

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Episode 6

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Host: Annemarie Cross

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Annemarie Cross: Hi, I'm your host Annemarie Cross and welcome to another episode of Women in Leadership podcast, the podcast that empowers you to reach your full potential whether you're already in the leadership role or maybe you are an aspiring leader.

Now joining me on today's show is Helen Storr and Helen holds a master's degree in leadership and management and her impressive career involves 37 years as an educator, 15 of those years were spent in leadership positions including school principal, regional leader and central trainer.

Helen is currently the director of her own consultancy company specializing in executing coaching, leadership consultancy and facilitating and training in the new field of m-braining where she supports her clients to expand and improve their performance in their given areas.

Now on today's show, Helen's going to share some key insights in how we can stop self-sabotaging our success by knowing the importance of your vision, setting goals, and planning, identifying what you should be focusing on as a leader with regards to what you can and can't control as well as reminding ourselves of the importance of sharpening your sword and what that means for us as leaders or aspiring leaders. So welcome to the show, Helen.

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Helen Storr: Thank you Annemarie.

Annemarie Cross: Great to have you back here joining us. Now Helen, one of the things that I've heard you say there is so much negative talk about women in leadership, the roles and quotas that companies and government departments have implemented and therefore need to achieve.

As women, we can so often become distracted by these things so much so that it can take away our focus from our own goals. I would love for you to speak a little bit more about this.

Helen Storr: Yeah what I mean when I was that is really important to think about what you're focusing on.

Annemarie Cross: Uh-hum.

Helen Storr: One of my favorite sayings is what you pay attention to is it more roles.

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Annemarie Cross: Yes.

Helen Storr: So if you are actually focusing on not getting that job and a man getting that job and those sorts of things, you're actually taking your swords into a place where you're starting to think those negative things about oh, I'm only woman and etc. and etc. and that sort of builds up.

So by focusing on what you want rather than worrying about what's happening with the men or the other women around you, we tend to self-sabotage where we want to go.

Annemarie Cross: Uh-hum. So true. We can get caught up can't we in the negative speak and things that are going on and I'm a firm believer in what you focus on is kind of what you're going to continue to attract. Of course you're not going to be inspired and empowered to reach out for the goals because a lot of us not only impact ourselves through self-sabotage but it impacts our self-belief, our self-confidence, our self-esteem.

So let's talk about knowing the importance of our vision, setting goals and planning because these are some key areas that I know you speak about. We need to get totally clear on these things so that we don't remain distracted and continue to self-sabotage our success.

So let's dive in. What do you mean about vision and why is knowing our vision so important?

Helen Storr: Well vision is actually looking at knowing where you're going, your direction. So what leads that is knowing what is important to you and what is valuable to you.

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So the first step around your vision is to really, really understand your own values and what is important to me and what I want to do.

So if we don't know what drives us in our values, it's very hard to work at where we want to go. That often happens, you'll find in executives, any women that are unhappy in their jobs.

Annemarie Cross: Uh-hum.

Helen Storr: So the first step to find your vision is to actually play around and understand and unpack your own values. What is important to me, what drives me in my whole life.

Annemarie Cross: Yeah.

Helen Storr: We do a lot of work around that first.

Annemarie Cross: Uh-hum.

Helen Storr: Before we even go into looking at where do I want to be in five years' time or ten years' time, that vision of moving forward.

Annemarie Cross: Yeah. You know, so often as women I think Helen we can absolutely discredit some of these key things that you're talking about and we look at what other people are doing. We get stuck in that comparison syndrome or what we try and do is take on board what people are telling us we need to be or think about or aim for.

So I think it's such a great reminder where you said you know what, we need to take a step back, identify what our values are, are they aligned with the corporation. Because maybe through doing that exercise, we recognize that hey I know what I want to achieve yet the reason I haven't achieved that yet is because

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the environment in which I'm working is just not in alignment with who I am and my values.

Something else that I noticed and I'm sure you have too over the years and in the clients you've worked with, we can often be reactive rather than proactive when it comes to our career goals, leadership goals. So let's talk about the importance of setting goals and planning.

Helen Storr: Okay. So I'm just going back to that point of reactive and proactive. When you sort of say that, that exactly comes back to what I'm saying about your values. Reacting, you tend to be worrying about what other are thinking and doing around what you're doing.

If you can become more proactive when you really understand who you are, what drives you in your values, you become more proactive in what you can do because you actually have your own plan.

Annemarie Cross: Uh-hum.

Helen Storr: Rather than depending on other people's influences to decide, may help you decide what to do.

Annemarie Cross: I mean how often do we look at people who are being proactive they are achieving various promotions. Their name is being put forward to special projects that we dream about and we think oh look at them, they're so lucky. You know, we fall into that trap of thinking that these people are lucky. What you're saying is they've probably got really clear about their values, about their vision and they are now taking proactive steps and action to help them achieve that.

