

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Episode 34

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Annemarie Cross: You're listening to Women in Leadership podcast episode 34. Welcome to another episode of Women in Leadership. I am your host Annemarie Cross, branding communication strategist also known as the podcasting queen. This podcast empowers you to reach your full potential.

Now are there days where you struggle to inspire and influence yourself let alone your team especially with all of the challenges and demands that you have to face? If you answered yes, you're certainly not alone.

Joining me on today's show is Virginia [*Walker*]. In her three decade career that spent sales, finance and leadership, Virginia has held senior roles and leading organizations ranging from the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Ernst & Young to HP and IBM.

Building on her corporate background, Virginia has undertaken an eclectic journey of self development including a coaching qualification and has gone on to establish her own business transformation journey where she works with leaders and is passionate about helping deliver and learn particularly in the area of large scale transformation programs.

On today's show, Virginia is going to share what you must continue to do to develop yourself as a leader, the importance of understanding others if you want to be influential as well as finding a balance between being a leader who is

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insensitive and a leader who is afraid to hurt other people's feeling. So welcome to the show, Virginia.

Virginia: Thank you, Annemarie. It's a pleasure to be here.

Annemarie: One of the things that we're doing for this particular series is sharing some milestones and successes of our guest so we can celebrate alongside you. Some of the things that you're proud of is developing a team who delivered key elements of a shared services model and then went on to hold senior management roles driving change for their organization. You empowered others to go on and do that, so congratulations.

Virginia: Thank you. It was an absolute thrill.

Annemarie: Yes and particularly too with some the organizations you worked for where certainly well-known in the industry. So couple of other things as well. You led a cross-functional team to launch in a very short timeframe, Albert, a revolutionary payment device and you've written your first book – The Truth About Transformation which is soon to be published. Well done.

Virginia: Thank you. That was a journey in itself, a very special one.

Annemarie: Yes. Tell us when you look back to that journey of writing your book and maybe even some of the other roles that you had, would you do anything differently or would you share something like an insight to your younger self.

Virginia: I, in the last year, discovered the power of meditation. I would certainly recommend it. I know over the years that I had a number of people recommending to me that meditation is a very useful and powerful thing to do.

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Interestingly enough and this maybe something that your listeners would find useful to, it was only when someone said to me I want you to get your phone. I want you to put the timer on for 20 minutes and you will press it and you will meditate like this for 20 minutes every day and I just started doing it.

So all those gentle please were insufficient, a straight order sorted better answer and I have been pleased to say that I've been meditating since then and find it much easier to maintain balance in my life.

Annemarie: I'll have to agree. One of my colleagues and mentors recommended that I do that too, take some quiet time. Haven't quite reached the 20 minute mark but I noticed such a difference and it's incredible what comes up – thoughts, ideas, innovations. Because we're so busy running around with lots of clutter going on mentally and what we're surrounded by that all of this bubbling process and that relaxation just doesn't allow for that thought process.

Virginia: Yes. So I love the phrase – we're always busy doing rather than being. I think exactly to your point if we spend even a few minutes a day just being. You know if you're in a busy workplace and you go to the ladies or the men if there's gentleman listening just take that 2 minutes and just be still. It's amazing that we don't find the time. But if we try there are all sorts of moments that you can do it.

[0:05:00]

Annemarie: I love what you did. You know what. Be intentional. Put it in your calendar and it will get done just like any other task.

Virginia: Just like any other task. Yup. You're very right.

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Annemarie: Let's talk about the first insight that you want to share. What must we continue to do to develop ourselves as leaders?

Virginia: The biggest thing that I've learned over time is that as I grew myself, as I work on the things I wanted to achieve for my team if I look to myself first that was how I got things done. It can be from the simplest things. It can be from the simplest things.

There was a challenge once where nobody turned up to meeting on time. They were members of a board team set out of an employee survey that said look we really don't like this that people don't turn up to meeting on time all the time.

So I said let's start with us. Within two weeks my turned up to every single meeting on time because I was there on time. It was a shock. It was a shock. It's a reminder of be the change that you want to be in the world.

It also extends to much more strategic elements of how you lead a team, how present you are with your team. You know many other things. But just a simple example like turning on time to meetings, sets an example that other says okay if that's the rule around here, that's what we'll do.

