

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Episode 9

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Host: Annemarie Cross

Annemarie Cross: You're listening to Women and Leadership Podcast, episode 9.

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

Joining me on today's show is Irene Scott; Irene is an author, a speaker, marketing strategist, copywriter, consultant and engineer, who specializes in systems, marketing and copywriting for today's small business owner. With 19 years' experience as a medal winning structural engineer Irene has contributed to communities in Australia and South East Asia, with her bridge designs. She used her sharp engineering skills to develop systems, analyse problems and provide unique solutions, as well as to develop and lead a team of 25 engineers. Irene has taken her engineering skills and combined it with the knowledge gained as a certified business advisor and professional copywriter into the business arena; she now runs her own business with a team as well as helping other business owners grow theirs.

Now on today's show Irene is going to share how self-leadership is a key component to being an effective leader. Why you need to have strong, clear and specific goals that connect your heart, mind and soul, and what that means as a

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leader, as well as successful leaders and how they add value to other people, so welcome to the show Irene.

Irene Askwith: Thank you very much Annemarie, it's wonderful to be here.

Annemarie Cross: With 19 years' experience as a medal winning structural engineer, you've led a team of 25 engineers, you've contributed to you know your expertise to communities across Australia, South East Asia, really quite an accomplishment, so before we dive into some of the key insights that you will be sharing with us today Irene, I'd love for you to think back to when you were leading a team, for people listening today who aspire to lead a team such as you did, what were some of the key things that you did in your career that had you rise up that career ladder, so to speak to take on that leadership role?

Irene Askwith: It's a great question, I guess for me I've always looked forward in terms of where do I want to be? What do I aspire to be? And then what do I want to be in terms of the people around me? So who do I need to become? What sort of person do I need to be? And it was always the case of wanting to add value to the people around me, especially in engineering to be honest you can't do anything alone, you need a strong team, and that's when I realised the key thing in everything that we do is relationships, if you have a good strong relationship with your team, with your colleagues, then they will support you and they will help you rise up as well, so I guess in answer to your question I've always been focussed on achieving and focussed on the big picture goals for myself and always really enjoyed bringing people up with me as well.

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Annemarie Cross: Great, great insight, so now I love the way that you've shared, and so many of the guest experts that we've had on the show have said that as a leader the encouragement of you team and I think as a leader it's showing a level of confidence that we have in ourselves that allow us to create a culture in the team and the environment that allows our people to shine, to contribute, to collaborate and that certainly has been something that you have just shared has made a difference in your career and in your leadership and would of course do the same, likewise, for others, now would you say that self leadership is the key component of being an effective leader, I'd love for you to share more about this.

Irene Askwith: Absolutely, there is so much happening out there, there is a lot of distraction and if you're not someone that's leading yourself in the direction that you want to go it's difficult to lead your team as well. And that's what I talk about when I say self leadership, because for me it's a case of being focussed, so focussed knowing the direction you want to go, it's being disciplined, so knowing that there's action steps that you need to take in order to achieve that goal, and then really just knowing for me very importantly what values you have? So what drives you, what things would you say yes, or no to? And that for me is really the self leadership component, because once you know which direction you're heading, what your strengths or weaknesses are? Then you can be a lot clearer with those around you, and then they can actually support you in that leadership goal as well.

Annemarie Cross: You said something about values and in the previous show that we've had we spoke a lot about values and how they're very important too and you know if the people that are working in our team if their core values were not being met, that often causes diminished performance morale, all that sort of thing so now you're bringing into the conversation that not only do we need to be aware that the

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values of our team members are being met, however when you're talking about self leadership that our own values are also being met. Now for some people may not have really ever taken the time to sit down and evaluate, you know what are some of my core values, let's share a little bit about what you did or what are some things that I need to start to think about to identify what's really important to them and what are their core values?

Lisa Askwith: That's actually a good question, it's something that I've been working on for the last I'd say ten years, it's; yeah it's quite interesting, my background was that when I was 13, I knew that I was going to be an engineer, so I knew it at that age, I told dad you know what I'm going to be an engineer, this is what I want to do for the rest of my life. He said you can't, you're a female, you can't do it.

Annemarie Cross: Oh Wow

Lisa Askwith: He didn't mean it in a nasty way.

Annemarie Cross: No, no

Lisa Askwith: He was just being very realistic and what that gave me was that determination to show him "you know what I'm going to do it" and so that gave me a value for really showing him that no matter what he says I'm going to achieve it. So in terms of my initial career when I first started, my driver back then was really to get out there and to show him and to prove to him that I could do it and I ended up, I mean I did, I worked really hard, I got the university medal, because for me it was a case of I'm not just going to show him I can do it, I'm going to be the best I can be, but then in terms of on the negative side of that it just pushed me to really achieve and that was all I was really focussing on, and it wasn't until I

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actually got sick from; there was actually quite a lot of stress in there and I was thinking in there in the hospital what am I doing this for, and I had to really re-evaluate my values and I remembered back when I was 13 why did I want to be an engineer? And it was a case of I want to help people. I mean at the core of it I believe that engineering really helps the society and the communities and that then shifted those values around and then once that happened that's when I started stepping into the leadership role, because then those values aligned with other people around me as well. Values are key, and if your values I guess from my point of view I would call the initial value I had was more of a selfish value to show dad I could do it.

