I can access in order to have more doors open, most doors open. And then, once I got into – so, I did HEC Paris.

And once I got in, at some point I thought, "Okay." In my first internship, actually, I thought we spent so much time at work. I didn't realize. We have to really think through about where we put that time, that energy. Climate change is the main challenge that we have to face right now. And I don't just say my generation in the coming year. I say right now.

It seems you don't have to be an activist, or super engaged, or anything to say, "Okay. Well, then that seems like the most logical way to put my work and my energy in." And from that decision, actually, I got a lot more informed, trained on those topics because I chose internships. And then, later on, a career, first job, et cetera, that connected to this. And the more you learn, the more you want to get involved.

And so, what started my activism journey was actually, a year and a half after I graduated, I had my graduation. Because I graduated in 2020. COVID reasons. And some students in France who were graduating in agrological school made a public speech about how their school wasn't pushing forward enough climate change topics, and education and career paths as well. What their alumni are doing, et cetera, on those aspects.

And I thought, "I have my graduation in a month. I have to say something about this because it's my everyday life. I make choices about this. And I feel like as leaders, future leaders, we have a responsibility to act in that way. And I wanted to talk to my fellow graduates about this. And so, I contacted HEC. And I did that speech. It resonated a lot in the media to have someone at that school say that kind of thing. It was kind of new. I don't feel like what I was saying was new. But the resonance it kind of had a lot of media attention. And that's how I began to spread that message.

I still don't think what I'm saying is very new. But now I'm focused on pushing leaders in their business life to make that kind of thing. What I'm convinced of is that people will tell you that you can – as a person, you can act as a citizen through your vote. You can act as a consumer through what you buy. Where you decide to go on holidays, et cetera. Both of those are very true. But you can also act as a professional.

And people tend to think that their professional life is not a choice that they can make, but they really can. And that's the difference. When you say company don't act enough for climate

change, companies are people. And so, if you convince everybody. I mean, of course, if you convince the leader, you'll have a lot more traction. But if you convinced everybody on the company, "Okay. How do I make my job compatible with planetary boundaries?" Well, that's a question that everybody must ask, and especially leaders.

And so, that's why I that speech at HEC is because people that go to that school will be future leaders. So, they need to really be focused on, "Okay. I chose a career. I'm starting my first job. I want to be an accountant. I want to be in finance. I want to be an entrepreneur." Okay. You can do all of those things. But you have to think about the environmental impact of your job. Whatever your job is."

[0:07:10] RT: Okay. So, let's go – because this is how I came across you a year ago, was the speech in graduation, HEC. I think it's safe to say it kind of blew up, which is much bigger than what you're portraying here.

[0:07:24] AFG: Absolutely.

[0:07:25] RT: You were in Financial Times. You're in all sorts of publications. I will say we'll post a link to the video of the speech or some parts of it for people to watch because I think it's useful. I know you've spoken a little bit about this, but I want you to speak it here. You do that. And what happened after the speech for you?

[0:07:45] AFG: I got 2,000 LinkedIn requests mostly. Right after, actually, I had a standing ovation at HEC, which was unexpected. I had a lot of people coming up to me right afterwards saying, "Thank you for saying those things." That I felt like this kind of – how I was upset about something about this whole ceremony. I thought it was kind of – this whole thing about how business leaders, et cetera. And we're not speaking the truth about what we're being taught that is actually worsening climate change. And that has important consequences. And people don't – we're not trained on those consequences.

That wasn't expected because I know the people in my – I know my friends that are engaged in those topics. There are 15 of us. Over 300 or something promotion class. Having that many

people who I did not know to be concerned about this saying, "You totally said what I think."
That was huge.

And having a standing ovation from an entire – like from 5,000 people who joined HEC Paris, which is top business school. You don't join a business school because you want to be engaged on environmental topics. To me, that recognition was already a huge sign of hope. Was to say that people actually do agree and would be willing to do more. It's just that, for now, it has been kind of set aside and set up as, "Yeah, you can also be the green person in your environment and do that." And not as, "Okay. Everybody has to take this into account. And it's a super complex topic. And we need all the brains that we can get." And it's not a specific field. It's something that should be cross all sectors, all activities. So, that was great.

And then after that direct reaction, which was amazing, which was the focus of the speech. I hadn't thought at all about the external consequences. My main aspect was to talk to the people present in the room. To my fellow classmates. That was that.