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So yes let's dive in about talking about setting goals and planning.

Helen Storr: So setting goals is around the vision part of it is your big picture of knowing that in five years I want to be whatever you want to be. And then it's the baby steps, it's the breaking down of those that direction to set those goals and make them achievable, make them measurable, make them realistic so you can actually then move into them in a successful way.

So success into your direction. So we'll use a little bottle around smart gosling and so it's being specific in your goal, making sure it's very specific not this great big imagination thing. Make it very specific, make it measurable, make it achievable, make it really steep and put a time on it that buy next week or by next six months, by 12 months this is where I want to be.

Annemarie Cross: Yes.

Helen Storr: And kind of measure that you know that you're successful in it.

Annemarie Cross: Smart goals I think are so important and I know for those people who have listened to a number of other podcast, you would have heard me use the term powerful bold goal. Sometimes our goals can be so big that if we really to ask ourselves do you really believe that you can achieve this goal? If we're honest we kind of think no, it's just kind of pie in the sky goal. I think all of the things that you've just mentioned there are so important.

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Just something else that I want to mention talking about goals, some women that I know and have spoken to around setting goals because they have been unable to achieve goals in the past, Helen have now become what I call stuck in the small stone syndrome. And that is that they fear setting goals because they don't want to set themselves up for failure again.

I think at this stage if someone is sitting here listening to Helen's wonderful insights and you're thinking oh I don't really want to set any goals, that's a huge self-awareness and an insight that you want to spend some time working on because yes, setting goals is so important. How on earth are you going to achieve if you don't know where you're going? I think that's really important.

Do you have any words of wisdom to share around planning? Maybe some of the things that you have done?

Helen Storr: Yes. So when you were talking then about people being stuck in their not wanting to set goals, two things came to mind and the first one is that goals in the past may have been too big as you said and they weren't achievable so they weren't measurable and achievable.

Annemarie Cross: Yes.

Helen Storr: So what I would do is I would make sure that the goals that I was setting were much more realistic. A goal can be as minor, as minor as walking from one place to the door. It doesn't matter how big their goal is. So I talk about baby steps a lot. You know what is the next one thing you will do to get you to move forward? It's a bit like standing on the edge of a bungee jumping.

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You know, I hear you stand on the edge of these different --

Annemarie Cross: Uh-hum. That precipice. [Laughs]

Helen Storr: It's that first step isn't it? Yeah. So what is that first step that's going to allow you to then move forward into what you really want? Sometimes that first step is the hardest step.

Annemarie Cross: Yeah, absolutely.

Helen Storr: So the other thing that came to mind was around the mbraining that we do and we believe there's three brains. Each one of them has got prime function so we then access them for different reason.

Annemarie Cross: Uh-hum.

Helen Storr: Things start, alerts me very much into something sitting in the duct brain, the primal brain of protection and that's where we get stuck. So I work around that as well.

Annemarie Cross: Yeah. So just reemphasizing that with the mbraining what you're doing Helen was talking about the three different brains. One in the guts, so it's your intuition, your gut feeling, the heart of course and then of course the brain and we'll share how you can find out more about Helen and the wonderful work that she does later in the show.

You know, one of the things that I've done about setting goals I've set a 90-day goal for myself. There's a couple of things in there and what I've done is I've printed them out and I've put them right next to my computer screen. I will attach it to the wall but it kept falling down with the sticky tape wasn't strong enough.

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Helen Storr: [Laughs]

Annemarie Cross: So I've got it sitting there next to my desk so I'm reminded of it every single day. You know it has made a single difference because usually I kept it in a folder but now I see it and I think oh what's one more action step that I can do? I mean obviously I've listed action step because I've taken time to plan that but I went oh what's one more thing that I can do? It really keeps you focused. So I love that you've shared. That's a great reminder for all of us.

Now Helen so many of us can get stressed out. I know I can be a bit of a control freak. We try to control everything which really is impossible and not the best approach particularly if we are aspiring to be a senior leader. You know there's no way we can control everything.

So you say that it's important to identify what we should be focusing on as a leader with regards to what we can and can't control. So I would love for you to share more about this because I know this is going to change someone's life from this point forward.

Helen Storr: This is massively powerful you might find. So I find these that so many people are focusing on things that they cannot do anything about. I had one recently and she had her whole world focusing on a sub reports behaviors which she just couldn't do anything about. So she would spend all her day worrying about that and not getting on with what she should have been doing.

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By turning her around and saying well you know, can you do anything about that, can you make her do anything else and can you control what she's doing? Then once she realized that she had no control of that and she started to focus on things that she could make a difference on and she could control, it turned her whole management around.

Annemarie Cross: Uh-hum.

