Deloitte.
Together makes progress

Breakthrough by Design podcast series

Breakthrough Blueprint:
Building innovation from chaos with Katrina Stevens

Host

Kim Christfort, Chief Innovation Leader, Deloitte Greenhouse®

Guest

Katrina Stevens, President & CEO, The Tech

KIM CHRISTFORT: What if you could spark the next generation of innovators, not just by teaching them facts, but by inviting them to get their hands dirty, make a mess, and discover what's possible? For today's guest, that's not just a philosophy. It's a mission.

KATRINA STEVENS: *"Breakthrough really means trusting the mess—sitting in that discomfort and pushing through it till you get to a breakthrough."*

KIM CHRISTFORT: That was Katrina Stevens, president and CEO of The Tech Interactive, lifelong educator and champion for equity in STEM.

From her early days as a classroom teacher to shaping national education policy, and now leading one of Silicon Valley's most dynamic science centers, Katrina's work empowers people of all ages to be creators and problem solvers by embracing the mess of hands-on learning.

I'm Kim Chrisfort, Chief Innovation Leader for Executive accelerators and the Deloitte Greenhouse. You are listening to Breakthrough by Design, where we chat with a diverse array of guests, from scientists to CEOs, academics to athletes exploring what it takes to get to breakthrough. Katrina, welcome to Breakthrough by Design.

KATRINA STEVENS: Thank you, Kim, for having me. I'm excited about this conversation.

KIM CHRISTFORT: Excellent. Well, to kick us off, I always like to help our listeners get to know our guests a little bit better. So, I'm curious, I know you believe in inspiring creativity in others. Do you have a hobby or activity that fuels your own creativity?

KATRINA STEVENS: That's a great question. So, one of the things that I like to do, which I don't think most people know, is to make these little kinds of fairy houses. So I go,

my partner and I, go on these long hikes. And so, we like to be, this happened during the pandemic. We would create, we just find things you know, pine cones and twigs and all of this stuff, and then just create these little houses and then put them out on the trail.

And we just kind of love the idea that somebody might find them, you know, as they're walking along. So, no real purpose, but it was a kind of a delight and fun to play with.

KIM CHRISTFORT: Well, I'm sure the fairies would disagree. I'm sure they love those houses. So, I also think, one of your other hobbies I've heard you talk about is baking. I'm curious, what's your go-to treat and do you have a signature recipe?

KATRINA STEVENS: I do. So, there's a nine layer chocolate cake that I make chocolate leaves on the top with raspberries. Goodness.

KIM CHRISTFORT: I feel guilty just listening to you describe that.

KATRINA STEVENS: Yeah. That's sort of my go-to if I needed to have kind of a showstopper.

KIM CHRISTFORT: So it's interesting, you are a baker. So you are able to take the patience and the time to actually measure out the ingredients and uh, and get to that perfect cake.

KATRINA STEVENS: Yeah, it's actually funny. My partner does a lot of cooking, and I do more of the baking. And I do actually think there's more messiness in cooking. There's more forgiveness than there is in baking.

KIM CHRISTFORT: That is very true, although I'll say whether I try to bake or cook, it ends up being quite a mess usually.

So, I'd like to talk a little bit about your career, because you've had such a fascinating span across education from classroom teacher to then policy advisor, and now to leading The Tech Interactive.

And so, stepping back, can you share a little bit more about that path and how your early experiences in the classroom maybe inspired and shaped where you landed today?

KATRINA STEVENS: Yeah, I mean, I would go back and say that my classroom was my first innovation lab. When I first started teaching, I didn't guess that someday I was going to be running a science center. It wasn't a linear journey, and each stage was really about a curiosity. I would see another part of the ecosystem and I would want to understand it and also see if I could fix it or iterate it and see if there's better ways to do it. That was really all around how can we improve outcomes and experiences for kids.

That was a lot of my early and that led me to kind of each step along the way.