But afterwards, there was media attention. It got mainly because we posted it with a collective called *Pour un réveil écologique*. An ecological awakening, which is a movement of students in France who started out in 2018 to engage their schools to teach those topics.

It's still a super, super active movement right now. And they're doing amazing things in France to train even our parliament people. Like, they're doing great. And so, they posted it. That's how it got media attention. And so, I had a lot of, as you mentioned, papers and everything and requests to say more on this. And so, that's what I've been doing since.

[0:10:35] RT: Talk a little bit then – I want to circle back a little bit and connect to your work at Deloitte here. But how has this changed your life?

[0:10:43] AFG: Yes. I think the first thing is regarding my own convictions, it kind of forced me to put words on them. Because I had been making life choices based on the environmental consequences for a while. But you discuss those with friends and you're kind of the eco of the group. And that's that.

To have to put words, and to justify, and to have strong opinions and to engage people, you go deeper in yourself first to see, "Okay. How exemplary am I? What do I really think about this?" And so, you kind of dig deep. You kind of read stuff about, "Okay. I'm telling people from this sector that they should do that. But do I know enough to say that?"

And so, I think the main thing is having people asking you questions publicly and having to answer publicly makes you question what you think. And so, deepen your own thinking about this. I'm much better at conversations with my friends and everything now that I have done that because I think stronger, if that makes sense.

[0:11:56] RT: Can you share an example or two of something in that process where you dug deeper to find out what it is that you're going to say with regard to – did you discover a conviction or two that was sort of latent or sort of disguised that became more visible to you and has been part of how you navigate now based on doing the work of getting ready for that speech?

[0:12:19] AFG: I'm not sure. Because I don't remember what I thought then and what I knew then. I think the main thing is about creating your life story. People don't ask you where are you from and when did your activism come from if you're not in a public space. What you just did. Actually, recreating the steps that led me to that was something.

Then on a personal level, I was already doing pretty great on those aspects. I'm not afraid to say it. I'm not flying. I'm mostly vegetarian. I didn't discover anything more on those aspects. I think what it opened – your original question was how did it change my life? That's the internal part of how I look at myself. Okay. I'm an environmental activist now. That's part of who I am. It wasn't before. And so, that changes a lot.

On a very day-to-day basis, I do media, and conferences and stuff like that maybe once every three weeks. It has confirmed to me that I'm not – I don't dislike media, but I also not like this enough to do it on an everyday basis and to make it a career. I don't want to be an activist full-time. I mean, I love my job. It was also a new realization that I do love what I do. It has affected my life. But I feel like I have found a balance on this.

[0:13:42] RT: Okay. You used a couple words here that I'd like to pick up on. You talked about the group that you're involved with in creating a kind of movement. And then you just mentioned a narrative. My view on leading is that it's not a role and a position. It's a choice and an activity. It can come from anywhere in the system. And it calls for people like you are describing yourself. I'm going to raise my hand and use my voice because this matters to me.

[0:14:08] AFG: Yes.

[0:14:09] RT: So, talk – because we have people who care about lots of things and they may be trying to figure out how they can make a difference. From your own experience, in your own perspective, how do you use yourself? How do you use your voice? What's the process? Or what pre-thinking do you do before you go into some conversation or something that helps you stay on point and do what you think you want to do in that moment?

[0:14:36] AFG: Well, great question. It's actually something that I just thought of regarding what has changed. The main thing that has changed is that I discovered I had a voice. The whole process of having the idea of the speech, writing it and doing it, I actually wasn't that scared. People say, "How do you have the courage to do that, and to stand up and to speak?" I wasn't really.

And I know that's kind of unusual. And so, I went out. And so, now I know that I can do that. And so, that's one of the weapons that I have. To learn that about yourself is very useful. To me, everybody has things that they can use to exercise their leadership and to push forwards their opinion. And they're very diverse. Because we are all different people.

And growing up is about learning which one are yours? I mean, which are basically your qualities and the stuff that you're not very good at. And I discovered that public speaking, I could do that. And I didn't know it really. So, it was kind of new. And that's one of the main reasons that I continue to do it. Because it's like, "Okay. I have this cause. I have climate change. I need people to be more aware not of climate change, but of the fact that their job is affecting it and that they can challenge this. That they can question it."

