

"I help women leaders create the life they dream of by developing inner confidence, courage, and strategies for best decisions and next steps for new opportunities in six months."  
Dina Readinger, MBA, CEO, Leadership Coach

## CASE STUDY: A DIAGNOSTIC THINKING SUCCESS STORY

Leslie McAlister joined Diagnostic Thinking looking to find a strategic plan for getting what she wanted and deserved from her career. Read her inspiring story about how she jumped two levels from Director to VP finance in two years.

You can also view Dina's interview with Leslie on [YouTube](#)



### Dina

Hello, everyone wanted to welcome you to an interview with a very important guest that I have. Her name is Leslie McAllister, and she's been a Diagnostic thinking member and she will share a little bit about her experiences, what caused her to really think about how to make sure that she got what she needed and what she deserved out of her career. So welcome, Leslie. It's great to have you. Leslie is currently in Germany. So talk to us a little bit about what you were looking for before diagnostic thinking and what's transpired that put you in this amazing new location. So tell us a little bit about you and your experience



### Leslie

I have worked for the global company, um, in the finance area now for, um, going on 16 years and I, um, am most excited about this opportunity for an international experience because of the, um, opportunity to grow my networks within the company and to get the exposure to the senior level leadership because of their location tends to be here in Germany. And so looking forward to working on, um, different projects that are challenging, um, both from a strategic standpoint, um, working with strategic projects that progress our business, as well as, um, learning more operationally about how our company works from the headquarters.

[Continue Reading the Transcript of the Conversation](#)

## CASE STUDY: Leslie McAlister's DIAGNOSTIC THINKING SUCCESS STORY

**Dina**

That's pretty amazing, and how long have you been in Germany?

**Leslie** ([01:38](#))

So I have been here for three months now. Um, landed in the summertime and the heat and then now getting to enjoy autumn.

**Dina** ([01:48](#))

That's so awesome. And when I first met you Leslie, it was through connection that I had in the diagnostic thinking group that's had currently been together for almost four years at that point in time. Where were you in your career before you enter diagnostic thinking and why would you want to enter the diagnostic thinking groups?

**Leslie** ([02:08](#))

Yeah, so, um, we have a mutual friend. She was a neighbor, and we were having one of those, uh, fence conversations where we're playing in my yard and her kids were playing in her yard and just having a conversation about how work was going. And I was at a place where I was really frustrated, um, with our leadership and with my development in terms of progress within the company. And, um, he having a seat at the table, having my voice heard, having my opinions valued, um, and talking through my frustrations with, um, our friend, she recommended checking out this group as a way of taking ownership of my own development. So before joining this group, I had gotten all my professional development since college by the company. So I've been with the same company for 16 years and, um, everything that I've learned or developed in has been inside the company.

And so we chatted about the fact, it was probably time for me to make networks outside of the company and to really push myself, um, externally as well. And so, um, with her help, but we met, um, at a Starbucks with a little Starbucks and had the first conversation and I went directly from our meeting, um, very energized about the possibilities of what the group is about and went into my boss's office and laid the piece of paper down on the table and said, would you guys support my development? And here's the way, um, here's what I think I can develop by joining this group and why I think it's good. Um, for me as a female leader in this organization, and this is a development that we don't have internally at our company. And so how can I, I can't get it inside. So I have to go outside. Would you be supportive of that? And they were, they were very supportive. It went up to our head and HR and they said had no problems, um, supporting me in joining this group so that I was very thankful for.

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**Dina** ([04:13](#))

So back to that, asking for what you want, you were pretty bold, right? You're like we don't have it. You stated you have to give it to me because you don't have it in our company. A lot of women walk away from that sometimes, really asking for what you want. What would you say to a woman who really wants development is getting a little bit of pushback internally and saying, I don't know, I'm not going to support you in that. What would you say to her?

**Leslie** ([04:38](#))

I think it's really pushing to understand why, why is it not being supportive, um, from a company perspective, do they not see you growing into that type of a leader? Do they think that, um, the company provides the same training, but in a different avenue, um, like really, truly understanding and listening to the why's. Um, and do they make sense? And what I see on from my internal in the side of the company perspective is that sometimes there, there could be a misalignment between how much opportunity of growth you individually have versus what your company thinks you have. Um, there could be some misalignment, but a lot of times it's just that you're not asking for it, or you're not putting yourself out there in a very direct way and saying, this is what I want. Do you see the same thing and going after it? So it's really is having that conversation

**Dina** ([05:33](#))

Yes, having the confidence and asking for it. Right? So tell me a little bit of background about going back to where you were, where was the aha moment when you're in a diagnostic thinking group? And you're like, okay, I got it. I got the plan.

**Leslie** ([05:51](#))

Yeah. So I would say that the first few sessions I was just sitting, I was observing, I did participate, um, in the sessions, but it didn't, it wasn't until you did me that I truly bought into, um, the program. And so, you know, I remember that day super, clearly sitting in that conference room and having the conversation where I'm going through my problem. And I don't know if you remember, but I was on the verge of like, I need to quit. I need to leave the company. Um, I need to go do something else with my life. And I don't know what that is, but it's, it's hindering my personal life with my family, my kids, my husband, and it's hurting me professionally. And, you know, I walked out of that conference room, took the weekend to really think about it. And then it was again, I went into my boss's office and I said, okay, I'm giving you a heads up.

