



## SuperStar Communicator Podcast

# Is International Women's Day still relevant for young people

### **Nick Simon:**

Welcome to the superstar communicator podcast of your hosts Nick Simon and Susan Heaton Wright. We're here to create intriguing interest about spoken communication to empower you to speak and communicate with confidence, clarity, and credibility in all of your business conversations. We interview expert guests from all over the world. Listen twice a month to be inspired to be a superstar communicator.

### **Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Hello, everybody. This is Susan and Nick from Superstar Communicator. We have a podcast and a livestream discussing all aspects of spoken communication and having really good business conversations. Tomorrow, it is International Women's Day. So if you're listening on podcast, this is an evergreen podcast. It's on the 8th March 2024, and the the theme for International Women's Day this year is 'inspire inclusion'. But we both wanted to ask the question, is International Women's Day still relevant to young people today? And given the fact that, Nick, respectfully, you are Gen z, you are in a perfect position to be able to answer that question. So I'm throwing that question to you first of all.

### **Nick Simon:**

So, from a historical standpoint, well, I'd say today, but tomorrow, International Women's Day is an opportunity to shed light on, historical women who might not have, had the chance to be looked at from from my perspective as a classical musician, that would be composers. And on the Internet, there is a a huge discovery, level within YouTube to discover female composers. So that, the International Women's Day is a kind of opportunity to shed light on women that might have been overlooked. And, today, it's it tomorrow, it's an opportunity to celebrate women's achievements and personal goals and sort of from a younger perspective, take time to appreciate the strong, figures in our lives and also the fact that there is still a long way to go to achieve full gender equality.

### **Susan Heaton-Wright:**

And what does gender equality mean to you?

### **Nick Simon:**

It would, ultimately go down to, equal opportunities and the the ability to be able to do the same thing and have the same opportunities.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

So, you know, looking at some of the research and and life now, girls are doing better than boys in exams usually, and there are more young women going to university than boys, more young women training to be doctors and lawyers than men. Surely it's already a better world for women and girls.

**Nick Simon:**

Well, the the that's sort of, a perspective from the, what would it be? The developed compared to developing countries and lower end countries that don't have equal rights, in the Middle East where women still have have to have that they aren't able to go to universities and cut. And so in, countries outside of the UK and USA, women still don't have the same equal work equal rights. So tomorrow, it's a day to shed light on those countries as well.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yeah. I think that's really imp a a really important point that, we can be seeing what things are like in a first world country, but, there are countries all over the world where there are not those opportunities, but also to to realise that, you know, when when I was in my teens there were not the opportunities for women and girls that there are now, which is brilliant and that should be celebrated. I'm not moaning about that. But I just wanted to spend a moment just to share why International Women's Day was really set up. It was set up in 1918, sorry, 190 8. The women in the textile garment industry in New York protested about equal pay and better work conditions, and it started a movement of recognising and recognising the contribution of women and girls in the world and in life. There's, you know, there are traditions of recognising International Women's Day, not really in Britain but it's actually a national day in places like Afghanistan. The irony there because the lack of women's rights, the human rights violations towards women's and and girls in Afghanistan is immense.

**Susan Heaton-Wright**

But there are other countries like Georgia, so certainly in my family we have a family who's from Georgia and this is part of their tradition to celebrate women on this day. And in some countries presents are given to women and girls, places like Italy. So, you know, for my son, I'm expecting a present tomorrow from him. There are proper celebrations. In Italy, mimosa is given to girls. It's a little yellow flowered, I I shrub that has beautiful yellow flowers at this time of the year and there is a famous mimosa cake. So there are lots of things going on in other parts of the world. But are you aware, Nick, of International Women's Day here and celebrations that are taking place?

**Nick Simon:**

I'm I'm actually unaware of any, celebrations. For me, one of my friends, is having a birthday party on the same day. So it's it's a bit unfortunate, but, I'm aware that there are, things like, similar to the the pride parades, there are, big celebrations going on in the city. And, yeah, that usually, there are big, social media hosts that people do to show, the top top ten female artists, that inspire them to do do, what they do?