And to push that forward, I have my job, and my degree, and what I do for a living, and the analytics that are behind it and all the work that I do in the – basically, the academic qualities that led me to be competent at that job. And I discovered a new tool, which is public speaking. The question is how do I use this? And so, I'm using it that way.

To me, the main thing that I learned in this whole process was you can speak up. It's actually very easy not to publicly speak up. Not everybody can and want to do public speaking. But to actually dig deeper within your own convictions and then say – just people will listen if you make them. And I know that's kind of harsh to say it like this. But it is true.

And, actually, what I was more surprised of is the number of doors that opened with just saying things that I thought were, again, pretty basic. I don't feel like I have super new opinion. I'm not a scientist. I don't discover new things. All I do is say things that to me are stuff that should be obvious.

And, yet, I've been contacted by – for example, I work at Deloitte. The boss of Deloitte France emailed me saying, "Oh, you're a consultant at our place. Great. Can we meet?" And I was like, "Okay." I told my colleagues, "I'm meeting with the big boss. What should I tell him?" And that door was open to have that conversation. I'm not saying you can jump in any office and make people listen. But I feel like people are frightened by obstacles that sometimes aren't actually there.

[0:17:50] RT: Yeah. Okay.

[0:17:50] AFG: And that if you learn to – I'm actually going to use the motto of my school. But if you learn to dare, it's actually something that you can do. And just contacting HEC and say, "Can I talk at the graduation? I have a very interesting thing to say." They said, "Sure."

So, just asking, sometimes you can do stuff and you can have a conversation. And just emailing someone might get you to have a conversation. And sending a message. And you have nothing to lose really.

[0:18:18] RT: Okay. I want to ask one more question here. And that is to what extent when you decide that you want to use your voice to have a conversation with some people? What's involved with you preparing for that?

[0:18:33] AFG: Yeah. What I've learned in that regard, the first thing is to know your audience. That's very important to me. Also, in personal conversations. If I meet someone at a party and I start to talk about this. And then, later on I realize their parents are farmers. Well, obviously, that gives that person kind of a specific angle on those topics that is not the one that would be someone working in finance. To know who you have in front of you is very important.

And then, obviously, I'm not saying tailor your speech. Like, change your convictions. But know how to use examples and things that might speak to them. To me, that's one of the main things I have done.

The media is very different. I mostly do conferences and things like that and to know who I speak to, which is very different from the media. The media, you don't speak to anyone. You speak to everybody. You cannot do that. And that's probably why I don't like it as much. But if you speak to a room of 50 or 100 people that come from basically that are here for a reason, a common reason, that's important.

To give out a few examples, I did something for the biggest universities in France. And so, the people in the room were mainly here because they were bosses of universities. Deans of universities. Obviously, I'm going to talk about including those topics in the courses. I'm not going to tell them what I would tell a small company's leader. I did something for a group of small companies, like a leader, the CEOs of small companies in the East of France that gather for their annual thing. And I talked at that event. Well, I'm not going to tell them the same thing that I told the deans of the universities. It doesn't make sense. So, you have to know who you're talking to. And then, maybe one other thing that I learned was to speak the – to be true in what you say. And on the form, to speak your mind like what I'm doing right now, I guess.

[0:20:45] RT: This is the only way I know you.

[0:20:46] AFG: Yes. Yeah. And it's kind of putting yourself out there. But also, if you speak like you would speak to a friend, people are listening because you're talking to them. And you're not saying – you're not reading notes. To me, that's what I – I mean, people have been telling me this. Just like you said, I don't really know how to do it otherwise.

It can also be something to be careful of. Because I tend to be a lot more familiar than formal speech in some occasions. But to me, I feel like it's something – it's part of what makes people listen. And also, obviously, not only in the way that you say it, but in what you're saying.

For example, to me, one – something that is not included in corporate communication and in communication in general is transparency. And in the way of admitting the things that you're not doing right at this point. Admitting the things that you're currently doing.

I mean, imagine a company. And some are doing it, but super very few. Saying, "Okay. On that aspect, we did that. Very proud of it. Here are our results. We reached our goal." "On that aspect, we didn't reach our goal. We're still working on this and we have this, this, this data. On that aspect, we still don't know anything."

A financial institution who could say, "Okay. On biodiversity, we know it's interesting. We know we have an impact. Honestly, at this point, we have no idea which. Next year, we are working on quantifying on our impacts and on reducing it. Regarding climate, we are trying to involve our companies. At this point, we don't get enough data to provide this, but we are doing that, that, that."

