

Hezeliya Kariuki: Empowering Women to Excel



My sojourn in the corporate world had its share of highlights. One of them was meeting Hezeliya Kariuki, a transformational life coach based in Milton Keynes, UK. Back then she was the leader of my department and the face of a corporate culture that was the complete opposite of what I had been accustomed to. A lead taking the time to have one-on-one meetings with team members not to lament about unachieved targets but to find out how she could help them grow was totally new to me. Hazel, as we called her, shortly left the company to embark on a new journey. I caught up with her to see how the transition was for her and to delve into what she now does for a living.

- How did you get started as a transformational coach?

My journey as a transformational coach began during a group coaching session where my coach asked us a profound question: *What do you think your purpose in life is?* At the time, I wasn't sure. But then she said something that stopped me in my tracks: *'For every second you're trying to figure out your calling, there's someone out there stuck because you hold their breakthrough.'*

That statement floored me. In that moment, the Holy Spirit began reminding me of countless incidents throughout my life where I had naturally helped people. I realized I had always had a deep desire to leave people better than I found them. I spoke life into others, saw the best in them, and encouraged them to see the same in themselves. That reminder made it clear—I had been coaching people all my life; I just never gave it a name. Stepping into this role as a transformational coach wasn't a new journey; it was simply recognizing and embracing the purpose God had already placed within me.

- How difficult (or easy) was your transition from the corporate world to beginning your own coaching practice from scratch?

When I decided to pursue coaching full-time, I was fortunate to have a financial cushion to lean on. However, one of the biggest challenges I faced was transitioning from the structured environment of a traditional job to the open-ended nature of self-employment. I didn't plan my time well at first and found myself feeling lost and unproductive.

A good friend gave me invaluable advice: *Maintain a similar routine to the one you had when you were employed, and fill your time with activities that build your business.* That shift in mindset helped me create structure and focus on growth. Now, after 2.5 years in coaching, I've experienced it all—the ups and downs, the good months and the bad ones. There were moments when I regretted leaving my job too soon, especially when the business wasn't yet generating consistent income. It's been a steep learning curve, and I've realized there's no shame in seeking supplemental income to cover basic needs while building your dream.

My advice to anyone looking to start their own business is this: *Don't leave your job until your side gig is consistently bringing in the same income as your current role.* It takes time to build a stable and sustainable business. Give yourself the financial security and peace of mind to grow at a healthy pace. Entrepreneurship is a rewarding journey, but it's much easier when you prepare for the realities that come with it.

- Why are you so passionate about helping women succeed?

I am a firm believer in purpose—the idea that every woman is placed on this earth with a unique, God-given mission. My purpose is to help women discover theirs by breaking the cycles and patterns that keep them stuck, preventing them from stepping into their true potential.

It breaks my heart to see women struggling, feeling lost, or trapped in repetitive patterns, not realizing how powerful they truly are. Each woman has incredible gifts and talents within her—capable of bringing joy, peace, and success—not just to herself but to the world around her. Helping women succeed isn't just about personal achievement; it's about unlocking the potential that God has already placed within them. When women step into their purpose, they don't just change their lives—they inspire change in their families, communities, and beyond. That's a mission worth dedicating my life to.

- From your experience as a life coach, what is the biggest hindrance that prevents women from achieving their potential in their chosen profession?

The biggest hindrance is often rooted in belief systems shaped by a variety of influences—upbringing, life experiences, society, and culture. These belief systems directly impact how women show up in their professional lives. For some, this manifests as fear or low self-esteem. For others, it's a lack of belief in their abilities, a limited mindset caused by exposure to restrictive environments, or past experiences that have created barriers to growth. Even words spoken over their lives—whether positive or negative—that they've chosen to internalize can have a profound effect. The result? Many women struggle to see just how powerful they truly are. They view themselves through the lens of these limiting beliefs rather than seeing themselves as God intended—capable, resilient, and equipped for greatness.

Breaking free from these belief systems requires a shift in perspective. It's about unlearning the narratives that hold us back and embracing the truth of who we are. When women do this, they unlock their full potential and step into their professions with boldness and confidence.

- One of your key teachings is around Breaking Cycles. How do women get into unhealthy cycles and why is it so hard for them to break free?

Most unhealthy cycles are rooted in our early years, typically between the ages of 3 and 11. These formative years shape our core beliefs and lay the foundation for the patterns we carry into adulthood. Often, these cycles begin with a traumatic experience. In response, the mind creates a form of protection to ensure that the trauma isn't repeated.