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yeah I think that's really important. It's an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of women isn't it? Certainly I have I'm part of my work is that I do speaking and I have a couple of, speeches. I delivered one yesterday to a fantastic client called Halyon, and it was to inspire career development, career success, which I think is I believe is very empowering. And I have a couple more of those events taking place. But, I've seen personally, I've seen more and more that one is that there are events going on organised by corporates, but they don't want to spend money on paying a speaker, which the irony there to empower women, but you you don't have a budget to to pay for a great speaker, or even one organisation whom approached me and then decided to go down the route of giving a health check to every woman working in their organisation. What they're going to do with that data, I don't know. It's all a little bit worrying, isn't it? But other places, you know, they are celebrating by giving everybody a manicure or something like that rather than let's celebrate how amazing we are and let's have some people who have really achieved and sharing their their achievements and, to empower you and inspire you. Do you think that that's better?

**Nick Simon:**

Well, I I suppose, it's it's it's, it's quite an interesting one. But from a corporate perspective, they're going to put on shows to make it seem like they support that kind of thing. But, really, the best way to do that is to shed light on their own, diversity within the corporate realm. So the the 1% showing how their, CEOs are based around a diverse leadership. So not just, men as CEOs but women as well.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

She says I recruit for the insurance industry and there are some great events happening this week in the city to recognise and support International Women's Day. Lots of great networking, networks getting involved. That's brilliant because, in fact, part of career success is building a very strong network. Can you give some examples, Angela?

**Nick Simon:**

And the I think that's yeah. That that that's sort of an interesting thing, from the the online perspective because, from, yeah, International Women's Day, it's a great great opportunity to bring conversations around. So, create online discussions. So that's, as well as networking, it's a great opportunity to pass on the, online discussions.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yes. And, Angela, are there within the events that you're going to, are there men coming along? Because certainly we're having this discussion. Nick, you're you're a a man. I I'm a woman. I think that it's great to have the perspective of both sexes here but, do you encourage male allies to come along? So men that support this as well, support women and support the empowerment of women into more senior roles. I'd be very interested to hear anybody else wanting to contribute. I've heard independently from, Antoinette Dale Henderson who works with women on gravitas to empower themselves to move into senior roles, she said that, she's very conscious of the fact that there are some very scary statistics about sexual violence in schools. In 2021 Ofsted published a review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges in England.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

It found that sexual harassment occurred so frequently that it had become commonplace. Sexist name calling, 92%. Rumours about their sexual activity, 81%. Unwanted or inappropriate comments of a sexual nature, 80%. Sending pictures or videos they didn't want to see, 88%. Now I mentioned earlier on that girls traditionally do better than boys at exams. More girls go to university, yet there's an increase of sexual harassment even in schools. What are your thoughts, Nick?

**Nick Simon:**

Well, I suppose, it's quite an interesting one. But from a corporate perspective, they're going to put on shows to make it seem like they support that kind of thing. But, really, the best way to do that is to shed light on their own, diversity within the corporate realm. So the 1% showing how their, CEOs are based around a diverse leadership. So not just, men as CEOs but women as well.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yeah. I think it's that kind of, Internet problem. Yeah. Really, you're detached from, the person, than you would be in real life. So there's there's not a no. When you send a message, you don't see their reaction. So I think there's a kind of psychological element that people actually don't see the effects of what they're doing, or, they they don't think that they're going to have repercussions as badly. So it's really a problem with, the modern technology of the Internet and being able to send those mess explicit messages with, without thinking of, the repercussions.

**Nick Simon:**

And I think, really, that that, needs a a modern kind of law, a new law thing?

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yeah. It does. So I think that, one thing is that if women if girls are targeted like this at school, it's going to undermine their confidence and almost silence them. If they're being bullied, they're not going to want to speak up in class. Perhaps their even their, their goal setting for after afterwards that their confidence is going to be knocked by that.

**Nick Simon:**

Yeah. And I think, it's also, it's a growing discussion, which means that, there will be teachers who hopefully can discuss that with the students and not leave them, completely silent. But, ultimately, there there needs to be laws in place for social media for younger users to show that there that there will be repercussions to those kind of messages.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yes. Well, what does anybody else think? Now getting back to the idea of allies, Angela has said, yes, absolutely there are male allies involved in these events. And she also said, I would encourage for us to have those conversations and absolutely bring those male allies to our events. We need this to to work together. Now I I will mention yesterday that, I was at a client, speaking, and there weren't any males present in the room because it was it was actually a hybrid event. There were over 900 people at the event, but most of them were online. There were men there as well as women. I've been having Women's Day, everyone was welcome, they didn't specifically feel welcome.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

And we all felt afterwards, gosh, we've learnt from that. We need to actively encourage the men to feel welcome, not just for the sandwiches at the end, but to participate, not just online but face to face. So that's a really, really good point, Angela. One thing that people often say is, why do we have International Women's Day? There isn't an International Men's Day. What do you think about that? Because we know the answer to this, don't we, Nick?

