



## Episode 19: RUN FOR OFFICE

This is the *Become an Unstoppable Woman* podcast with Lindsay Preston Episode 19, Run For Office.

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Welcome to the *Become an Unstoppable Woman* podcast, the show for goal-getting, fear-facing women for kicking ass by creating change. I'm your host, Lindsay Preston. I'm a wife, mom of two, and a multi-certified life coach to women all over the world. I've lived through enough in life to know that easier doesn't always equate to better. We can't fear the fire, we must learn to become it. On this show, I'll teach you how to do just that. Join me as I challenge you to become even more of the strong, resilient, and powerful woman you were meant to be. Let's do this.

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Hey there, Miss unstoppable woman. Thanks for tuning in to this week's episode. I am so excited to share this episode with you today. I swear I say that every time, but today we're talking about running for a political office. Regardless of what party you fall in, I want more women running for office. To be honest, running for office has always been something that I have dreamed about as well and thought, "Man, one day, I may do this," and I happen to meet a woman named Megan Bedera just casually networking in Dallas, because that's where I am if you didn't know and she reached out to me one day and said, "Hey, Lindsay, I just want to let you know that I'm starting this program or this company called Women Campaign, so if you know anybody who's interested in running for office, send them my way because I can help them with their campaigns."

I just thought it was this really cool miracle from the universe, the synchronicity, since this has always been a dream of mine, I started talking to make it a little bit more about it, listen to some of the other podcasts interviews she had done. I said, "Megan, I have to have you on the show. I want anybody out there who listens to this show, to have this information, to know that they can go and run for office."

Potentially that Megan could help you because she breaks it down today in a very easy, understandable way. Because to someone like me who doesn't know that much about running for office, it seems very overwhelming. Megan just really makes it understandable,



to allow you to see that this is something feasible. This is something that you could be doing and I know many times we just see these big elections. Like right now we have the President's election coming up here in 2020 in the States, but all these little local offices that we could be running for and making decisions and impact, and Megan really breaks it down again in such an amazing way.

There are things she said in this interview that I will never, ever forget, because she's just allowed me to understand running for office and our government in a way that I've never really thought about before.

I hope this episode is something that will help you regardless of if you're thinking of running for office because this just is a great one to listen to become a better human to be honest, especially if you're here in the US. Got to start to understand our government more, we need to be informed we need to know what's going on. I've been somebody who was in a very political family, meaning we just like to vote and my parents are very, very passionate about the party they're in. It's important that we know behind the scenes of stuff too because if you're like me, you're starting to see some of us are getting screwed, and we need to be informed about everything.

My interview with Megan is jam-packed. I won't talk anymore about it so I can just cut right to the interview. I hope you enjoy this interview with Megan and I can't wait to share with you so here it is.

Megan, thank you so much for being on the become an unstoppable woman podcast today. I told the listeners all about you and why I wanted to bring you to the show but I want to hear from your mouth. Tell us what Women Campaign is all about and why you felt the need to create it.

Megan Bedera: Okay, well, thank you so much for having me, Lindsay. You have just been an inspiration and I actually think you were the first person I met when I moved to Dallas so it's nice to get to connect this way. Women Campaign is an outcome of my 10-year career running political campaigns where I feel less than about 10% of the clients I had over the years were women.

Maybe it was just all the news, everything that's going on in the world right now, but just something tugging on my heartstrings is that this is a place where it's not just that I can give back, it's a place where I need to give back because we need more women in the conversation at every level of government. A lot of times there's a lot of talks about getting women in Congress, and that's great, but we're not talking about how we can get



more women involved starting at school board or local government and helping them climb up to those federal levels.

I set out and I recruited a couple of other girlfriends in the industry, to put together a training program that's completely online and take it, whether they live in big cities, small cities, if they're running for school board or Congress, to really get them ready to go and start thinking about running for office, or at the very least helping the other women in their lives running for office.