But I think that, I don't think the company has what I need in terms of a future. And I think that this is my heads up, but I'm probably going to start looking for another job and it really opened the door to, okay, what do you really want? What do you want in terms of development? And then the other piece of guidance was to set a timeline associated with that. And I was able to do that right off the bat that very next Monday, um, with my boss and say, okay, you know, six months, you got six months to really make something happen. And in that six months, I'm refreshing my resume. I'm making connections and I'm, I'm working towards it. So let's work together. And, you know, thankfully I do have a really great boss. I actually have the same boss that I had then even still good. Um, and so his ability to, to make things happen, I definitely admire because I know in a corporate world, it is very hard, um, to make these things happen. But when you have someone who does believe in you, um, and wants you to be

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there and you have, you know, HR and you have your leadership teams supporting you, then then things can happen. Um, and they were able to fulfill everything that I wanted to happen.

**Dina (08:06)**

That's so cool. And just the thought of there's so many times we, as women get kind of caught up in that 5% of our conscious thinking, right? Most of our opportunities are resting in the subconscious or the unconscious, right? What do we need to do to move that forward? Talk a little bit about the safety of a diagnostic thinking group, because being on the hot seat, when you talked about doing it, that's what that means. So everybody knows that's what she means by that. Somebody sets into the seat where we actually worked through a critical issue for, for the person that's really a very personal issue for them. And we work together as a group. So talk a little bit about why that was so powerful for you and how psychological safety played out in this group.

**Leslie (08:55)**

Yeah, I think having the three or four sessions in advance, so I attended what three or four sessions where we had other people in the hot seat and had other conversations and whole afternoons to really get to know the other women in the group. Um, and it was interesting because this was even before COVID and so some people were virtual, some people were in the room, um, but really got to know the details of their life. Like what's going on at what, what are you do? We do, um, spiritual,

**Dina (09:29)**

We do family and career.

**Leslie (09:32)**

Work. Yeah. And so you get to hear the different aspects of the people's life, not just their professional aspects. Um, and you share in their joys, whether they're having a baby or whether they're, um, you know, leaving their job, um, their joys, their sorrows, all of that. And you become a part of, of their life. Even though it's four hours, once a month, it's still is very powerful time and it stays with the group. And I think that's really important. And I never, I did personally know somebody in the group. Um, and so that created a different dynamic that I don't think you guys normally operate in, but even then it still felt very safe. Like what we shared in that environment was, was stayed in that environment. Um, and because there was no one else from my company, I felt very open and, and able to say, you know, what truly was going on from my perspective, what was going on.

And what I enjoyed the most about being in the hot seat was I think the, we, we put me in the hot seat because of my family life. And I rated myself very low from a spiritual and a family life. And once we dove into it, it was work that was driving that. And yes, and when I thought about it in the moment, it, that wasn't clearly evident for me. And so having the bone, being able to be vulnerable about like what was going on between me and my husband and what was going on between me and my kids to then turn around and say, okay, work is driving that, that behavior. Right. So it was just super powerful.

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### Dina (11:10)

Yes, we find that a lot. Um, I started the diagnostic thinking groups in 2016, and I want to say 90% of the issues of the hot seat with it's a family issue, or it's a, it's a business issue. It's always has a family issue involved. Right. There's always something there. We're all working all around the clock just to make sure that we're putting food on the table and making sure our families are moving, but at the same time, you don't want to lose your family in the process. You've got to make sure that the base is there, and it's it's hard. It's hard to talk about a lot of those things. And most people are not sure if they want to get on the hot seat, yet other do this because we care for each other.

Right. We really love each other. We to see people to be successful. So there's no ill intent. No one is there to judge or shame or fix you because you walk out of deciding what is it that you're going to do? So let's talk about when you're at the end of the session. So we finished it, we know we solved the right problem. Finding the right problem to solve, which is a huge part of the front end of this process. Once we figure that piece out, then we'd go through some strategies. Um, tell me a little bit about, the strategies that you were offered and then which one you chose. Cause that's a big deal too. We're not telling people what to do. There's a choice that's best for you. So talk a little bit about how that felt when you're done with being on the hot seat.

### Leslie (12:35)

I felt like I had the right language. I was going to say the right tools, but I think it's more about, I was able to put into words what my problem or what my issue was, um, in a very clear and concise way, which I was then able to turn around into a conversation with my husband over a bottle of wine that night. And then the following Monday morning with my boss while it was still fresh while it was all like the words were all still there. And for me personally, just getting those words and getting to the heart of the issue is the problem. That is the problem. And I don't want to bore my boss talking, you know, around all of this stuff. Right. And so the, the ability to sit down with him and say, okay, here's the problem. And here's what I'm facing.