Annemarie: Yeah. That is so powerful and so many lessons that are shared and insights that are shared on the show as you've just today can be used across other areas of our life. And as you were sharing that, I remember reading somewhere that husband was having difficulties with the relationships with his wife and he said exactly what you said.

You know what. Rather than complain and continue to really have that conflict, I'm going to be the change and I think every day he did something lovely for his

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wife. All of a sudden I think within a couple of days he noticed that she started reciprocating and before long they were then able to continue working on the relationships.

No matter what's going on whether it'd be in your team, whether it'd be with a staff member, whether it'd be in your relationships be the change, do something, take action first and then it will often be reciprocated by the other parties.

Virginia: I couldn't agree more. It's a little bit shocking, isn't it? Because we often look externally. If you work with what you control and change which is typically yourself, the influence and the result can be extraordinary.

Annemarie: I also think too. When we realized as leaders, I mean the whole word leading. We lead by example which is exactly what you're saying and so often we need to be reminded of that and how often in a workplace or even with your team you might be encouraging your team members to do things a certain way.

Yet if you're not implementing or doing what you're wanting them to do, how often do you people say why should I do it if she's or he's not going to do that?

Virginia: Absolutely right. I absolutely agree. We tend to observe it in others and looking in the mirror is always a good place to start.

Annemarie: Would you say then that if we are seeing, observing actions or inactions in other people a great place to look is okay what am I doing that perhaps is encouraging that even if I'm not going out of my way to purposely encourage that. Look to

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ourselves first and then see what can I do to change my actions, my interactions to be able to be a role model for my team. Have you found that over the years?

Virginia:

Very much so. There's a couple of aspects that I've learned more recently in like going through the coaching program. When see something in others that we don't like or that irritate ourselves, it can be reminding ourselves of ourselves. It can be reminding of someone we don't like or it can be the opposite of what we do.

So understanding that that behavior or action that is done by the other person is triggering us and observing what's going on for ourselves is the first place to go to start to fix it. I can think of an example if somebody is, I particularly don't like selfishness. It's a trigger for me.

I find that when I observed being selfish I get quite, from a body point of view I can feel it. I can feel it irritating me. So accepting that that's how I'm seeing it for that person isn't intending to be selfish, that's how I'm receiving it, is the first step to me then going okay what about I don't see it like that.

[0:10:06]

Annemarie:

Yeah.

Virginia:

What about I just let go and say that other person has got a million things going on for them that I probably have no idea about. So what they're doing is what they're doing. They're not intending anything. It's me that's receiving. That observational role is enormously helpful in them working out how to get that situation or that relationship to work that up.

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Annemarie: I think no matter where we are in the workplace whether you are a leader or you're an aspiring leader, just that insight itself can be so powerful because what you've also done being intentional rather than reacting in the moment.

Let's face it. How many conflicts start by someone reacting in a place where they're feeling very uncomfortable? And then of course it lands not very well with the other person so they tend to react too. Before you know it, you've got this full blown conflict on your hands, don't you?

Virginia: It just escalates. That's exactly right. So if someone can step out of the escalation. You know it only takes one person to step out of an escalation to stop it going to the place that you're talking about. It takes two to fight. So if you're not participating in the conflict, there won't be a conflict.

However, that doesn't mean you don't stand out for yourself. But just observing what's going on for the other person and saying okay can I see things from their perspective. Is there's something I'm missing here and seeking that clarification which is that second point that I spoke about which is can we understand what's going for that other person? Can we ask them?

I had a situation once where I said I'm not really quite clear what I've done that's upset you. But it seems to be quite serious because you seemed to be quite agitated with me. This person said I don't know. I never thought about that before. Yes, you're right. I guess I blame you for this.

We both looked at each other and gashed. Because he hasn't understood that's what he felt. I had no understanding that that's what he felt. But just making that

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inquiry brought it out in the open and the whole thing went back into neutral, went back into a neutral position where we can move forward and say okay that's interesting, a few things have gone on. Now how we got to work together different.

Annemarie: I think one of the things that you've shared in the show notes and I'd love to share that with listeners is what Steven Covey said that seek to understand before you seek to be understood. The example that you're just sharing we can become far more influential with others by understanding them.