It's not about justification. It's about being transparent on what you do. What you don't do. And so, it works as well when you're talking to people and when you just – that's part of speaking the truth, I think.

[0:22:49] RT: Okay. Let's bring in your professional life here. Because there's a bit of overlap or some connective tissue here. Let's get that in place so that we can play with that a little bit. In your work as a climate and finance consultant at Deloitte, how do you help your clients? What do you typically involved with helping them do in your role at Deloitte?

[0:23:09] AFG: Yeah. I work at Deloitte Sustainability. It's a whole department dedicated to those topics. We're like 200 people in France. And we all have specific expertise. Some people only work on circular economy, for example, which is not at all my specialty.

And so, what I do is I work on the finance sector on topics of climate and biodiversity. What I do is help them tackle those. Basically, in the finance sector right now in Europe. I don't really know about the other parts of the world. But in Europe, there are a lot of new regulations. There are a lot of new initiative. There is a lot of media cover – a lot. Not enough. But there is media coverage on how banks are not doing enough and how banks are financing fossil fuels, et cetera. So, there is pressure.

Everybody is trying to tackle this, but no one knows how to do it. And so, what we're doing is helping them do it right. For example, if a bank has decarbonization targets and then they wonder, "Okay. Now we have targets. How do we reach them?"

If you have a portfolio – if, for example, regarding mortgages. A bank that does mortgages. How do you decarbonate your mortgage portfolio? Basically, you can put better rates on low-carbon housing and add conditions on your rates on a worse carbon housing to renovation. That can be something. And so, we help them do that.

It's a lot about climate strategy. And truly, in your operation, in the everyday job of people at the bank, what is changing? How is your risk changing? How is your strategy changing? How are your IT tools changing? For example, if you're an investor and you want to invest in stuff, you should include climate risk in your due diligence. Which aspects of climate risk? How do you measure that? Et cetera. People don't have the skills yet. And so, we're trying to push it forward. They have them more and more. But it's still kind of new. So, we are helping them do that.

[0:25:27] RT: Okay. I know that on the website, Deloitte says the better future is entirely possible, but require a profound and lasting change in attitudes and behaviors. And this jumps at me because I think that this is a marker for really complex problems as opposed to technical problems, which is that we are in fact part of the problem we're trying to solve.

[0:25:49] AFG: Yeah.

[0:25:50] RT: The way we think. The way we behave. The way we believe things. So, how – to the degree you can. How can Deloitte help a monolithic organization who is made up of a combination of individual beliefs and behaviors tweak that in some particular way in favor of doing better impact on the climate? Because that's hard work.

[0:26:16] AFG: Yeah. Yeah. Definitely. I'm not going to speak for Deloitte as a whole. Because we have a lot of different activities and I'm just speaking for myself in this podcast.

[0:26:23] RT: Perfect.

[0:26:25] AFG: But my perspective on this. First is, as consultants, you do have a technical point of view. The main way that you address what you just said is that we give them the analysis that justifies action. That's the first way of doing this, is that we put the level of rigor, and the level of analysis, and the level of reasons and everything that we – that all strategy and financial consultants have been doing for God knows how many years into the climate topics.

And so, we put that level in order to make sure that they reach that level. And we are not afraid to say, "Okay, if you just do that little thing that is kind of fashionable, okay, we're not going to do – I don't know. We're not going to put plastic glasses in our work environment." Well, to put the number behind that and to say, "Yeah, that's good." But that tackles probably like a teeny bitty bit of your footprint. And to actually put the numbers behind that and to show everything, that gives seriousness to a topic that has long been in the emotional kind of sphere.

People in business would have told you 10 years ago, "Yeah. I mean, the environment, that's nice to think of – kind of if you're a nice person, you think about that. But in business, if you want to do business, that's not relevant." Well, to say that, "Yeah, it is definitely relevant not to increase your profits, but to just continue to live on the planet." To actually put the level of rigor. That's the main thing.

But then, recently, I've been doing that job for three years now. I'm definitely kind of junior in the whole workplace environment. But from my perspective, I've seen situations in which this is not enough. We are talking on some things that does rely on personal conviction. I mean, it's sad,

but it's true. It still does rely on personal conviction. You're an American. I'm not going to teach you that.