Helen Storr: Not only did she become more effective but she became much less stressed and much more self-satisfied in her work. So it's really focusing on okay is this something that I'm spending all my energies around, can I actually make a difference in here? Can I do something about it and if the answer is no, turn around and say well what can I make a difference in, what can I do something with and focus on that and that's where your effectiveness comes as a leader.

Annemarie Cross: Yeah that's such a wonderful example that you've shared there and I think as leaders when we are focusing on the wrong things, not only is it inhibiting our team because you've heard of micro managers, micro leaders where they are really just micro managing.

Helen Storr: Exactly. Uh-hum.

Annemarie Cross: You're inhibiting your team. You're not allowing them to empower themselves to step up and do some problem solving and seeing how they can perhaps impact what they're working on.

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But also it impacts your own energy and your own focus because you're not focusing on the other key elements that you really should be focusing on. I think Helen it really is such an important reminder for us to get clear on our vision and our goals and also obviously the action steps that we need to take. That's also going to impact our team. Our team also needs to.

Helen Storr: Yeah.

Annemarie Cross: So in other words, if we're reviewing the situation currently is beyond our control and if that particular incident or issue challenge directly impacts negatively and positively towards the achievement on your vision, then you realize this is a big problem. If we don't fix it then all of the team is going to be inhibited in achieving the goals and those questions are going to really help knock down or get down to 'how can we change this?'

If you go through those questions and realize you know what it's really insignificant it's such a small issue let's empower the change and find us a solution that's not really something that I need to spend my time on. It can really help us keep focused on overcoming the challenges that we know we need to overcome that can block us from achieving our goals.

Helen Storr: Those small things that get in the way that you can't control. They can in an organization really impact on the culture and they're really as you said minor themes. But because people are constantly focusing on them and what you pay attention to you get more of and they go around and around on this issue that they cannot control and then it impacts on the whole organization and that's where you get those really difficult cultures in organizations.

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We talk about politics in organizations and it's really if you focused down on to it, it's probably some very, very minor detail and it's something we can't control or going back to how we started and talking about self-sabotaging it can well be looking at someone else in women, looking and saying well he's doing that and judging other people instead of focusing on your own direction. So you're too worried about that man getting that role that you should have had instead of worrying about okay what do I have to do to get to my next step.

Annemarie Cross: Yes. Yeah.

Helen Storr: And so it all sort of impacts around that controlling. I can't control that that man got that role over me. I can't control that. So why do I spend so much time building up this negativity within myself instead of focusing on my next step.

Annemarie Cross: Be so good and stand out that they cannot help but notice you. Yeah. if we're focusing on the negative rather than the positive what can I do better, what can I put my hand up for, who do I need to network with within the organizations. So next time a promotion comes up I'm the first person on that list. Yeah, great, great, great advice.

Helen Storr: And also you find in organizations when those promotions and things come up, if you don't get a job, more important how you behave when you don't get that promotion than if you do get that promotion. Because people are watching your reaction of how you --

Annemarie Cross: Yes.

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Helen Storr: --didn't get that or how you failed and how you can actually step up in that more negative place. If you set that and say okay so I didn't get this particular promotion, what do I need, what am I missing here, what can you help me or what feedback can you give me so that next time I can't.

Now if someone is watching that they're going to get a very different opinion of you instead of a person who's wallowing only going oh only go to the men and I'm a woman because she's...

Annemarie Cross: Yeah, yeah.

Helen Storr: So see the difference in that next step and how important that is that when you don't get a position how you behave.

Annemarie Cross: Yes. what you've just described happened just a couple of days ago, Helen. Here we celebrated Australia Day. This interview goes live a couple of weeks down the track, but Australia Day. Someone was recommended for the award amongst a group of people. Someone else got it. One particular person complained to the media so it went kind of viral. The following day this person had to put an apology in because it really sounded like sour grapes.

Helen Storr: Right.

Annemarie Cross: You know what, I'm so – I think what that person did by apologizing and doing so publicly really did contribute to having a change of mind by everyone and by the public and I think sometimes stepping forward and doing that really shows our strength. But just as you said, don't allow it to have you become jaded and complaining and focusing on the wrong things. Rather let it empower you forward

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so that you can yeah put together some clear steps, planning, vision , be proactive so next time that your name is right at the top of the listen.

So Helen sharpen the saw. This is a saying that --

Helen Storr: Sharpen your saw yes.

Annemarie Cross: --I'm sure we've heard before. What does that mean for us as leaders?

Helen Storr: Oh I love this because what it means is just you need to work on yourself and your self-awareness. So the analogy is a woodman trying to cut down a tree with a blunt saw. It's going to take an awful long time and energy for him to be spending cutting, trying to cut down that tree.

Annemarie Cross: Yes.