Lindsay: Wow. Meg, when I hear there is you saw a lot of women who aren't running and I saw a stat on your website that said, "Although women are 50% of the population, only 25% are elected officials." Why has it been that other than just the patriarchy in general? Why is it that women are just now stepping up you think?

Megan: There's a lot of theory and research on that going around right now but the prevailing theory is that-- and it's actually even consistent with women beyond politics, women in the workplace, women in other areas, but they're not often in the room where it happens to quote Hamilton, but they're not often in the circles or in the groups, the powers that be saying, "Hey, we should recruit Jane to run for office." "No, no, because Joe's here, he's in the room." It's more about getting the idea of women running for office out there, as well as encouraging women to put their names forward to be recruiting supporters and advocates just like the popular movement right now is for women to be doing that in the workplace.

They also need to be doing that in the community and public arena and I think that's where we're starting to see the shift, we're starting to see women say, "Hey, I don't understand why, for example, in Congress, we're voting on a women's issue, just pick one but three out of every four votes cast about a woman's issue are cast by men." I want to start having a conversation about that, which then leads into a bigger conversation about recruiting those women to run for office and to support the other women who are putting their names out there.

Lindsay: Yes, absolutely. What do you think will open up as we have more women in office? What's your vision that you see there?

Megan: That is an interesting and a really good and deep question. For me, I'm looking for more cooperation, more discourse in politics. I certainly believe we're at a horrible time in our country's history, I guess this is not the first time, but where we have so much partisan fighting, and it's become more about the characteristics that define you and less about the



issues that are impacting regular, everyday American. I personally believe that by bringing more women into a conversation, we're going to have a conversation, instead of just shutting it down or yelling at each other or having the debate through the media. There's been some stories and statistics of some of the women trailblazers, when they've gone to Congress have managed to do great things, because they sit down with other women and they have a conversation and they look for places of agreement, not places of disagreement.

Lindsay: Great relationship-building overall, regardless of the party and beliefs is what I hear there.

Megan: Yes, absolutely.

Lindsay: Okay, you mentioned it earlier, Megan, but I want to go back to it and you didn't say it directly, but you have a women campaign school, right?

Megan: Yes.

Lindsay: Okay, tell us about that and what it does.

Megan: Where my heart was, I had just recently moved to Dallas and has left a lot of my network behind. I still run campaigns at both in my hometown and my new hometown in Dallas. What occurred to me is that so many women are finding their support network online, and so many of the current training programs are either guest speakers coming into their community or you having to leave your community and go somewhere else and that often comes with a huge expense. What we're doing at Women Campaign that really sets us apart from the other group is we're creating a completely online training program with modules ranging from what you can be doing now, before you're just thinking about, maybe you want to run for office all the way up to how you set up your campaign, and that can be done on your nights, weekends, that can be done at that time, and that can be done anywhere across the country and significantly lowering that overhead costs.

The other thing is through that we're creating groups of women going through the program. Because sometimes especially in politics, it can feel very negative. It can just feel like you're always under attack. You got your primaries and then your generals. Sometimes it's nice to hear from other women, even if they're in other sides of the country, maybe even different political parties, but we're all fighting the same battles to try to represent our communities and the issues that we believe in. We're building more of a community as well as that training program to get you started.



Lindsay: That's awesome. Megan, you and I have briefly chatted about this, but I've always had this side inkling desire to run for office at some point, but it just seems so overwhelming and there's so much potentially involved in that. Can you break us down- and I know there's so many different offices out there that involve very different things, but can you just give us like an overall gist of what would be involved if we were to run for some probably local office?

Megan: Absolutely. That's great, and that's what I love about your heart and wanting to give back in those ways, but what Women Campaign loves is that you're thinking about it now, and you're starting to put those pieces together now. The basic structure of your campaign is you got to decide that you are running. I will ask my candidates, "Are you in?" Because that really does change your view as we start setting things up.

