

her story of rising

An interview with Takayla King & Ana Querol



*I'm Kristin Kolesar, Executive Coach and a Mentor Coach for the Women Rising® Program and today I'm sitting down with two of our WR Alumni, **Takayla King**, Head of Belonging at Box and **Ana Querol**, Paint Area Manager at Ford Motor Company. This is their story of rising.*



ANA QUEROL
PAINT AREA MANAGER
FORD MOTOR COMPANY

Kristin Kolesar: When did you go through the **Women Rising®** program?

Takayla King: Well, I believe it was 3 years ago, in 2020.

Ana Querol: For me it was 2 years ago.



TAKAYLA KING
HEAD OF BELONGING
BOX

Kristin: How have you grown since going through the program? Is there anything that you can celebrate as it relates to your personal growth?

Ana: Well, yes, after the program I got promoted. Actually, when I was taking the program, there was a rumor that I was being considered for area manager in the paint department. And that's one of the things that I told my coach, "Oh my God! I'm so nervous because I might be in that position next year. I don't know what will change, and how it would be." And she accompanied me in that transition, and it was really good to have her by my side.

Takayla: That's awesome. Congratulations.

Ana: Thank you.

Kristin: Pretty cool and Takayla, what about you?

Takayla: I think for me, a large component of the program was around personal branding and values. And when I was going through the program I was at a crossroads or tension point in my career. I wanted to get back to diversity, equity, and inclusion, which I am in now, and just not feeling the courage to make that move or make that career transition again. My coach had just made a huge career transition. You know the empowerment that she gave me through coaching of like "everything will be okay. Let's think... you know your values and your personal brand. Let's think about how this aligns with what you want to do in the future." And so, it just gave me a lot of empowerment and confidence, to recognize that I'm not crazy for wanting to make this big jump. It aligns with my values. It aligns with my personal brand and just making that jump. So, since the program, it's not a direct correlation to it, but it's an input to it, I have transitioned careers. It's been good.

Kristin: That is awesome. That sounds like you did a positive pivot in the right direction. And it's wonderful to hear that you had a mentor-coach that was able to support you from this perspective.



her story of rising

An interview with Takayla King & Ana Querol

Takayla: Yeah, she was very transparent, and I forgot how many coaching sessions we did have, but it was being able to have that open and vulnerable conversation with someone who has been on that path, and is also still going through it, and being able to share. It was 2-way, feedback of encouragement between us both. So it was cool.

Kristin: I love that. **Is there something that you're most proud of when you look at how you show up right now as women leaders?**

Takayla: For me, I show up with a lot more intentionality, as a part of my personal brand, which I talk about a lot because it's very important to me. As a leader, I'm very proud of the intentionality that I show up with and alignment with what I value and what I believe is important. Especially with my line of work being diversity, equity and inclusion, being authentic is extremely important to me, because it cultivates people feeling comfortable around me, and it aligns with my values. I'm most proud of being able to show up authentically and intentionally as a female leader, which isn't always the most comfortable and most accepted. But I'm growing and that is what I'm most proud of.

Kristin: That's awesome. **Ana, do you have any thoughts on what you're most proud of in terms of how you show up now?**

Ana: Well, for me, what had more impact from the program was the book, [How Women Rise] that we read.

It was eye opening for me, because when I read it, I realized that I have 11 of the 12 habits that keep us from rising. Like when I say I had 11, I mean I had them all, and when I was reading it, I realized that it did have an impact on my career having all those habits. It's something that I didn't see before. I still have them, but now when I see myself doing it, I'm like, "Hey, wait! That is the thing that you should not be doing anymore." And I try to refocus or change them, I'm better with myself because I used to be like "oh, you're not doing well enough, or it's not perfect enough or now you're not up to where you should be to be in this position, and maybe there's someone better than you." I was always making myself small and I have changed that a little bit. Now, I'm more caring with myself and I try to talk to myself in the way I would talk to someone else, and that has really helped me. And also, I am trying to pass this knowledge to younger females, because for me this training got to me a little late in my career. I already suffered with blood and tears and learned it the hard way, right!? And when I read the book, it put it in words. But those were things that I already suffered, and I already had the consequences of having them. So, what I thought is this book, and what it teaches you, should be something that the very young women that just started in their careers should have that knowledge. So, I took the book and I put a dedication on the first page and I passed it to one of the younger girls that is here, and I told her "You have to read it, and you have to highlight the parts that you identify with the most, or that you think are important," because that's what I did. "And then, when you finish, you have to pass it to someone else".

Takayla: Oh I love that.

Ana: I want that book to be filled with dedications from one to the other, until there's no more space. That's something that I also liked about this program, because it's motivated me to give that knowledge to others so that their careers will not be as accidental and hard and painful as mine was.



her story of rising

An interview with Takayla King & Ana Querol

Takayla: I absolutely I love that. You know Ana talked about the inner critic component of, making yourself feel small, and for me, I'm a first generation everything: first person to go to college first person to have a career, move and everything like that, and so, every step of my life is always second guessing: "Am I doing this right?" Because I didn't have any guidance. And then there's also a component of women in general, there's a lot of women have that same thing regardless if you do have guidance. We all have this, they like to call it impostor syndrome. But I like to call it, misrepresentation. And you don't see yourself in different spaces. And so, I think this program also helped in the fact of I was surrounded by a group of women who are experiencing the same thing, and I didn't feel as, 'Oh, this is me. This is me and I'm trippin'.