For example, imagine a child with a parent who was overly protective to the point of being unfair. That child might grow up resenting authority in general, creating a cycle of resistance or defiance in any authoritative relationship. Without early awareness, these cycles deepen over time, becoming so ingrained that breaking free feels almost impossible.

This is why awareness is critical. When we don't address these patterns early, they become automatic responses—almost like second nature. You've probably heard the saying, 'You can't teach an old dog new tricks.' While that's not entirely true, it highlights how difficult change becomes when patterns are deeply embedded.

The good news is, cycles can be broken. But it starts with understanding where they come from and bringing conscious awareness to them. Once you identify the root cause, you can begin the work of rewiring those beliefs and creating healthier patterns for yourself.

- You also had a 90-day challenge that aims at helping women finish the year strong. Could you give us an idea of what that's about and how lessons learned from it can be beneficial for the new year?

The 90-Day SheVolution Challenge is a transformative, faith-based program designed to help women take stock of their goals, reset their mindset, and build momentum to end the year strong and start the next year even stronger. Over 90 days, we focus on key areas like business, career, spirituality, personal development, finances, relationships, and health. Participants learn to set clear, achievable goals using the SMART method, gain insights from expert speakers, and develop a success-oriented mindset with tools like *The Power of Now*. We've already completed two books to elevate our thinking and are supported by weekly coaching and accountability sessions. The lessons learned are invaluable for the new year: you enter it with a crystal-clear vision, aligned priorities, and a mindset prepared for growth and resilience. It's about finishing 2024 powerfully and stepping into 2025 having gained momentum, equipped to achieve extraordinary results.

- I know you're big on mentorship. You actively sought to mentor your colleagues in the course of your corporate career. How can women in leadership help foster a culture of mentorship to increase the chances of those starting out building successful careers?

Mentorship has always been a cornerstone of my leadership approach because I genuinely believe people are an organization's greatest asset. One of the key things I did

in my corporate career was to sit down with every employee, ask what they wanted to achieve, and then write out a tailored plan to help them get there. I went as far as collaborating with my manager to fund the qualifications they needed to advance. The result? Every single person I managed got promoted, with some moving up two to three levels—a rare achievement. For women in leadership, fostering a culture of mentorship begins with a mindset shift. You must genuinely invest in your team, not just as employees but as individuals with potential. It's about finding out what they need, curating a plan, and holding them accountable to it while providing the necessary support. To create a culture of mentorship, start by leading by example. Offer one-on-one mentorship sessions and encourage your leadership team to do the same. Highlight success stories from mentorship within the organization to inspire others and normalize the practice. It's also essential to ensure mentorship opportunities are inclusive and accessible. This means creating structured programs, offering mentorship to all employees regardless of level, and actively seeking to mentor underrepresented groups in the workplace. Lastly, mentorship is not just about helping individuals—it's a strategy for long-term success. When employees feel valued and supported, they perform better, contributing to the organization's success. And beyond the organization, mentorship helps break systemic barriers by empowering individuals to rise into leadership roles themselves, creating a ripple effect that benefits the entire industry. For women leaders, my advice is simple: mentorship is an investment. The time and effort you put into growing others will always come back, not just in results but in the legacy you leave behind.

- From where you sit in 2024, do you feel the proverbial glass ceilings have been broken and women can become all they want to be in their careers?

To be honest, I think there's still a lot of work to be done. While we're certainly not where we were 20 years ago, progress has been made, and we're seeing significant strides thanks to the efforts of many incredible organizations advocating for gender equality. Their work has empowered the girl child and brought much-needed awareness to the systemic limitations women have faced for decades.

As a result, we've seen women step into roles and leadership positions that were once considered unattainable. From boardrooms to industries historically dominated by men, women are making their mark. For instance, women now hold 32% of global senior management roles—a record high, there's progress in pay equity too. Many industries have implemented policies to ensure women receive equal pay for equal work. Yet, we know the gender pay gap remains persistent in many sectors and regions. The glass ceiling may be cracked, but it's not entirely shattered. Challenges such as unconscious bias, lack of mentorship opportunities, and societal expectations still hold many women back.

I believe the future will depend on continued efforts to create inclusive workplaces, provide mentorship opportunities for young women, and challenge the cultural narratives that limit women's potential. While there's a long road ahead, I'm optimistic that with

intentionality and collaboration, we'll see even greater progress in breaking those ceilings.