

## Speaking Joy

An Interview with Joy Fitzgerald,  
Senior Vice President and Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer, UnitedHealth Group  
and Chief Executive Officer, Speaking Joy

**EDITORS' NOTE** Joy Fitzgerald is an author, speaker, and life coach who has dedicated her life to motivating and igniting joy into every aspect of a person's life. Her power is in her courageous voice and desire to develop and grow people. She is known as a highly sought-after transformational leader and executive coach who helps take people from where they are to where they aspire to be. As a dynamic speaker and strategic thought partner, Fitzgerald has presented keynote speeches and workshops in more than



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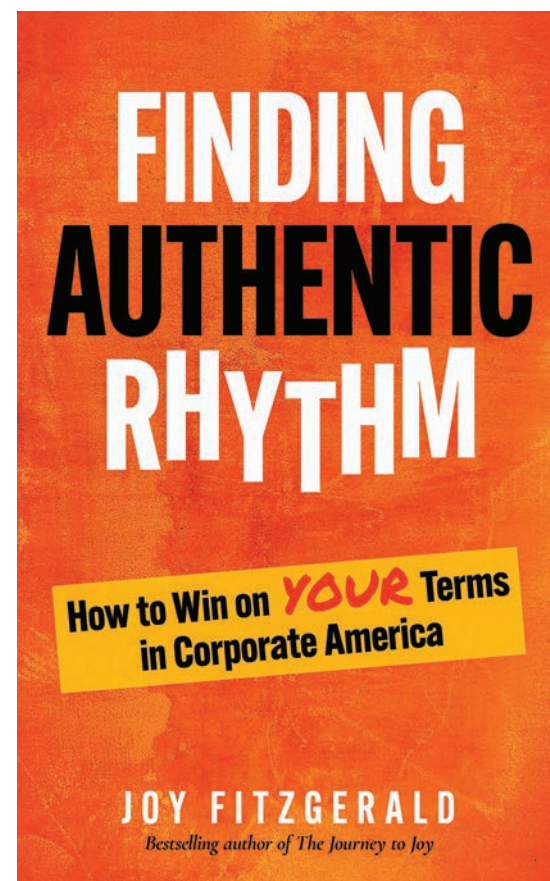
20 countries and five continents. She has more than 25 years of leadership experience working across business sectors, for both profit and nonprofit organizations in various industries. She has served on boards for several organizations and was named by Diversity Journal as a "Woman Worth Watching," by Healthcare Businesswomen's Association as a "Rising Star," and by Black Enterprise as a Top Executive in Corporate Diversity. A global leader in talent management, as well as diversity and inclusion, Fitzgerald has dedicated her career to improving the lives of individuals, one person at

a time. She seeks to create a world in which all people are treated with dignity and respect, and works tirelessly to champion inclusion by creating safe spaces for brave conversations on topics of injustice and inequities. Fitzgerald currently serves as the SVP, Chief DE&I Officer for UnitedHealth Group, where she partners with Human Resources and business leaders to support the company's efforts to attract and develop talent, build future leaders at all levels, and improve diversity and inclusion across the company. She earned a bachelor's degree

in organizational development and a master's degree in strategic leadership from the University of Memphis.

### What excites you about working in healthcare?

Several years ago, I lost my best friend, my sister, to cancer. The healthcare system failed her, and they failed my family. For the last ten years, I've worked in healthcare because it allows me to connect my purpose and my career. In some small way, every day, I have the gift of contributing to a mission that is much bigger than me. I work in



the healthcare industry because I want to make life better for people all around the world. That's the work I want to do for a lifetime.

**How do you define the role of a Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer and how critical is it for the role to be engaged in business strategy?**

A Chief, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer is responsible for creating the strategic

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framework, programs, processes, and initiatives to effectively integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into every aspect of the business. Their role is to empower a culture where everyone experiences feeling welcomed, valued, respected and heard. They are responsible for developing relationships and business insights to grow the business and create innovation solutions.

**What interested you in writing the book, *Finding Authentic Rhythm: How to Win on YOUR Terms in Corporate America*, and what are the key messages you want to convey in the book?**

Writing is one of the ways in which I express my life's purpose – to speak joy into the lives of others. As early as I can remember, I've always wanted to write a book. It has been a lifelong goal and dream. In *Finding Authentic Rhythm: How to Win on YOUR Terms in Corporate America*, I want each reader to feel inspired and encouraged by my journey as I struggled to be successful without compromising the very essence of who I am. Truth moment: I did compromise pieces and parts of myself for the sake of success. I feared that being me was too much, too bold, too authentic, and not safe. I had to do the work to find my

authentic rhythm. *Finding Authentic Rhythm* will share principles, tools, and methodologies I have created throughout my career and experience to help others navigate and thrive.

When you find your rhythm, it becomes infectious to others. In fact, you give others permission to be authentic when they see you confidently and unapologetically living out your purpose without fear or compromise. You will walk and operate in a stride of confidence that will signal to others – I am taking my rightful place in corporate America. Your pace and cadence of how you live will show others how to live and thrive. You will restore hope in others that they too can be exactly who the universe designed them to be.

**What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers?**

I want to see young people win and thrive. I hope to share lessons that I wish I had known much earlier in life. I encourage young professionals to first and foremost engage in the work to know your purpose. You cannot live in authenticity without knowing why you exist and what you can contribute to this gift called life. Being true to oneself is being open and honest about your

feelings, values, and desires. It also entails openly sharing your emotions with others, enabling your truth to radiate from you into the world.

Second, stop delaying your goals due to fear. Start by confronting your anxieties. Everyone occasionally struggles with fear. Practice tackling some of your fears that are brought on by inexperience or uncomfortability. Let your fear propel you forward versus keeping you stuck.

Third, surround yourself with positive people. Whatever your identity, the people you associate with reveal a lot about you. You can be lifted or brought down by the friends you choose. Select friends who are upbeat, ambitious, and encouraging. These are the individuals who will aid in your success. Have supportive friends and be a supportive friend also.

Lastly, stay passionate. One of the best ways to stay motivated is to be passionate about your work. As a result, if you are passionate about what you do, you are more likely to succeed because you will be able to maintain your motivation. You will have an optimistic outlook when you are passionate about your work. You'll practice more. You'll strive to perform better. You won't give up, and your resolve will be greater. ●

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