Then the next question I'm going to ask you is, why are you running? What issues are important to you? As you're thinking about running for office, I would challenge you to really be internalizing the things that get you fired up. Whether that be you see a problem at your child's school, or it could be as simple as a pothole that you can't get the government to fix. But having that core reasoning on why you want to run, because without that, you're going to struggle to keep your own motivation up to do the hard work. Because then once we get into our campaign season, we get to file to run for office, being it we're looking at- we have got to call these donors and those donors are going to ask you why you're running and what you're going to do.

We're knocking on doors, we're talking to voters, because at the end of the day, these are the people you're running to represent. We're going to be out there talking to them and making sure that what is important to them is reflected in your messaging and your goals when you're elected. Then really we're going to bring it all together and get your advertising campaign together. That your advertising campaign is going to scale up and down based on the size of that office, but whether you're running for dog catcher, we're still going to be talking about we've got to have a vehicle for getting that message out. That's a really quick overview, the basic pieces of your campaign.

Lindsay: Wow. Exciting, Megan. It seems more exciting when you say it [laughs]

[laughter]

Because otherwise it looks overwhelming and seems scary.



Megan: It does. I am certainly not saying that everybody has to hire someone to run their campaign. I'm not saying that you have to be professional or fit inside a certain box, but one of the things, when I first got into the industry and I did it right out of college, is there was a lot of pushback. There was a lot of pushback that I was too young. There was even push back that I was a girl, but not as vocal.

Mostly there was pushback that I was upsetting the status quo. But in my personal opinion is that if you Lindsay are going to put your yourself out there and run for office and you want to ask someone how to do it, that should be allowed. That should be encouraged.

I hope I'm not in the minority, but I think in our political discourse, it might seem like it, but primaries are actually really good things because they require you to talk, to reconnect with those voters and not just take them for granted. The fact that you can get professional campaigns help who can point you in the right direction, make sure you're talking to the right voters and help you put the pieces together makes it manageable.

Not every race is going to have that budget. That's where Women Campaign comes in, is that my goal is twofold. If you're running a small race school board, you're not going to have that budget to hire a professional until one, you get the training program to know all the pieces, two, you get a support network of other women also running for office. For those who are able to hire that help or are running for a higher office, my goal is that you have already done running for office 101.

You're able to hit the ground running when you hire your team. You've already answered that question of why am I running or what's important to me or how I set up my campaign. Absolutely our goal here is to make this manageable. I think funny enough, going back to our first question it's one of the reasons that keeps women out of politics, is that it feels overwhelming.

Lindsay: Yes. Because the question that always goes through my mind is how much time and money is involved, because I am a mother, I have obviously a business, what do I need to do in order to add this to my plate of-- Many women already feel like their plate is already so full, and yet we want to be in those spaces and at those tables and in those meetings where we can help make decisions, Megan, but it just seems too much. With that said, can you give us a ballpark of what time and money could be involved for say just a local community office?

Megan: It's varies not just at levels of office, but even at different communities. Is that some communities, it is actually by law, it's a paid or a full-time or a part-time job.



Whereas other communities, it is very clearly a volunteer or do it as you can job. Really there isn't a blanket answer for that.

What I would, I guess, remind you, is that right now our political discourse is really shaped by a few key groups, is you get your political actors, but your career politicians, just putting it that bluntly, is either their finances for whatever reason, being in office, running for office, that is a career for them. You get your folks who are retired from a lot of different industries, then you get your folks who are your working professionals.

Each of those groups are giving it a different amount of their time, but it makes it a whole lot easier for certain groups to have more representation because their representatives have more time.

As for working mother, to give that time accordingly, is we're really looking at a part-time nights and weekends job for the most part running for local government. That being said, it's a couple days a week and usually a few hours at a time. A lot of people they find it completely manageable. The first year is overwhelming. It always is. But then you get into that groove. I think going back when you're running for office thinking about what those priorities are, what do you want to accomplish, what's important to you, that's really going to dictate how involved in it which areas and how much time they take once you're elected. But getting to elected what I will tell you that, that election year, especially that first election year is there's a lot of work to do.

But I think the more people you can build up around you, the greater support network you have through your family, your friends, your paid support, your volunteer support, the more of a circle you can build up around you, the more manageable it is.