In the US, it's getting politicized. And it's really is a terrible thing. Because, for example, in France, I mean, it is getting politicized. But, mainly, people are like, "Okay, this is real and the politics about it is how do we solve it?" It's not about do you believe it's real or not?

People still kind of feel like it is a personal conviction. They still kind of feel, "Okay. If you want to do the environmental stuff, it's because it's your own kind of conviction, your own emotions that are attached to that."

And so, when you talk to an executive committee and you have people who aren't trained, and who don't know about this and who are just not in touch with those topics. Not only not in touch on a personal basis, but also that, again, are not trained. Like, they did not receive the proper data, et cetera, to be truly convinced that they need to do this. Well, it doesn't go as far as we want to be, as we wanted to go.

As consultants, our job is about pushing stuff forward. And then, at some point, you do have to let it go because it's not your company. You're not the one making decisions. All you can do is try to push forward the options that you think are best regarding the situation.

And it can be frustrating to see that if people that are making the decisions are not trained, are not actually feeling how urgent this all is, they don't take the right decisions.

I'm trying to explore the things that I use in activism actually, the kind of way to talk to people about everything. Trying to study how we could use it a bit more in my consultant life. And to try to not be on the robots stating truths and arguments that are justified by rational things. But also, to, in some way that I don't know about yet, kind of engage people emotionally. Because this has so much power.

I'm not saying we have to start every executive meeting by telling them their children will die, but it's about finding the way to talk to people that can really touch them and that can make them

move. And to me, that's an exploration that I'm very excited to kind of study and to find do's and don'ts about this.

Because I've seen situations where you have people in front of you and the meeting ends bad. And you're so sad and frustrated. And you're like, "Everything was so crystal clear and they didn't want to hear it." And that's very frustrating. It's about finding, "Okay. For that type of persona, you have to maybe talk to them that way. That type of persona, you have to take them another way." And trying to find the best way to engage people.

[0:31:32] RT: It's a combination you're seeking there between what you call the analysis that justifies action. The logic of it and the emotive part about – I'm saying it. Because at the big very beginning here, you talked that it was possible for people who were working in organizations who feel strongly about this issue or maybe some other type of issue. That they can actually do something from their position in the organization where they are probably inclined to say, "Well, I can't do anything. I am three levels down." Et cetera. Et cetera. What is it you're speaking to there? What could those kinds of people do? Because a lot of people who listen to this conversation or similar conversations are located there in the system. And they feel like I have no power and authority to do something. What are you talking about?

[0:32:21] AFG: Yeah. I feel like everybody can feel like they're in that position. Because even a CEO will tell you I have investors. I mean, it's kind of a whole chain. It's actually a main speech. I mean, discourse of inaction. It's about, "Yeah. But some other people are my bosses, my investors." You're always kind of reporting to someone at some point. Nobody will tell you, "Yeah, in my job, I'm completely free." I feel like it's a position that everybody can be in. So, what they can do in a very concrete way.

And, again, any ladder of the organization, the first thing is to ask yourself the right question. If you're starting to be interested in those topics and to follow Instagram accounts and everything in your personal life, if you're starting to question some things in your personal life. Well, face what you do at your everyday job and wonder how is it compatible with that. And so, question that.

And for every job, it's going to be different. Just kind of screening your own job and having the mental exercise of imagining the impacts that you have on the environment through that first is a good exercise. Then study about your own company. Look at your reports. Like, your public reports. Something that nobody does at your own company. Look it up.

And if there are things that you think are questionable from this and your own personal feeling about it, question it and ask, "Why aren't we doing that?" And you don't have to be aggressive about it. It doesn't have to be an activist's kind of move. It can just be, "There is a new project coming." Whatever your field or job is. There's a new project coming up. Your boss asks you to – for example, I don't know. A new IT service. You're in the IT department and there is a new project to have a new IT logistics software. And so, you're asked to benchmark those software.

Or just researching the environmental impact of each of the software you are benchmarking. And then the recommendation that you make to people. And you say, "In terms of environmental impact, choosing this one would actually allow us to reduce our environmental footprint." Just adding this to your job is already something that you're pushing forward.

And on the other hand, if you're on the other side of that conversation when you give tasks to someone, well, include that and say, "Oh, I would like you to benchmark this. Don't forget to include the environmental impact of this." And if you're on the phone with like suppliers and everything, if you're working on that part, you can ask a lot of details about suppliers. If you're into products kind of innovation, you can't think about the environmental consequences of choosing that type of textile over that other type of textile.