And, and it was about me. It wasn't, you know, your doing this or you're doing that for me, it was okay, here's what's going on with me. And so it wasn't up for discussion with him. It wasn't my judgment versus his judgment. It was very fact-based. And so having those words summarize, like that was truly helpful. And then it allowed for immediate action on their parts. They knew what I wanted. Um, they knew what, you know, if I even go that far as what I was demanding from them as a company and whether or not they could meet it or not. And we talked about during my session also, what could the company do? What could I expect from a company perspective so that we were level-setting by expectations or the expectations at the same time. And so I went into it, not knowing why not. There was no doubt that they could provide what I was asking for if they wanted to. Yes.

### Dina (14:23)

I love that. And how many people around the globe, can you just imagine just kind of being locked up in that place where you can't communicate clearly what you want for either fear or not having clarity about what is it that I want. Right. What is the ask? Right. So I think that's very, very powerful. What's interesting is when you came back to the next session, it was a very much about awakening. It was like almost a relief.

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**Leslie (14:55)**

Yeah, it was. And I think even by the very next month we had answers and I say, we, because I feel like it was a group journey and we did have answers and we had a path forward. And I think by the end of my first year, I was already in a new role and, and had a clear line of sight to what the future would hold and did, I, I now I think I'm two years out, but now I have, within those two years, got every single thing I asked for. And more so, um, so from, from that initial, you know, it's been 18 months, I guess, since that hard conversation with my boss. Um, but it'd be in a part of the group it's been, it's been a whirlwind of the last year, for sure. So

**Dina (15:41)**

Well, I heard you say from the time that you started the diagnostic thinking group, did you got two promotions then, but there were big one too.

**Leslie (15:51)**

They were big ones. Yes. And, and even from a internal perspective, um, that my is still astonished when he's like, just think about the last two years where you came from. And part of, part of that is I was somewhere where I didn't deserve to be. And so I got myself to where I deserve to be. And then the next reach was to where I wanted to be. And so, and, and I'm in a role now, which is a bit of a stretch, which I think is expected, you know, of our high powered leaders to continue to grow. I have to be in a stretch role and I was able to negotiate that for myself. So it has been two really big promotions in the past two years

**Dina (16:32)**

Are huge. What was the period of time from the time you started diagnostic thinking to you got that first one, do you remember that by any chance?

**Leslie (16:41)**

It was, um, when I started diagnostic thinking, I started in may and I w it was in like December. Okay. So, cause I got my, I did my hot seat in October. I did, I really remember this October. And so then it was two months for them to work out the details and to change my role and to, to get that first promotion.

**Dina (17:04)**

Gotcha. And then the second one was how much time after that a year. Okay. So all pretty quick. Right. So that's awesome. And we were all so proud of you and there's so much accountability to it. As you were saying you go from one diagnostic thinking session to the next months session and you have to report out the next month, right. To tell us, what you accomplished. So it's really is an invested journey for everybody.

“...an invested journey for everybody.”

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**Leslie (17:29)**

I do think that's, that's a good point though. If sorry to interrupt. Do you think that that's a really good point because the other piece of it is the group holds you accountable and the group, um, you know, you have a next session coming up and you knew, you took takeaways of like, okay, I'm going to, you said this publicly, I'm gonna do this. And you know, the group there for you, if you're like, okay, I didn't have the courage or I didn't have the time or whatever the reason is, they're definitely there for you. But I found for me those excuses, weren't there. Like I couldn't, I couldn't go in to that next session if I hadn't at least on my part. So the group did their part. Now it's time for me to do my part. So that accountability piece is really important. And it's the same as like stating publicly what your goals are. Yeah.

**Dina (18:15)**

I love that. So the last question I have for you, what would you tell another woman or anyone who's thinking about joining a diagnostic thinking group? What would you tell them?

**Leslie (18:27)**

Yeah, I would say don't hesitate, but to do it, um, I would say that the, the journey it's about the journey. So it's about going in and, um, taking those sessions where you're not in the hot seat and learning from them. And, um, thinking about the process, I think, is it learning about that process is really critical because I took that process that I learned through those 10 to 12 sessions that I set apart of. And I use that now in my everyday life, I use that with my husband. I use that with my kids. I use it with my employees because I do think that it really does teach you a great way to assess issues, um, and to assess your thinking about those issues. Um, so that alone is powerful enough to become a better leader, um, and a better communicator also. So I think those are really important. That's, that's maybe the best reason. And then you have personal growth and development on top of that.

**Dina (19:26)**

And as we always say behind every business decision is a personal decision, right? It's a personal decision to step into the things that kind of make us feel a little bit stuck the most. But, um, we are so proud of you back here in the states, all of us talk about all of our women that have moved on done great things. Um, and I'm super excited for you and your family. Um, and we know that we're going to keep in touch forever. And I want to thank you for being a part of diagnostic thinking and sharing with the world, your story. Cause we couldn't be any more proud of you, Leslie. Thank you. Take care. And I'll talk to you soon. Thank you.

**Leslie (20:03)**

Bye-bye.

**“I'm two years out. Within two years, I made two major career jumps, and I got every single thing I asked for, because of my membership in a Diagnostic Thinking Group.”**

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