KIM CHRISTFORT: I love that. And I know with The Tech Interactive, you're really aiming to inspire the innovator in everyone, and you're doing that through hands-on engagement in science and technology. So can you talk a little bit more about how that really takes that curiosity or that desire to do it better and brings it to life and what methods you use maybe to do that.

KATRINA STEVENS: Yeah. We do this in several ways. So, there are experiences when you just come to the interactive, which is, you know, kind of our museum space. It's not your typical museum. It's our collections and you're not learning the history of things.

We have exhibits like our tech studio, which we change out all the time, and it's a hundred percent designed to be iterative and we don't have toolkits. You know, it's not like, so here you come and you put the kit together. But it's more like - here's a collection of fasteners, here's a collection of flat surfaces, how might you figure out how to design this challenge? And we have some people who are there for 20 minutes and we have some people who will be there all afternoon because they going to keep iterating and keep iterating and be able to create something that's even stronger. But we also do this in other ways.

We do a lot of teacher training and one of the things that we really help teachers see is to be okay with a mess in their classrooms. And one of the best ways to do that is to have our teachers do it themselves. And so like they have to get comfortable with kind of doing that messy kind of piece of it before they're comfortable and able to bring that to the classroom.

KIM CHRISTFORT: Well, you are speaking to my heart here because of course, making a mess is one of our core breakthrough manifested principles. But I would love to hear your take on why you think that hands-on messy experimentation is so important for learning, and especially in the science and technology fields.

KATRINA STEVENS: Yeah.

Part of this really goes back to how the brain works. The way we learn, we kind of create these patterns in our brains, and if you do it the same thing over and over again, you get these deep grooves, but if you're able to try to create new pathways, it actually allows your brain to connect things differently.

And play is one of the biggest ways to be able to do that. It allows the brain to not be locked in and to be worried. It takes off. Takes that inner critic off and allows you to just try things. Allows you to be able to laugh and when you can do that in a team or in a group that just opens up possibilities, and allows you to try something you might never have thought about doing before.

KIM CHRISTFORT: It seems like a lot of the aspects of play are being enhanced in interesting ways right now with technology. I had a teammate send me a gen AI generated photo the other day, which took our team and put them in a fun context of pickleball and had some futuristic things woven in.

How are you seeing technology really enhance this ability to play and to be curious and make a mess?

KATRINA STEVENS: Well, one of the things that technology allows us to do, I mean, technology is a tool, so it's not the end. It's really like, how can it help us do things? And we are, as we're starting to play with some of the AI tools, it can allow you to iterate faster or to be able to see a more developed image. So folks who don't necessarily have really strong artistic skills, for example, can still show like, here's what I'm thinking about because they can use a tool that allows them to be able to get to that faster. But again, we actually go back and forth between using a tech tool and then just using cardboard and, you know, hands-on. I think that the best approach is to be using a combination of these things.

KIM CHRISTFORT: The combination is super powerful and I know that what you've described is an interesting mix of digital things and of very tactile things. What do you think is the barrier to people bringing those things together sometimes, you know, I do see a lot of people that we work with sort of feeling like everything has to be buttoned up and perfect.

Do you think that's getting in the way of this experimentation or what is it that keeps people from embracing these different aspects of making a mess?

KATRINA STEVENS: Yeah, I think it's a hundred percent has to do with people's mindsets and as a society. There are actually other countries where it's even more profound. We're taught that you can't fail. It's high stakes in high school in terms of what college you're going to get into or what career you're going to get into, especially for people who've been, you know, kind of your high performers. It can be really hard to allow yourself to do something that might fail. And so you have to, we do this a lot at The Tech where we, when we're designing things or thinking about strategy, we literally do design challenges. Even at an all hands not long ago had everybody do this challenge where you had to get this cupcake across the line using wind.

And then we just had a handful of stuff and we only had a short period of time, and that was sort of the goal. Just try it. Like you have no time to think it through and you just have to do it. And that got people into a different frame of mind that then allowed us to be able to have more creative ideas as we were approaching our strategy.