Helen Storr: If he walked away sharpened his sword, and spent some time building his tool better, he could then chop that tree down so much more effectively. So what it means to us as leaders is that the importance of spending time on yourself and your own self-awareness and your own learnings. So it's that ongoing learning thing and making sure that you're sharpening your saw and making sure you're more effective as a leader. So that time to be and it's very hard in organizations but make time to have a mentor or a professional coach. Make time to build your own awareness around things and then that will make you more effective. Your soul will be sharpened and you will be able to be more effective in your role.

Annemarie Cross: Uh-hum. It's such a great reminder. I mean if this is something that you are looking towards, I mean really aspiring to be a leader or if you're already a leader, really stepping up to a more senior role whatever that maybe. We need to set that

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intention, don't we Helen? We need to then look at okay what's the vision, what's the goal, do all of that smart goal fantastic steps that Helen shared previously and set the intention of the planning. What do I need to do? Well I need to develop myself in that area. If we don't set the intention. If we don't put it in our diary in our schedule, guess what, we will never find the time.

So rather than trying to find the time, make the time, set the intention and be proactive. Great, great words of advice. So Helen, for people listening today, what would be one last word of encouragement that you'd like to leave us?

Helen Storr:

So when you were talking there I was just going back to your questions and thinking so and I suppose the three questions is what do I want, what do I need to do to get it and how will I know if I'm successful? So making that clear what do I really want out of this and truly want and going to your heart and what is truly the thing I want out of this, what do I have to do to get it so set those goals, set that vision, set the goals, set a structure however suits you because a lot of people say oh this is the way to do it. But everyone needs to find their own way to set their goals and set their plans and their structures. So what do I want, how am I going to do it, and then how do I know if I've been successful?

Actually be able to measure and be able to take it off and say yes I've done this. I've got a great example: I've got a cousin staying with me. We've been for a swim this morning.

Annemarie Cross:

Uh-hum.

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Helen Storr: And we came back and she's not a swimmer but she swam just a little bit and she came home. As we got out of the car she said, oh I'm really pleased I've been successful. So what --

Annemarie Cross: Right.

Helen Storr: --she's scared herself to do she although very minor, she had given herself a measure that she would be successful if I did.

Annemarie Cross: Yes.

Helen Storr: So it's about really making sure that you have a measure around what it is you want to say when you're successful? What do you want to do when you're successful, what does it look like when I'm successful. I'm sure --

Annemarie Cross: And acknowledge.

Helen Storr: Yes, understanding around that.

Annemarie Cross: Yeah and I love the way that your cousin said yeah, being successful. She acknowledged it. I mean how often we do not acknowledge it or we wait for external acknowledgement. You know what, give yourself a pat on the back. Let's what I've always said to my kids right from when they're little toddlers, that's a great job, give yourself a pat on the back. [Laughs]

Helen Storr: It's a baby step. Even if the success is only minor in other people's eyes it could be major in your eyes, whatever that baby step be. What is the next --you know, which step is going to take you off that cliff when you're bungee jumping.

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Annemarie Cross: Yeah. [Laughs] Love that. So thank you so much for joining us today, Helen. How can people get in contact with you?

Helen Storr: Okay. I have – probably the best way is just email me and my email is helenstorr@pivotalpathways.com.au. I do a lot of work with organizations through word of mouth and things so email is probably the best thing to do here.

Annemarie Cross: Terrific of course and again we'll put all of those details on how you can contact Helen on our show notes. Now it's over to you. Helen and I want you to join the conversation to let us know what's come up for you when you've gone through those questions that she's asked. So to join the conversation and to find out how to connect with Helen, go to annemarietcross.com/podcast6. Leave your comment below the show notes and Helen and look forward to reading your comments. Of course that link again annemarietcross.com/podcast6.

[music]

So this is an interview to help you ace that interview brought to you by our sponsor acethatinterview.com.au. Now are you negotiating your salary? Don't think you have to accept their offer especially if it's only the average range of salary in the industry the role, demands and expectations and what you know you are worth and can contribute to their bottom line. Instead, be clear and able to express your expectations confidently.

So a suggestion you could say, from what I understand the expectations and demands of this position to be and what I know industry standards are for this type of role and level of seniority along with the strengths and value I offer, I would have expected the salary to be around x to x. Then stop talking.

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Now if you do have an upcoming interview and you want additional support so you can negotiate a salary that pays you what you are worth, check out www.acethatinterview.com.au for further information.

Now that brings us to end of another show and I do hope that you will join me again next week. Remember to subscribe to our iTunes channel. The link is Annemarietcross.com/podcastiTunes and by subscribing to our channel means you'll be the very first person to learn about our new espies and be inspired, empowered each week. Again that Annemarietcross.com/podcast iTunes. While you're over there, if you want to leave a comment and a writing that would be awesome as well. So see you next week and make it a good one. See you Later Helen.

Helen Storr: Bye Annemarie. Thank you.