Virginia: Yes. Yes. Anybody who's involved in negotiation, anybody who has been involved I very serious negotiation will probably appreciate that this is the most powerful place to negotiate. Because unless you understand what is a value to someone else you can actually give an enormous amount that's a value to you without satisfying their requirements or their needs or their wants. You say you're giving things away but you don't need to. Whereas in fact, what they wanted was possibly something quite small to you. It was an enormous value to them.

Now that happens in big negotiations and it happens in one to one relationships. Therefore understanding before you try to solve things or fix things or address things without fully understanding what would fix them and what would address them, and clinical evidence is not very efficient and it doesn't feel very nice cause it feels very unsatisfying.

So at both levels, both from an empathy level and from an efficiency point of view seeking to understanding before you seek to be understood is just good practice.

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Annemarie: I think asking great open-ended question so that you can be more understanding in what the other person is saying cause something else and I have to point my finger at myself too, we can so often presume something that someone else is thinking or their intention whereas if we had asked an open-ended question, we would have realized that that was not the intention at all. In fact, they were thinking about something far different, not about us and yet we made this big thing because we've assumed incorrectly. Is that something that you find as well?

Virginia: I think you're spot on, Annemarie. We're all very intelligent, experienced people. We got years and years of business experience and leadership experience and life experience and we think we know and maybe we don't and maybe we know a bit and we don't know the whole story, the complete picture. The complete picture can be a lot more helpful. Often is a lot more helpful.

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Annemarie: Absolutely. Ask the person an open-ended question and he was able then to come up with okay, not really but now that you mentioned and that's certainly took the conversation in a far more constructive manner.

Virginia: Yeah. I have a little rule for those conversations which is one I've always talked to my team about which is own your statement. So whatever you say is your statement. There's no accusing. There's no judging. There's no assuming. It's like I feel this. I think this. I sense this. I believe this. The I is important.

Because no one can tell you what you feel or believe or think. They don't have to agree with you. But they can't tell you what to think or feel and neither can you

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with someone else. So if you own your statement, it actually does what you're talking about. It becomes an open-ended statement that allows the other person to respond.

Annemarie: Let's talk about leaders that can go from one extreme to the other. You got a leader who is very direct and almost seems very insensitive, far too direct and then on the opposite extreme you got leaders who don't want to hurt other people's feelings. They never really get to the point. What can we do to achieve more of a balance?

Virginia: I think the starting point is to understand your own particular tendency. Many of us have had technical training of whatever discipline or profession can lean quite heavily on that technical training and try and get points across or use logic to work with people. But people feel and respond and have a whole backdrop to the way that they listen to an argument or a question.

It's important to understand that if your tendency is to be logical then you got to be more careful about listening to other people's feelings and expressions of uncertainty or distrust or concern. If you're someone who is a highly empathic person and you know you are, you know you're scared of hurting people and you don't like hurting people's feeling then that awareness that that's your tendency then you may need to be more structured in order to get a point across or to help someone understand an argument is the starting point.

Because teams and that's who you work with are where your strength lies. So if you understand your tendencies then balancing them out with the people around you and seeking counsel from those that are different to you is going to be a very powerful way to move forward.

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Annemarie: Absolutely and I think again it's all about self awareness, isn't it? Awareness of others. Yeah. Really being aware of that and basing your approach on that. Cause there's going to be some people who are far more open to having a little bit more directness in your conversation and others who do really appreciate some conversation around that rather than just getting straight to the point.

Virginia: Asking people is always a good start.

Annemarie: Yes. That's right.

Virginia: How do learn? How do you like being communicated to? I mean it's such a simple question, isn't it?

Annemarie: Don't assume. Ask.

Virginia: How often do we actually ask?

Annemarie: Exactly again to the previous point. Don't assume. Ask them. I'm sure if we do observe and that's what we said understand others, observe them as leaders. We can soon gauge how best that we can influence our team and the way that they appreciate information being shared to them. So what last word of advice would you have for everyone today?

Virginia: In many ways the summary of some of the things that we've talked about that I think it's important for all of us as leaders to take time to understand our unique set of abilities and passions and talents. Appreciate those of your team and those around you.

If you do that, you can make sure that you work in an environment and that you create an environment that values each of those unique contributions. It means

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people can contribute their best and reinforces for you and your team the value of the diversity all the time.

Annemarie: Yeah. So true. So Virginia, how can people get in contact with you?

Virginia: My website is transformationjourney.com.au. At this moment, it's still undergoing some work subject to the release of my book, The Truth About Transformation which will be out probably in the next 4-6 weeks.