I also think that it's important to scaffold for people. If no one has ever done that before, and we are doing work in Kenya where, it's a very rote education system. And, so you have to start with small challenges. And I would say for giving advice to other companies or organizations, do something small, do something that's like a 20 minute activity. Then once people have success, then you can do something that's a little larger, but you have to build up that – we talk about as a growth mindset. It's a muscle and a mindset that you have to do by practicing before you get really comfortable.

KIM CHRISTFORT: I love the gradual on ramp of that – that you sort of step into it.

Maybe you're just not given a choice. You have to just try. You have an ambition and then they get to see the success and

then hopefully get momentum out of that. Do you have an example of a time where you yourself, maybe were reluctant to try something new and that you pushed yourself to just try or take a baby step?

KATRINA STEVENS: I do. I think one of the biggest shifts I made that for was a big challenge for me. I was a teacher and a principal, and this is when the early days of ed tech and as I was rolling out things across the Baltimore County Public School district, I didn't have the tools that I needed to be able to do that well.

And so a colleague and I created some tools to be able to figure that out. That led to us starting a little ed tech company. And the biggest thing I did was to quit my very comfortable job. I had a pension and I stepped out and did a startup. And this wasn't in Silicon Valley, this was on the East Coast, and my family didn't understand and I was scared.

Like I was not sure what was going to happen. And as it turns out, the startup, I ended up leaving that startup, but I don't regret doing that work, because it led me to where I am now. I would never have ended up in the Obama administration, and I never would've ended up at Chan Zuckerberg or any of that, or here at The Tech. That small decision and willingness to kind of step out of my comfort zone allowed all these other things to happen.

KIM CHRISTFORT: I love that you're actually getting at one of our other principles, which is this idea of checking your edge. You know, that you'll never grow unless you know where that edge is for you, and sort of be willing to toe that edge and step beyond it – is really powerful.

I also love what you're describing is essentially, a way of getting yourself into that mindset, it sounds like because you were taking baby steps, you were making actually what ended up being a big change, but doing that perhaps in these incremental steps on that journey. Hmm.

KATRINA STEVENS: Yeah. And before I did that, I had been working on the startup the same time as I was doing my job, so I had

some thoughts like, okay, this might work.

One of the really big parts for me was when I left the startup. I didn't have a job and I didn't have my startup and one of my colleagues just gave me really good advice and said, just take all the meetings you already had scheduled, and each meeting actually led to work and led to the journey that I was on.

It was small steps. It's like, okay, I don't know what's going to happen next, but I will take this next meeting and see what that leads to and I'll take the next meeting and see where that one goes to.

KIM CHRISTFORT: You're taking this huge change and actually finding a way that you're already making progress towards that.

I'm wondering how similar that is to maybe the way that you think about breaking down complex challenges where people need to innovate because even with some of the things we're facing in the world, there is no simple solution. And so, we often hear, well, it's not even worth starting, particularly with young people.

I could see that as being a potential barrier. How do you interact with your learners to break down those complex challenges and really give them perhaps some of those starting points to just begin to get momentum?

KATRINA STEVENS: And this is really, I think our secret sauce at The Tech is being able to take complex problems and be able to break them down or complex ideas and to be able to help other people be able to do that themselves.

The whole message when you come to The Tech, and we have storytelling, so I do think that there's a spark component to this, which is we tell stories about innovators that look like our visitors and look like our students, where they saw something in the world and they figured out a way to be able to try to solve it.

Every single story that we tell has a story about failure. They could always include like, okay, when did it fail and how did you recover from that? So, there's the

inspiration that other people have done this, and then we design our activities and our challenges, so that you get to actually do it yourself and you get to immediately put yourself into that mess.

One of the biggest ways we do this is something called our Tech Challenge. So it is the longest running engineering challenge in the country. We're going into our 39th year. And one of the reasons why we do that is because the challenge that we design. We test. And actually even something you talk about in your chapter, we actually test this with our stakeholders. So just yesterday I was over at The Tech, , and they're prototyping next year's tech challenge, and they're testing out names and they're testing out a few things.