And so, just adding that is actually pretty simple if you think about your own job. And you don't have to have huge ideas about how society as a whole should move. Just question it in your own job. Question it in your everyday task. Add it. Because it's less likely that somebody will tell you, "You shouldn't have added that." than it is to someone, "Yeah, don't forget to add this." It's about being the change you want to see in the world, blah-blah-blah. The first thing is to add it yourself to your own tasks and see how people react. And then maybe you can push it forward.

[0:35:58] RT: A starting point would be to do something on my own and actually get activated in the process of beginning to do something as a starting point.

[0:36:08] AFG: I say that also. Because I feel, on a personal level, it's the more approachable thing to say, "Yes, you should go and challenge the upper management about this." If you feel like it, go ahead. To most people, this would be super frightening and would say, "I would never do that. Even my N+2. I'm not in a position to do that."

But at your own level, you know your job. You know what you do on an everyday basis. If you're in a bank desk and you feel like you don't have any type of idea of how to change the way the bank is doing stuff because they're in the corporate offices and you're just at the desk. Well, the first thing is, "Okay, you see clients every day, which are the specific financing products that you push forward." And what are their environmental impacts? Do you know that?

Well, you research it and then maybe you push that forward to clients. And that's already doing your own thing. And then maybe you can talk to the main thing – of your boss, like the boss of the local bank to say, "Do you know if corporate has planned to put more of those type of products on the market? That would be interesting. Some of my clients are interesting." And then he takes it up and then blah-blah-blah. And so, that creates a whole kind of chain of events.

It's about one example. But to me, changing, reflecting on what you do every day is a lot less frightening than thinking about what your organization should do. Or if you have the power to do this on an organizational level, go ahead. I feel like it doesn't really change from what I'm saying. Because for the CEO, his day-to-day job is thinking about the strategy of the company. What I said before about being at the desk of a bank also applies to the CEO. It's just about which tasks are you planning to do today. And how do they relate to that?

[0:38:09] RT: All right. So, you're in a conversation. I want to put a context here a little bit or ask you a question in a context here. And what is it that you are learning or have learned, because I think you're talking about this a little bit here, about how you mobilize people into action? Because you can make more progress when you can get more people involved in the cause. What is the craft of mobilizing another human being? The N to two, the N to four, the N to eight, et cetera, that you've learned in your life based on the work you've done so far?

[0:38:42] AFG: Very complex question. I'm afraid I don't have an answer. To me, the thing that I have found to be most effective mostly with my close friends and my family, et cetera, is what I just talked about. It's about talking to them about what they do on their everyday life.

Also, to, I won't say, flatter them. But to kind of tell them, "We need you." And that's also something that I truly believe in. It's such a complex topic. And we don't have any idea of where we're going. We need people with all types of skills. And the more brains that are working on that, the more time spent on a cumulative way on those topics, the faster we will go.

To me, what I have found is to say, "Okay." Well, for example, my dad. He worked in international logistics in a company. And so, now he works on the decarbonization of international logistics. And it's kind of because my brother and I are involved in those topics and are telling every day to people, "Question what you do in your job. And think about what it would be in a version of helping the transition of the entire economy towards a greener economy." And so, that's exactly what he did.

And that's something that I've seen happening with friends and with people around me. And so, to me, I think to speak to people about what they experience on an everyday life, what their skills are, what their job are is a lot more concrete than to say big things about what's happening to the whole planet and about how, as a society, we should move.

I do have opinions on this, but they are more about political stuff. And to say, yeah, the government should do this or that. That's definitely conversations that you can have. But it's not what's going to make people move.

I mean, it can be and it should be. And some activists are focused on that. And to me, that's great, because you need people everywhere to kind of push that agenda. Yes, I'm not afraid of the word. That's coming from my background.

I can't be speaking to – I mean, I don't feel like I would be useful telling people they should eat less meat. They should. And it's definitely something that should be pushed forward. But I'm more comfortable talking about people about their professional lives and how they can, in their

professional tasks, question this, et cetera. That's why I focus on. But it's definitely something that needs to be done by other people.