Lindsay: Absolutely. Megan, next question. If somebody is interested in running, how far out should they start preparing ideally before they actually go out and run and have a political campaign?

Megan: Absolutely. That's a really interesting question because the first step of running for office is thinking about running for office, and you can't do that too early. It's years in advance. You can be thinking about, "When I run for office, I want it to look like this." For me right now, one of my big passions, I keep hearing all these new stories about kids, lunch lines that kids being sent away because their money for their school lunches is negative or the schools that have these huge unpaid debt. The fact that we're making families, kids decide, at elementary school age, what they're having for lunch means they're not learning. For me, that is one of those core principles I care about today that I





want to do into the future if I was ever to run for office. There's no point too early to start thinking about it. But when you want to start putting the pieces together, I say about 18 months out from the election is when we need to be talking to a lot of the ways that the powers that be, and so just getting a lay of the land, we're not asking for permission, we're getting a lay of the land.

What we need to know is are we running against somebody who's already in the seat? Are we running against an open seat? Is a group that we want to represent, wanting to challenge the status quo? But starting to get that information so we know what we're up against. Your campaign is not really going to start in earnest at more of a local level for about 12 months out from election day.

Actually, where I'm looking to the fall of 2019, we're going to start seeing those balloons being floated for our candidates who are going to be running in 2020. In most communities, most governments, and this varies and every single one of them, you have a filing period. For a lot of the candidates who are going to be on the ballot November, 2020, we're going to see them filing to run for office, but actually going down and signing up in the springtime, usually around March. That's when things get kicked into high gear. That is a time when people do decide to run. It's not too late to decide to run in March. We just may have to run a little bit faster to get organized so that we're prepared for when those primaries and generals come up.

Lindsay: Yes, so 18 months. That's a good little snippet there. Next question for you, Megan, I feel like I'm just rapid firing all these questions at you.

Megan: That's okay.

Lindsay: Who do you think are great candidates to run for office?

Megan: Well, that is probably a two-part question, is that we have the candidates who are great on paper, but the funny thing is the candidates who are good on paper don't always get elected. Those are the candidates who may have the time, they may have the money, they may have the network, but they may not always have the passion. When we're looking for candidates, when I'm looking for candidates, I want them to come and talk to me and we're going to have a conversation about the community that you want to represent. That doesn't necessarily have to mean that your street and we talk about all the crosswalks and potholes and other issues. If I've worked in a community where they have a perpetual flood that we're dealing with.





But that could also be that we're talking about something more structural of whether that be government priorities and that we feel very strongly about a service being provided or in many cases, a particular tax going up. I probably don't want to go into a huge-- a lot of conversation be philosophical on taxes, but when an individual community has either a need or their elected body perceives a need, you might see an unproportional tax come up. Those can be motivating factors, and that's why I keep coming back to this, why are you running and what do you want to do as part of either running or being elected?

I want some passion. Then to your point earlier is we are going to have to have some hard conversations about time and money because if we don't have money, we need more time, but if we have lots of time available, we can do it with a lot less fundraised money. Really, I think it's just a passion for public service and wanting to get out there and do something.

It actually reminds me as I'm explaining this and drawing this out in my head is there was a story going around recently about draw a picture of a leader, and predominantly people were drawing men as that stick character leader, and trying to draw this picture in my head of I think women are superwomen and juggle so many things, but it's hard to draw a picture that encompasses everything that is an ideal candidate. It's really bring who you are, bring what you have, and let's get to work, and that passion is going to be what carries you forward.

Lindsay: Yes. I completely agree. Even stuff I do with my clients when they start to work with me, I always want to know what's the why, what's the why. Because that, like you said, carries the motivation through this because there's going to be ups and downs. I can imagine it's going to be hard. It's going to push you, but that was one of the reasons I wanted to bring you on Megan too.

I think sometimes we look at things and we just want the end result of getting the office or doing those things, but I can imagine just running for office, yes, it's going to be a time and money investment per se, but the amount of things you could gain from that is huge on a personal level. Would you agree, Megan?