And it's very, you know, it's not a polished poster. It was like handwritten, you know, and kids had to put their choice in these cups but that allows us to be able to get that input. And then that gives us a challenge that feels like it's very comfortable and very accessible to lots and lots of kids.

Now when you get in but you start to realize like, oh, there's lots of ways to do this, you know, and it's more complex and, oh, we got to figure out this, and, but by then you're hooked. And kids would work, do this for like months and months and months, and then they come, we have about 2,500 kids who will come and do a showcase and show us what they've been working on for all that time.

KIM CHRISTFORT: That's incredible. Very, very impressive. I like what you're describing with this low fidelity way of teeing up the opportunity. It feels like that's a way to make these things more accessible. And then this idea of storytelling is intriguing as well because you're making it real for them with real people.

There's an authenticity to that by showing that there's failure. You are actively embracing and encouraging this make a mess, and then they get to do it themselves. So, you've got the full cycle of engagement happening there, with

this low fidelity thing, and balanced with technology.

We mentioned that a little bit before, but I'm interested in how you, yourself, have brought technology into your life because I've heard you say that you were actually not a techie originally. Tech was not something that, that was sort of a natural part of what you did. So what brought about that shift for you?

KATRINA STEVENS: Yeah, it's true. I was not. I was the last person to get a cell phone among all my friends and colleagues and I was an English teacher and I believed in like physical books and conversations. It was really when I started doing work in Bermuda. And so, I was there for three years and, this is also when technology was really starting to become a little more robust.

And I realized that I was literally on an island. And the only way I could bring in a computer science teacher was online. And so it made me realize that technology had the ability to create access and personalization. And so, from then on, because I've always been driven on like, how can I get more, you know, more to our kids?

And then I got intrigued and I started realizing, oh, that same concept would be true in the US. You know, like this would help us be able to get some of this access to kids who are in our more rural areas. And being able to, if you have a kid who's a passion about something, get them more information or more resources that allow them to pursue those passions.

And then ever since then I've been in it and it's kind of funny that I went from being this anti-tech, especially with friends who knew me from back then, to being the deputy director and the Obama administration of ed tech. And now we're leading, national AI Literacy Day. We're kind of on that cutting edge again, and for me it's also like, okay, how can AI be able to help us better enable and be more creative and give more access to more people?

KIM CHRISTFORT: Well, and it shows your willingness, in the service of getting to this new breakthrough, this change that you're trying to make in the world of doing what it takes and experimenting.

Even with that, it sounds like your entry into The Tech world was a bit of an experimentation to figure out how do I get access?

And, by the way, I want a job on Bermuda. How do I make that happen?

KATRINA STEVENS: Yeah. It was, it was. I didn't even apply for the job. It was a call – do you want to go to Bermuda? And help design and redesign their education system and build out a new school. And I'm like, yes. So yeah, it was a really wonderful job.

KIM CHRISTFORT: I love that. I love that. Well, you've talked a little bit about your sort of bold steps to be an entrepreneur, to do some experimentation outside of the traditional path potentially you could have taken in your career.

I'm interested if you have other examples of you stepping into the uncertainty and being willing to take on the risk of failure in order to get to something new, to get to your own version of breakthrough.

KATRINA STEVENS: Yeah. I think that the last five years have given us some of that opportunity. The pandemic changed a lot. Almost like the world's experiment, you were experimenting at The Tech. We didn't have a digital presence. You couldn't even buy a ticket online. So, while we were closed, it actually gave us the ability to start thinking around being able to create tech at home and tech on casa.

And so, being able, like how do we take the resources and things that we do, how do we put it in a different format? Our tech challenge was five weeks away when the pandemic hit. And so, these kids have been working for months and months and months, and the team had to figure out how to, we could have just canceled it – everybody else canceled their events and we figured out how to do it on Zoom. You know, we worked with Zoom, we worked with folks and worked with kids. And so,

kids still got a chance to be able to do that. And we also figured, okay, if we're asking kids to be iterating all year, then we need to be able to do the same thing.