[0:41:28] RT: Let me see if I can combine a couple of things you said over the last 30, 40 minutes here and see if I'm hearing you accurately. Part of what – I'm struck by this thing. I really like this. And I hadn't thought about this, analysis to justify action concept. There's that part. But I'm also struck by how you and your brother tweak your father's awareness a little bit. But he is a man who has a position in an organization. I'm guessing it's fairly significant.

[0:41:52] AFG: Yep.

[0:41:53] RT: By expanding somebody's awareness and their capacity to understand what's at stake and their position, people are always – they have some dose of authority and responsibility in the organization. Part of what I hear you say is at least work within what you've got to work with and don't undersell what your resources are in order to nudge things in the direction you want it to go.

[0:42:15] AFG: That's exactly it. Yeah.

[0:42:17] RT: How did I pull that off? That's pretty good, huh?

[0:42:17] AFG: Yeah. It was pretty good. It's definitely true. Because no one can change what a company is doing. That's just an idea that would be good. But even the CEO, he cannot change the entire thing.

If everyone in their own – and just even executive level. If everyone focuses on how their own department can actually move things forward and the things that are in their responsibilities can actually be questioned, well, then, progressively, they're going to create links and they're going to say yeah. But if I do that at logistics, I have to talk to people that are choosing which products we are buying because I need them to be more local or whatever.

And so, then their own department is going to be focused on that and it's going to create a whole thing. And at the end, it's what makes the strategy and the company itself lower its environmental impact.

[0:43:15] RT: And so, there we have our movement. Scaling up.

[0:43:17] AFG: Yes.

[0:43:17] RT: All right. Let's take it in a slightly different direction. It's my experience that we learn more from our leadership failures than we do our successes. They stick with us. They sting us a little bit and we remember them. What have you learned about yourself from any leadership non-success? Maybe it's not complete failure. But non-success that's helped you navigate more effectively when you use your voice to lead?

[0:43:45] AFG: I'm not really in a leadership position. I don't have a lot of leadership failures. Because I don't have a lot of leadership successes either. But to me, the thing that stings and that stays is a lot about mis-conversations. Like, moments where I could have converted people. I'm saying this. I know it's a huge word, but kind of encouraged people to push further. And because of the words I used and maybe the place I was in at this specific time an hour, well, I didn't do it right and it didn't work. Those are the main failures that I remember regarding this specific topic.

And it's actually the same thing that I mentioned earlier about when you're in a – in my professional life as a consultant, where when you're presenting to an executive committee your results, their energy at this time doesn't match your energy. And it doesn't work. And it goes into conflicts.

And so, at the end, the end result is that they're not convinced by your work. And so, they don't push it forward. To me, that's kind of – the main thing I learned from those kind of situations is what I said earlier, which is know your audience. Also, be empathetic in the first minutes of it. Try to feel – if you're in a room full of people, try to feel the vibe. Try to know the – for example, I feel like one's super – I mean, it's not very interesting. But to know the past conflicts about this. Like, the past positions.

If someone in the room, you are trying to convince them as seven, or other people, or whatever and they have repeatedly been against ESG Topics in the firm, you have to know it. Because if you talk to them the way you talk about everybody else, well, you're not going to convince them either. You have to take him in a certain way.

I guess the main thing I learned is about empathy and how to know who you have in front of you and to talk to them from their own perspective. To talk to them about things that they will understand in order to touch them and to feel – to make them relate to what you're saying. And to give them very specific ways that they could act.

If you tell somebody who had taken the plane maybe twice in their lives, "Yeah. Well, a plane is the worst thing." Yeah. But he's flown twice. You can't tell them he can't fly a third time. It's not relevant. You have to speak about things that do touch him. That's I think the most important thing that I learned.

[0:46:30] RT: Perfect. All right. A couple more questions for you here. You may want to be modest here, but I hope you're not. What advice do you have for people who are thinking they want to use themselves to take on some – it could be climate change. It could be equality, racial justice. All sorts of social issues that we're challenged by in the world. What advice – if they came to you and said, "What should I be thinking about?"

[0:46:55] AFG: If you're thinking about doing this, do it. It's the first advice. Specifically, on climate change, about eco-anxiety. The more you learn, the more you feel anxious. Because the more you realize it's already upon us. Forest burning, blah-blah-blah.

And so, as a human being, you feel very overwhelmed by all of this. And the only Escape I found from that is rugby and just action. Like, just the thought of I'm doing everything that I can on personal choices and professional choices.