Megan: Absolutely. I will say even running for office, it opens your eyes and your horizon. You get to meet so many people, whether they are your neighbors or other community leaders that you're getting to talk to. Every candidate, win or lose, have always said that running for their office has changed their life, changed their world for the better, and really helps them be better and more understanding, more supportive when they look at other people who are on TV trying to change public policy or even their neighbors who are



struggling and they may not have seen it before the election and they certainly may not have understood it before the election.

Lindsay: Yes. Next question for you, Megan, because these are things that come up in my head and I'm sure other people it comes up in their head is, we've talked a lot about local office today because that's could be a great starting point of going to our local communities and getting elected there, but does it really make a difference in the big scheme of things? Because we even see on a national level, we elect these officials and just very few things seem to get done. If that's happening on a national level what's the point and can we make changes on our local communities?

Megan: Absolutely. 110% absolutely. I'd actually even challenge you to think of a pendulum and think at the very bottom of that pendulum you get big swings, but as you get closer to the top of it, it moves very little. That's what you actually see in your elected office, and why we talk so much about local government is you have so much opportunity to make a change at your local level, understanding that as you move up to the federal level, we don't want our federal government to be moving on a whim. We want our federal government to be a little bit more deliberative, and a little bit more understanding and representative of an entire country.

It's okay our federal government moves a little slower than I think we'd all like, but when we think about things we can do today, we can see an impact, absolutely you can see it at your local government. In the course of weeks, by working with your local government, whether this be elected or just as simply a motivated woman who wants to go get something done, within the course of weeks, you can go get a crosswalk put in, you can get a pothole fixed, you can present grants to government bodies and make sure that they know places where there is a need.

There's a huge amount of action that can take place I say at every level of government, but you can really see it and feel it at your local government. But as you take harder and harder issues, especially issues that are more emotional, you're going to see slower progress because our government is designed to be deliberative when it comes to big structural changes.

Lindsay: Yes, man, I love that analogy of the pendulum. I'm always going to remember that now. That's great. That's so great. Megan, what I view you as is you're almost like a coach for somebody running for office in a lot of ways, but do you view yourself that way?



Megan: Absolutely. It really is a two-part role, and I think as you get into your bigger campaigns, you have multiple people filling the roles. But yes, in a lot of ways, your coach, your campaign consultant is your first cheerleader. They're the ones powering you up. They're the ones giving you the lay of the land. But as your campaign goes on, I also then take on more of what I'll call a back office or back to support where I'm helping to run the logistics of a campaign, whether that be the financial side of it or we talked a little earlier about the advertising side of it.

For me, when I think about my political candidates, sometimes our political campaign budget is larger than your household budget and that can be really overwhelming, especially when it's fundraised money. It's not money that belongs to you. I believe it's a little more stressful if it is money that belongs to you. But we're talking about setting up mini businesses, but businesses that are designed to be set up and put on a shelf in 18 months. Oftentimes in addition to being that coach, I'm also your business advisor. I also helping you navigate those business waters, especially if those are places you've never been before, you've never bought advertising or managed a budget of \$100,000.

Lindsay: Yes. That's so great, Megan, that you're doing this. I have to go back. You talked about a little bit of why you wanted to start Women Campaign because you just didn't see enough women running for office, correct?

Megan: Yes.

Lindsay: Give us a little bit more. What is the deep passion behind you wanting to see women in office, I just have to know.

Megan: My journey in politics started in co-- I guess it started in the fact I came from a voting family and we took our political involvement very seriously. I don't like a political involvement. I really do mean voting in elections because voting is your voice. That turned into my passion for politics when I was in college, and I actually was studying political science.

I really, right out of college, jumped in. It was at a interesting time in politics. It's Barrack Obama, first candidate to use social media and website. A lot of those candidates they didn't know how to do it. I was ideal supporter being fresh out of college, knowing how to use those technologies. Really, the motivation at that point was that I never felt led to run for office at that point. I never envisioned myself running for office. What I did realize is that the people supporting candidates or elected officials, whether that be government staff, that be lobbyists, that be campaign advisors, is we have a very special ability to



influence and share our passion and goals at a very broad level. At that point, I had a lot of passion about agriculture, horses, I had sheep growing up. I felt like every elected official needed to understand what that meant.