You know, if something comes our way, like we've got to figure how to do it. And for the next two years we, because we weren't still able to have large gatherings, it gave us an opportunity to try sound. We were never able to do sound when you have an entire auditorium filled with 10,000 people, 2,500 kids.

But when it was online, that was one of the few times we got to experiment with something that we'd never been able to do. So, I think it's really around, as you start getting constraints and I actually do think that the constraints are important. I think that that's actually when you get creative. If it's completely open-ended, that's actually a lot harder, but if you have some constraints, you have to like, oh, how are we going to work around that? And that enables us to be even more creative in finding like really good solutions to things.

KIM CHRISTFORT: I agree. I've actually always loved the expression – constraints breed creativity. It is a nice forcing function.

And it's interesting too, because what you're describing relates to another one of our principles - strip away everything – which is essentially about challenging your own assumptions. And, you had a situation, as we all did during COVID, yes. Where suddenly we couldn't deliver in the way we'd always delivered.

You can't engage in person, and you could have thought, well then we just can't do it. It's just not possible. And instead, you took that constraint and really used it to push to a breakthrough actually for your organization and for the value you're able to create with your students.

KATRINA STEVENS: And some of the experiments we tried, and we did virtual field trips that had huge traction then, but didn't pass, you know, didn't come through after the pandemic. But I mean, another program that was around, because now schools had Zoom, bringing experts into

the classroom – actually still has traction. So, some of the things we tried worked just in that moment.

And then some things really didn't kind of move through. I think that's okay. That's part of the mess. I do think one of the most important things I can do as a leader is to make sure that when our teams try something new and it doesn't work, that I say thank you, express appreciation for trying it, and then asking the question, what did we learn from that?

We can say as much as we want – "we want you to iterate. We want you to try. And failure is okay." But the first time something fails, everyone's looking to you. Everyone's looking to the leader, whether it's the team leader or whether it's the leader's organization and going, is it really? Because if you do at that moment you're like, "oh, I can't believe we wasted all these resources", you are going to shut down all of that creativity moving forward.

KIM CHRISTFORT: That is great counsel and it's very relevant, I think now more than ever because we're telling our teams and our talent that they need to be more agile, which means they have to be moving quickly. They have to be experimenting, they have to be trying things, and they have to have the, not just permission to fail, but support to fail and what you're describing is really putting yourself behind that promise.

KATRINA STEVENS: And I think it's particularly important now with AI. I created an AI policy team. It's from across the organization. So, I have people from the floor to all the different marketing teams. And when we gathered yesterday, and I just did my, like, here's our framing - And what I said was like, we want to encourage experimentation, within safeguard rails. We want to make sure that we're safe and a couple of them were like, "oh, we just thought we weren't allowed to use it." And it was just like, "No. I want us to be experimenting" and this goes back to those, the constraints and we have to make sure that we're protecting our data and we're protecting our IP.

So then suddenly, that opened up, oh, what if we use it for this? And what if we use it for that? And just being able to, like right now our policy is more around, what's possible. Six months from now we'll have to update it, but I didn't want to wait and have six months of us going back and forth around like all the different pieces of what a policy could look like.

I wanted us just to try stuff. So, I think that's also really important.

KIM CHRISTFORT: So, you're essentially setting clear expectations. You're putting those guardrails up so that people can experiment and try things. You're making sure that when they fail, you're able to say, you know what? Thank you for trying and I'm not punishing you for that.

Are there other things that you're doing to help your teams embrace breakthrough thinking?

KATRINA STEVENS: And I see this as being kind of two different kinds of processes. So, there's the generative, when you're just, let's just throw a bunch of things out there and let's play for a while.

And that involves giving people space and time. If you give someone half an hour, you're not going to get anywhere. But if you give someone a half a day, then you start to get past that initial, like the kind of more generic ideas.

We also have a process that we do, which is called continuous improvement.

And so that allows us with just this idea of you're constantly changing. And so we have a whole kind of process that we work through. We've set a number of people who can facilitate it. And so that's when we do try something and we look at it and we kind of use that to evaluate.