**Nick Simon:**

I think there is a International Men's Day. Yeah. But it's, yeah, it focuses on the the mental health side.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Well, not just the mental health side, but but certainly here at Superstar Communicator, we always celebrate International Men's Day. And, one of the challenges for men is mental health and we've, over the last couple of years, we've had men who are supporting men in that area and also physical health. So absolutely we do that. We don't exclude men either for International Women's Day or supporting International Men's Day. Are there any other questions or comments or is there anything you'd like to to say, Nate?

**Nick Simon:**

Yeah. As from your perspective, how has, the attitudes towards, I guess, with, yeah, women's rights and, the International Women's Day changed over the years from your per

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

That's a really good point because, obviously, I'm a different generation from you. Do you know I wasn't aware of International Women's Day 10 years ago? I went to a girls' school and there was never any mention of that, which which is amazing because I would have thought that they would have picked up on that. But I started to be aware of it just with 1 or 2 events that were being shared on the Internet. So it has gathered pace. From a point of view of changes in the workplace, you know, I applied for a mortgage back in 1989. That's years before you were born, Nick. And I had less I had 3 times my salary. I had a 25% deposit

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

I had good references. I had a good job. And the broker came back to me and said, we're not giving you a mortgage because you're a single woman on your own, and you will you will get pregnant and you won't pay pay back. 25 years later, I wrote to those brokers and said, I've never missed a payment. But my actual broker went back to them and said, you do not know Sue. If there's anyone that's gonna pay back, it's gonna be Susan. But I had to pay a slightly higher percentage because I was a high risk because I was a woman. That would never happen now.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

And certainly, there were there was a situation around the same time when, in because I was a teacher at the time, there were in the magazine, there was a question about who you should, recruit for a job within the teaching profession. And it was the difference, a man with children and a single woman. And without exception, all of the experts said we should give the job to a man with the children because he has a family to support. Now that was in black and white in the eighties. And certainly when I was a girl, a school girl, there were very few female leaders. You know, your headmistress, you'd be aware of the matron who would be the sort of head nurse in the hospital and, you know, the head nun in the in The Sound of Music. But there were re there were really very, very few. Then there was Margaret Thatcher.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Women couldn't become curates until later on. There were very few women that were on the television as experts. The newcast newscasters came about a little bit later and when they did come, so Angela Rippon and people, it was a massive thing that their their voices were being heard but and there were very few women politicians. There was something that I picked up that Maria Miller and Harriet Harman, who are both, more mature female MPs and they've been MPs for many years, they said that as fee the number of female MPs and politicians has increased, there has been also been an increase in aggressive derogatory behavior and hate abuse, particularly online, towards those women. Now there are a number of women who have police protection now and, you know, that's pretty scary. I don't know why this is. Is it because there's a correlation between more women's voices being heard in the in the, House of Commons and this this is triggering some individuals to be aggressive. I don't know.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

What what do you think, Nick?

**Nick Simon:**

I think it does fall down to that, Internet kind of anonymous 2 things, sir. Element that people can simply say what they want without any repercussions. But I think there's also just, a bad, a pushback, from some individuals that might feel insecure, about that, kind of element. But I also think that there's there's, bad attitudes from, men in, the houses of parliament. There was a, case of Boris Johnson against I can't is that Angela the labor and

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

peace? Yes.

**Nick Simon:**

And Boris Johnson. Rayner. Yeah. He he said something, sexist that was distracting him. And I think there's just poor attitudes from the MPs as well.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yes. There is. And if you hear the prime minister saying something so derogatory, it does send messages to an element of society.