But if I was just one elected person I wouldn't be able to get that message out there. By working for candidates, every candidate could understand the rural poor part of their district at that point. But Fast Forward 10 years is that I really like as I think back on it, for a good part of my career, I was the only woman running races in my state, let alone my community.

That caused women to gravitate towards me in a lot of ways. It also caused me to have to spend a lot of time giving advice on things like haircut, or how to juggle your life, how to plan your donor meetings around dropping kids off at school. I found that I was often understanding of that's your life, I'm not going to tell you make your kids walk to school if that's not what they're used to because this campaign is so important, which is a lot of my male counterparts are, is that they'll give very blunt, very harsh advice, because they don't think about that. They don't think about the safety net that they have, that their wife's out there making sure that the kids are fine. I found that more and more women were coming to me.

I think it all came to a head, came to a point earlier this year, but we in the political industry have been riding the rapids of gender equality and how women are treated in the political space. I got to the point where I just was tired of being the only woman in the room. I think so many women can understand that based on different industries and the C suite. There's so much talk about that going on in the media right now. Campaigns are no different. Whether it be professionally, or as the candidate, is really got tired of being the only woman in the room and feeling like it's always a competition to-- It's a lot of men comparing themselves.

I feel like a lot of times that when you're in the industry and you're just comparing yourself or wanting to have the bigger, better client or make more money, that passion gets lost. We start turning out candidates that model where the consultants are, where the professionals are. I'm sorry, this is a long, rumbly answer, but I just was tired of politics as usual as cliché as that is, and that's a talking point I've used for years with clients, but I as a professional in the industry, was tired of politics as usual and said, "You know what, I want to be a change.

I want to make that change that I've been talking about for years. Let's do this thing. Let's build this resource. Let's see what happens. Let's make the knowledge available outside of



the traditional methods. Outside of the traditional people who are giving those messages, and even outside of the traditional communities. The communities that maybe are bigger, or for whatever reason, have brought in more political influence. Let's give that ability out to even school board and see what women can do with those tools."

Lindsay: Yes, Megan, I just love what you're doing. I love that you're doing this and making a difference. Thank you so much for being on the show today. Where can everybody go to find you?

Megan: Before I say where you can go to find me, I do want to say is that, Lindsay, people like you who are empowering people like me to get this done is this passion, these messages, these channels I'm using are a reflection of the great women like you who are out there talking about what women can do. I thank you for everything you're doing. Women Campaign you can find us online, [www.womencampaign.com](http://www.womencampaign.com). We are on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn. We have our training program officially launching in the fall. We are back to school season. We can't wait to see what we can do to empower and get this next round of women ready to run for office, whether it's election 2020 or beyond.

Lindsay: Thank you, Megan.

Megan: Thanks, Lindsay.

Lindsay: That's my interview with Megan Bedera of Women Campaign. I hope you enjoyed it. I hope you go contact her if this is something you're desiring to go do for yourself is to run for office. Let us know. I would love to know if this interview gave you that spark to go and run, because I would love to support you, again, regardless of if we agree on beliefs or not.

I have to just ask, if you love the show, and you want to see more interview guests like this one, please go leave a review especially if you listen on Apple podcasts, the more reviews that I have the bigger interview guests that I can get because whenever I get asked to do a podcast interview, that's the first thing I'm looking for. How many reviews does this podcast have? Want to see how engaged their audience is. Please go leave that review. I'd be so appreciative. Otherwise, I'll see you back here on November 1st. Can you believe it? November is here, and for the next episode a solo episode I'm not sure what I'm going to talk about yet. I've got a couple ideas. Just join me back there. We'll be talking about some great mindset stuff. Until next time, my friends. You are only as unstoppable as you believe you can be so believe in yourself. You got this.