My mobile number is 0413-451-455 if we wish to reach out directly. My email is Virginia@transformationjourney.com.au and I'd be delighted to talk to every leader who is interested in a personal development journey and being the best leader they can be.

[0:20:00]

Annemarie: Fantastic. Thank you so much for coming on the show Virginia and we will put all of those contact details on our show notes so you've got those easy to access annemariemcross.com/podcast34. Thanks again, Virginia.

Virginia: It's an absolute pleasure. Thank you, Annemarie.

Annemarie: As I've done over the last few shows I'm inviting one of my Microsoft brand ambassador, a fellow Microsoft brand ambassadors to share their tech tip and how we can use technology whether it'd be the Microsoft service, an app or process to help us streamline our business.

If you're using a Microsoft Service Pro and have a favorite app for the way that you're using it in your business, let me know and I'll do a shout out on one of our

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shows. Send me an email at podcast@annemariex.com. Anyway, let's dive into today's tip.

Today, we have Megan Iemma Tech Coach HQ with us again today. Hey, Megan.

Megan: Good afternoon.

Annemarie: What tip do you have for us today?

Megan: We are looking at OneNote. I just released a special blog post on how to get back to basic with OneNote. Today, we're talking about recording audio for meetings. Now we know for a fact that our brains can only take probably max three things any one time. So when you're in a meeting, it's really important to be able to take audio with people's permission of course regarding privacy. We can do this in OneNote.

How we do it is we go into OneNote 2016 is a desktop app version and you go to insert, that ribbon at the top. Remember ribbon is just another name for toolbar in the Microsoft world. And you go insert, record audio. The great thing about this is if you would like to add text type or handwrite a small amount of text when you're doing this, what happen is as you go to play back that audio is that it will play back the words as well. So that's really good as a visual prompt not just an audio prompt of where you are from your meeting.

Annemarie: If you're discussing something and you want to make a note like they might be follow up with such and such about this particular topic that particular text will come up at the same time that the discussion is being held. Is that correct?

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Megan: Yes. It's just like playback. You know when you're looking a video, like you fast-forward or rewind and you can see at exact that same point. I called it audio word karaoke because the words come up and light up or play when you go to that playback.

Annemarie: Is there a time limit on the audio file? Anything like that?

Megan: I think that's something I'll need to discuss in a future tech tip.

Annemarie: Okay.

Megan: But like with most audio obviously the bigger the audio the longer the recording and the bigger file of your OneNote. Keep in mind OneNote is an ever ending note or you know with your notebook. So keep it reasonable but yeah. Look it's worth experimenting and we'll put some cheats in to go with the podcast.

Annemarie: Fantastic. All right. So Megan, how can people reach out if they want to know more?

Megan: You can go to www.techcoachhq.com.au. Find me @megsamanda on Twitter, meganaiemma on Instagram or Facebook under Tech Coach HQ.

Annemarie: Before we go just for those of you who networking is a very big part of your day to day activities to build relationships whether it'd be finding key stakeholders or clients in your business, if you're struggling then you need to get access to our free network with confidence checklist, how to network and communicate with confidence to grow your network, your relationship and your business.

There are suggested icebreakers for those of you who struggle to start a meaningful conversation even with strangers. There is a format there on how you

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can create a powerful introduction that will entice people to want to know more about you and your business. As well as how to respond to that question, tell me more about what you do so that you can answer that confidently and create interest in your work.

If you want to get access with the network with confident checklist, all you need to do is go to annemariex.com/networkwithconfidencechecklist.

Now that brings us to the end of another show. I'm sure you've taken a lot of notes to how you become a far more influential leader. Please reach out to Virginia and access her resources and of course grab a copy of her book once it launches.

If this is the first time you are listening to today's show, welcome. It really is a pleasure and an honor that you have spent time listening to us. Why not subscribe to our iTunes which means that we will spend time together every week with another guest expert like we did today with Virginia.

How to do that? Go to annemariex.com/podcastitunes. While you're over there, why not leave a rating and a comment on the show. We always make sure that we're providing you the right content to have you become a far more influential leader in your business or if you're working in corporate for your team as well. Have a fantastic week. We will see you again next week. Bye Virginia.

Virginia:

Bye.

[0:25:27]

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