**Nick Simon:**

Yeah. He he wasn't prime minister at that time as well. So that's yeah.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yeah. I mean yeah. Not not bad. We could do an entire session on Boris Johnson, but I I'm not gonna waste the oxygen. He's not worth it. So I know I'm aware that people are watching, please do comment here, but, this year the theme for International Women's Day is inspire inclusion. From my point of view, I think that this is a very, very powerful theme. Everything from thinking about, a building, being welcoming for women and girls as well as men.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

So, you know, if you go to a normal theatre beforehand, during the interval, and afterwards, there are huge queues of women waiting to go to the loo because there are too few loo's. And it's not because we are going into the loo's and having a good old chat. In fact, in those situations, everybody washes their hands, gets out quickly because they know that there are other people waiting. But it's because for a number of reasons it takes us longer to go to the loop, you know, chain and clothes or we might need to go slight to the loose slightly more. Making more loos available to women is is a big a really easy win, isn't it? And also I was thinking about making buildings safer when people leave so that everything's lit up. If you're having to walk to a car park it's properly lit up at night so that you feel safe. Have you got any thoughts about t

**Nick Simon:**

Yeah, that's an interesting one. And I I know that, the women I know, especially from, university, they're always looking to walk in a group, home, which is there there is that fear. So I think in general, a positive mindset for, output from the police as well. If they're looking around and supporting women, when they're, on nights out and walking around the city at that time, that would be that would be a a benefit as well.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yeah. Absolutely. I I think that that's a really good point. A a visible police presence would help women and girls feel safer but also men that, you know, the the great thing about Inspire Inclusion, if that happens it means men become safer as well, doesn't it, if there's a bigger police presence? I I know that Birmingham City Council, they probably not got the money for it now, but they had an initiative that they, that they announced a couple of months ago that they were having a nighttime safety program in place so that women and girls did feel safer if they were working late that they could get to a bus stop or to a taxi rank or to their cars more safely, with better lit roads and and also a bigger police presence. But as I say, that's probably been overridden now sadly. But that's, I feel that that that everybody benefits from that.

**Nick Simon:**

And I was just thinking about how, your your experience with bankers saying that they they weren't going to give you, that that kind of payment, I think, is still happening today where, CEOs are decided, based on that a similar kind of, thought process that women are less likely to be chosen for higher up roles because they might be pregnant and take time off. So I think there is a a needed discussion within the higher realms of, a CEO and, the higher roles that needs to be happening as well.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yeah. Pick and you're you're absolutely right because, International Women's Day, of course, and Inspire Inclusion is partly about inspiring talented women to stay at an organisation and for an organisation to make the most of that talent and expertise, whether they're male or female. Brilliant. So I don't know if anybody has anything else to comment on, if anybody wants to say hi. But before we finish, let's both of us think of the answer to this question. Is International Women's Day still relevant to young people today? So I'll push it over to you, Nick.

**Nick Simon:**

So, my outlook on, on social media shows that it's still, a huge thing that goes around, a huge presence, on the day. And, I see I see last year, I saw many people posting online, showing their support. So I think it is definitely, an annual thing that will happen every year. So I think it it still shows relevance online. And in real life, it's definitely a thing that needs to still be pushed, as I say about those CEO roles, but even on the streets, police showing support. So, yeah, I think it is. Yeah.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

And what are you going to do tomorrow for International Women's Day? Are you gonna post something? Are you gonna put a video up or what?

**Nick Simon:**

Yeah. I think I think, it's there's a fun thing to do, which is make a list of, from my perspective as a musician, make a list of the top ten female artists, composers, and post that online, to show support.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Brilliant. And do finally, do I throw the question back at me?

**Nick Simon:**

Yeah. Do you think, International Women's Day still remains relevant?



**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

Yes. I do. I think that we can be given the rhetoric that everything's equal, that, there are more women in senior roles or or that organisations have got 40% women working in them. But you need to delve down behind the the statistics there because it could be that women are in support roles or roles that don't have the amount of influence or their salary is far less. I think that there are some huge issues for women and girls surrounding safety. You quite quite rightly say that the Internet has opened up another level of potential abuse for women and girls. And I know that you wouldn't do that, Nick, but there are, a minority of men and boys that feel that it's absolutely right to do this, and it silences women and girls and disempowers them, makes them feel frightened and lacking confidence. And that's not what we want in the world, is it? So International Women's Day really is relevant to young people today just as much as it would have been when I was in my teens.

**Susan Heaton-Wright:**

So thank you very much for listening today. Thank you for the contributions from Angela from Antoinette. Until next time, this is Susan Heatonwright and Nicholas Simon from Superstar Communicator. Bye bye.

**Nick Simon:**

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