And then it has a generative piece, but it's based on data and input. So that's something that's become more and more part of our DNA that allows, and we're also very clear, like, okay, is this something that's generative or is this something where we are thinking about iterating and refining something?

This shows up the most at The Tech is really around how we design our exhibits and our experiences. So, we opened a new AI exhibit, it's called the dream garden. But to design it, we did all of these experiments on the floor. Lots of prototyping. All of our prototyping, as much as possible we do so that people can see it. And we want folks to know like, Hey, this is how you design an exhibit. You know, it is iterative. And we, for our national AI literacy last year, we had a thousand kids, who are playing with some of our experiments.

And it was like tin cans kind of thing, you know, it wasn't like a high-tech stuff. If it's too polished, then they can't make a lot of suggestions for that. And the kids loved it and we were able to then really use in real time, get that feedback and use that to design the exhibit. We do that a lot.

KIM CHRISTFORT: When you do these new things, how do you know you're successful? What is that way of interacting or that expression you see on somebody's face? Like what does success look like in these experiments?

KATRINA STEVENS: Yeah, there's a really good example right now. We're going to open a new exhibit that has kind of a b-ball machine feel to it and what we did for months, we had this corner where we just put up general pipes and tennis balls and we just watched. And so, we watched kids of all ages, adults, playing with it so they could move these things around to try to get a ball to like move through this device. And we used that like to design something that's beginning more permanent, but it was the delight. And you just see their faces that they're like, "oh!" And when you get that moment of them, like, oh, I figured this out. Then we build that into the final design.

KIM CHRISTFORT: Amazing Katrina. I love my job.

I feel like I have a dream job, and I think yours is one of the few that comes close. It sounds amazing what you do.

KATRINA STEVENS: Yep. Yeah, no, I love it. And, you know, If I'm having a tough

day, I just go over to The Tech and see all the kids getting off of the buses and that excitement, which is also something funny that people often talk about a visual mass. But when I was helping teachers be able to learn how to kind of evaluate and give feedback of what they're seeing in schools, what I would do, when I would walk through, I would actually tell people to listen. Because there is messy noise that's productive and then there's unproductive, you know, because, oh, I hear - there's all kinds of noise coming out of that classroom before I even walk in.

I can hear it, I can tell like, is that excitement? Is that generative? And I can tell that too when I'm walking by a team here, if I hear laughter and I hear this kind of, even if it's loud like that, that kind of productive mess. We don't need to have everything be quiet all of the time.

KIM CHRISTFORT: Well, I'm not the quietest person. So that metric of success appeals to me.

Maybe a very basic question, but why should it matter that people are interested in engaged with STEM?

KATRINA STEVENS: Yeah, we talk about this a lot. Our goal at The Tech is to make people who go into STEM careers and we would love to have more folks go into STEM careers, but I think it's really important, especially today, we've got some pretty big, big challenges in our world, including things like climate change and having people being able to be good citizens and be able to have enough information or know how to be able to respond or to think about things.

Like one of the biggest things that happened when we had COVID is a lot of people said, "well, oh, you lied to us." You know, when things kept changing in terms of the recommendations, and I think if people understood that the way science works is its iterative – we learn stuff and then we change our minds. Like the dinosaurs that I learned when I was in elementary school all changed. Now, it doesn't mean that someone lied to me then, we just have a deeper understanding of it now, and so, well...

KIM CHRISTFORT: pluto's no longer a planet I know that rocked my world.

KATRINA STEVENS: I know it goes back and forth, back and forth, but that's important so that when you hear things in the news that you understand how the whole process works. And if you understand how the process works, it also means that you can participate in that process.

KIM CHRISTFORT: I love that. I think you'll have a unique perspective on this. There's a lot of debate about STEM versus STEAM. How do you think about that?

KATRINA STEVENS: We, we have that same debate internally around whether or not we should be using STEM or STEAM in our marketing.

We think that design and art, are actually incredibly important. So, to that design process, especially when, if you're thinking about things like play the artistic piece of that allows a different part of your brain to be able to come to bear. And so, for me it's less about the terminology and it's really more around making sure that we do have creativity as being part of how we solve some of our real world challenges.