My personal choices are climate-proof. Doesn't mean anything that you get what I want to say. And I've dedicated my career to that. And also, I'm trying to commit everybody else to do it. I

feel like I'm doing the most that I can. Then in 30 years, I will look at myself and be okay with the choices that I made at a certain point.

[0:47:55] RT: I want to underscore the thing you just said about rugby. Because I know that not everybody's a rugby player. And you know that, too. But I do think that – I'm a bike rider. And I know that when I'm completely in my head, and completely all bound up, and I get on my bike and ride, something changes.

[0:48:10] AFG: Yes.

[0:48:11] RT: And my brain works better.

[0:48:13] AFG: That's another advice. The first thing is, yes, act. Do everything that you can because it would make you feel good. And also, don't be swallowed by all of it. It's very important. The burnout in the activists' kind of world is very frequent because you feel empowered by a cause and you feel like you have to do everything that you can for the cause. But you will be more useful if you're happy and well-balanced then you will be if you're unhappy and you feel overwhelmed by this. That's another big thing that I learned and that I do recommend is, yes, go on your bike. Play rugby. Do what feels good. Spend time with your friends.

My girlfriend has been the best in the entire process of – especially when the media was very big, et cetera, to have times to just be, calm, home, at a place where I do feel happy and safe and that I get to recharge. I walk in the mountains a lot. That type of things. It's not distracting me from what needs to be done. But it puts me in an internal kind of composition where I feel like I can act.

It does relate a lot to what I said earlier when I said about empathy and the way that people are going to receive your message is something. The way that you convey your message is another. And the best way that you can convey a message is when you're happy, and serene and okay with yourself. This should not be neglected. And it's not because you are selfish or anything. It's because your message and your whole cause will be a whole lot better conveyed if you are feeling well.

[0:50:01] RT: Okay. Last question. What's ahead for you in the next five, ten years?

[0:50:05] AFG: Very good question. I have no idea. I actually discussed this with my boss very recently. I don't know at all. I could go into activism. I could go into politics. I could stay consultant for 20 years because I love it. I really have no idea. I'm trying to do this one step at a time.

I know that I still want to respond positively to requests such as yours today. I still want to push that message forward. Because as I said earlier, I still want to use the tool, the weapon that is public speaking. I don't feel like burying that. But I don't feel like doing it full-time. At this point, I'm going to keep doing that the way I do it now. And maybe that will change.

And I feel like on climate change, people are kind of wondering which way is the best way to act. Is it to kind of go out of the system? Is it to stay in the system? Is it to get involved into NGOs? The best way is the way where you feel good. And that can change. And that does relate a lot to what I just said about being happy. It changes over time.

And there is no right way. This has to come from all aspects of our society, of our economy, of any type of – people have to be involved in all of those places. And the best way for you is the one that you feel good right now. Right now, I do feel good at a consulting firm. I love my job. I also feel good as an activist. Maybe at some point I will hate being a consultant because you keep telling people what to do and they don't do it.

And so, I won't want to do that job anymore. And I will want to go into politics because I'm too annoyed and bothered by the way they are managed right now. Well, then, I'll do that and maybe I will stop. And it's something that you can just – you don't have to have one right answer at some point, especially not at 27. And you can change over time. And it's fine.

And also, I feel like this is putting a lot less pressure on it. Like, it's okay. As someone who recently graduated, you're like, "Okay. What I'm going to choose will be my career." And that's not true. You can change what you do. You can change your job.

I feel a lot of serenity knowing that climate change involvement is something that will stay the same in my professional life. I can fairly confidently say that. Also, because I don't think we're going to solve it anytime soon. It's not something that's going away. But the way that I do it will change. That is absolutely certain. I just don't know how yet.

[0:52:46] RT: Know how. All right. o I think we should just book in time in five years to see how it's going. We'll come back to it at that point. Probably three years or something less that at the pace you're going.

Anne-Fleur Goll, thank you so much for coming and having this conversation and for the work that you're doing both professionally in your consulting work and on the side. It's really not the side. It's another parallel track for the world and for your community. Thank you very much.

[0:53:11] AFG: Well, thank you very much for having me. And good luck on those endeavors.

[0:53:16] RT: Thanks.

[OUTRO]

[0:53:19] ANNOUNCER: Thank you for listening to 10,000 Swamp Leaders with Rick Torseth. Please take this moment and hit subscribe to follow more leadership swamp conversations.

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