It helped that the program was 2 parts. You had your cohort, and then you had your coaching and your individual work. And so having a cohort of women from different experiences, different age groups, different ethnicities, all experiencing the same thing of "I feel, like I'm not doing well enough", and we're all very powerful women, we're all very smart. We're all leaders, but it just it made it real that it is something that we all experience. And it was a comforting space to be in.

Ana: Yeah, it was very comforting. And I agree with you... for me it was therapy. It was better than my psychologist.

Kristin: Oh, that's great. I love hearing all that. and I'll third that. I've had those same feelings in my own career, even as a coach I can look back, and I've had some of the same impostor syndrome, not enoughness, not meeting the mark. That kind of stuff, how damaging that can be if we let that take over. But then, being in a supportive group of other women that are going through the same thing, it's eye opening.

What advice would you give yourself or others?

Takayla: I have a lot. One thing that comes to mind once again is just being very clear and intentional about what you want, and attaching that to your 'why'. So when I say a why, like your value system, your personal brand, being very clear and intentional. Because so often, I got caught up in "this is my career". I was being told what I should be doing and just going with it. And when that happens, you lose your intentionality. You lose your authenticity in that space. And so, I would say, utilize this program to channel what you clearly want out of your career, out of your life, both personally and professionally.

I think the second thing is back to the conversation we had about you are enough. Understanding that, being able to write down your accomplishments, and 'you are enough' would be a mantra I would share out for women.

Having that network and reaching out to other women and pulling each other up. That idea of pulling other women up as you rise within your career, I think, is something to keep top of mind? How might I help the next? And then the last thing is having that growth mindset and knowing that there is always so much more to learn.

Kristin: Yeah, that's great, fantastic, **Ana, do you have anything you want to add?**



her story of rising

An interview with Takayla King & Ana Querol

Ana: Yes, while they're rising in their careers, I will tell them you're always good enough, and you always will be able to do whatever you want to do. Just trust yourself and don't be so hard on yourself. I think all women, our worst characteristic is that we're always very, very hard on ourselves and we're really good with everyone else. We're caring and kind. But with ourselves we're really really hard and we don't motivate ourselves. On the contrary, we tend to go to the other side. We're our worst enemy. I will tell whoever is rising in their career that they don't have to be perfect to keep rising. No one is perfect. So don't expect or don't wait until you're perfect to have goals, and to have ambition to keep growing and doing what you like to do.

Kristin: Yeah. I love that. It's good insight.

Takayla: For me, a large thing that I got out of this program is just having the ability to understand that I was able to do what I wanted to do in the sense that I can follow my passion. I think that was my light bulb moment that I can own my career. I have that authority, and I'm the biggest driver of that. I have the ability to drive my career forward, because for so long I was just doing whatever role they put me in. I was like "That's great." and like I said it, that light bulb was, "No, I have the autonomy and the power to drive forward my career in the way that I would like to."

Kristin: I'm curious, because obviously the process of going through the Women Rising® Program was such an impactful one for both of you, what do you do now, now that you're a year or 2 out, or even, you know, 3 years out from the program? **What do you do to continue to grow?**

Ana: I started studying a master's degree and it's something that I didn't want to do before, because when I got out of the University really tired of studying. And my job is very tiring also, and time consuming, so I didn't consider it before. I didn't want to study something just because everyone was doing it, and it was a requirement. And it was something that was expected really because all the men here that are managers had masters.

I didn't want to study something that I didn't like. I found a masters that's called Positive Leadership and when I saw what I was going to learn there, and it align with my brand, my values and what I like to do, I decided to try it out and see if I could do it. If I could balance work, my home, my kid, and now studying something else. And I'm about to finish. I'm really happy, and I really like it because I love being a leader, and I love being a positive leader. I didn't know there was a career about it. I always tried to do that empirically with my gut. But now I have theory to back it up, and it's been really good for me, and it has made me happy to learn new things. And one of other things is I learned from my coach is to keep my network, keep people around that can support me.

Takayla: I love that and congratulations on your MBA. That's awesome.

Ana: Thank you.

Kristin: I want to say congrats too. **Takayla, do you have anything you would recommend to others that you do for your own growth and development?**



her story of rising

An interview with Takayla King & Ana Querol

Takalya: Yeah, I think very similar to what Ana just mentioned around your network. I call it my 'personal board of directors', and so surround yourself with people who empower you, and you can continuously learn from and be challenged by. I have many pods of that. I have a group of DEI practitioners that I frequently meet with. I have people from my past company that I still keep close ties with and a lot of people in the HR field that I keep close ties with as well. So having networks, and people who you can call on and bounce ideas off of, and who know your personal brand, who know who you are.

Ana: Wow, I want to say that I admire your courage, on changing your career, because that's something that for me would be very scary. I admire you a lot!

Takayla: Thank you. It was scary. It was very scary. But I appreciate it. Thank you so much.

Kristin: Thank you both for sharing your stories with me today. I am sure that your stories will be an inspiration for other women.