KIM CHRISTFORT: Wonderful. I happen to agree wholeheartedly, by the way, giving you a virtual high five. Yes!

And, you know, I think technology, especially in the age of AI, can be used in so many different ways that are enhancing and creative. But to your point, the tactile opportunities and using the cupcakes to blow across a finish line or whatever that device is, it doesn't need to be tech to be fantastic. I appreciate that message.

KATRINA STEVENS: And I also think that for a lot of people that if you start with The Tech, they think, I'm not a tech person. And then they don't engage. But if you're asking like, Hey, you wanna go play with some cardboard? We'll leave out cardboard. They know scissors. That doesn't feel as overwhelming and it helps.

A lot of people just have a different understanding of who they are. And so one of the things is we try to create a STEM identity or an innovator identity.

You do have to help people go from thinking like that. There are some people, you hear this all the time with math, like, I'm a math person. I'm not a math person. And one of the things I always say is, "you're not a math person yet." And I'd say the same thing for STEM. You're not a STEM person yet.

Of course you are. You're an innovator. We are all innovators. And being able to kind of, again, do that kind of scaffolding to get them to go like, "oh, I didn't know that that's what STEM meant. Well, of course I can solve a problem. I can use these kinds of tools." And that builds their confidence and then allows them to have a mindset where they do start to think about themselves as having a STEM identity.

KIM CHRISTFORT: I love that. Now you are a person who it sounds like has always been curious and you've managed to take that curiosity and turn it into a very successful career and really infuse it and share it with a broader population now. So I'm curious, what is the next thing on the horizon for you or for The Tech?

KATRINA STEVENS: Oh, it's a great question. What I mean, some of it I won't know. Right? So there, but one of the things I'm really working on at The Tech is for us to become, we're really well known regionally, but I'd like us to become a must-do destination.

And so, we're really trying to think about, what would get people to travel here and what's that wow factor in terms of the exhibits that we're doing. And then we're doing experiments in other parts of the world, and so what does it look like for us to take our tech challenge to other parts of the US, to other parts of the state, and being able to, and one of the things that we have access to here is because I have so many people every day coming through, that I can iterate much more quickly. We can create resources that, like a school wouldn't be able to have that ability to iterate that with that many different kinds of kids, or that many different kinds of adults.

And so how do I take the things that we are learning and experiment and how do I get that to more places? And so, I think that's one of the biggest things that I'm thinking about over the next few years.

KIM CHRISTFORT: Well, I'm sure a lot of our listeners are hoping that this comes to a geography near them, so I'm sure you have a future audience out there.

So, Katrina, before we wrap our conversation today, I do want to ask you a question that we ask everyone on the show, and that is, what does breakthrough actually mean to you?

KATRINA STEVENS: Yeah, breakthrough really means like trusting the mess, sitting in that discomfort and pushing through it till you get to a breakthrough.

KIM CHRISTFORT: Excellent. Well, this has been an incredible conversation. I am so appreciative of the mindset you're bringing to this, the methods that you have to try to activate it, that you're clearly showing as a result. I personally can't wait to go visit The Tech, and it was such a pleasure to have you with us today.

KATRINA STEVENS: I would love to give you a tour and thank you again. It was a wonderful conversation.

KIM CHRISTFORT: What an energizing conversation with Katrina—her passion for hands-on learning and fearless experimentation truly shines through. She reminded us that breakthroughs often come from embracing uncertainty and being willing to learn from the mess as we go.

My favorite takeaway? Play isn't just fun—it's essential for rewiring our brains, quieting our inner critic, and opening up new pathways for creativity. When we give ourselves (and our teams) permission to experiment, make mistakes, and try again, we unlock possibilities we might never have imagined.

If you want to learn more about Katrina and other changemakers, visit breakthroughmanifesto.com.

Thank you for listening to Breakthrough by Design, where we believe everyone has the potential for breakthrough.

About Deloitte