Annemarie Cross: Yes

Lisa Askwith: If that's the sort of value you're going to have, you're not going to really attract the right kind of people around you to have a really strong team and to be able to lead them as well.

Annemarie Cross: What I wanted to point out, because this is such a valuable lesson and I've spent quite a bit of time over the last couple of weeks in interviewing some guest experts who; some of them have had similar situations where they have been working on overdrive and you know the energy that they are expending, so that they are giving out, has not been balanced with self care and realigning their values, making sure that it's all being met and that is so important for women I think and certainly if people haven't listened to the episode where Karen Cheston was talking all about self care and energy around women go and listen back to Karen's interview because that's really important, but what you have said here Irene and I think it's so important for us to recognize is that yes you had a drive

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and you had a passion for engineering yet you were driven to really overachieve because someone had kind of you know challenged you a little bit and said "you can't do that" but had you continued to work hard and achieve all your goals without that voice at the back of your head and the drive from "I have to show" would you looking back have had a completely different experience because you wouldn't have put that much pressure on yourself, I mean hind sight is a valuable tool often isn't it? What do you think?

Lisa Askwith: Absolutely, it is, I actually tend to agree with you because I think the drive for me was that I had to prove myself or you know that I wanted dad to turn around and say "I'm proud of you" and I mean it was just the culture, he was you know the sort of person that he wouldn't say those sorts of things but I think that then drove me in that direction, but you're right if that conversation didn't happen I wouldn't have actually gone in that direction, although to say it in that way I'm very grateful for the experiences I've had because it's given me an amazing career and I've got amazing skills from it and I mean I really have done incredible things with different bridges and amazing teams, you need to know what your values are.

Annemarie Cross: Yes.

Lisa Askwith: And what drives you, and that's why now I've done a lot of work in personal development to know what are the ways that are the positive ones in me, that drive me and can support people around me as well, so that's where the whole shift has come and why I'm now in business and helping other people.

Annemarie Cross: You recognize that absolutely and you know being able to recognize it at a young age that you wanted to be an engineer, again it's one of those things where you

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know what is that passion for you helping people and of course you've got to do that in your career as an engineer and of course you get to do that in the work that you do as well, so if you haven't taken the chance if you haven't taken the opportunity to recognize what are your core values, certainly do that because you know we may find that there are certain stresses and impacts in our lives and in our career that are causing us stress because they are not aligned with our values and then we can make a choice once we recognize what is something that I can do, what is something that perhaps I need to let go, need to change and so that we can continue to really operate from our strengths and have our values aligned. So something else that you believe too Irene is that it is important to have strong clear and specific goals that connect to our heart and mind and our soul, we know we often just talk about having goals, however having them connect to our heart mind and soul, that's really taking it to a deeper level, especially when it comes to strengthening us within our leadership role. Love for you to share some more around that?

Lisa Askwith:

Absolutely, yes and I guess for me it's come about because I have been doing the achieving part and you know the working hard and I'm sure your listeners are like that as well, that you know there are times when things get really difficult, you know you may be staying up till 30'clock in the morning working on something and you just wonder why are you doing this, you know, what's it all for? And if you don't have a goal that's really connecting with you, like through your whole body, through your soul and your heart that's really driving you, I mean you may just go, "that's just too hard, I mean I don't want to do it anymore", so for me, and I call it my goose bump goal, so when I think of these goals I literally get goose bumps and you know it gets me so excited and that's the issue for me, I get

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too excited and I can't sleep, but it's just something that makes me want to jump out of bed, you know it's, you know that every day that you're alive, that you're moving forward towards that goal and it's that excitement, so for me I've actually put pictures of my goal and it's in front of me every single day, so when I'm working I see the pictures and they're pictures of happy children because I'm going to be building an orphanage in Vietnam that's one of my goals, and I'm also going to empower 200,000 business people, so I've got pictures of all these smiling faces at me, and I'm thinking well if I don't continue working and doing what I'm meant to be doing then these people would not actually have the opportunity of being empowered and actually being helped, so yes for me it really helps to connect difficult times, it gives you that energy and that passion to continue.

Annemarie Cross: And I love that you've given that example where you've created almost like a vision board this is your goal, the board where you have all those pictures and I'm sure when you think back to when you were overseeing the team of other engineers, were you setting similar goals and using similar techniques as you've just described as well?

Lisa Askwith: Absolutely, absolutely, anyone that knows me knows that I'm absolutely passionate about bridges, so for me I get, you can probably call it excited, or over enthusiastic any time I talk about bridges, so any team meetings we would have, I would be like "O my gosh we're going to win this bridge" and you know get everybody pumped up and really believe that we can actually win those bridges and we can actually design it as a team and that would be the way to like getting that energy in the room and getting everybody aligned and I guess the key thing here is not just to have the goal, especially in a team environment when you're

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leading people, the key thing is you need to be effectively communicating that goal to everybody. And you need them to jump on board and feel that, that goal is theirs as well and that they want to actually work towards it too.

Annemarie Cross: Mhmm.

Lisa Askwith: Because otherwise if you don't communicate the goal and you don't communicate why you want to get that goal, I mean the team won't stick behind you when things get difficult.

Annemarie Cross: Something that you pointed out, I want to highlight this again, because in the previous interviews that I have done we kind of covered that I read, let me share with you, I read somewhere that someone said, "keep emotion out of it, emotions got nothing to do with it, it's just business." If we think about what you have just said where you're really passionate about something, you and your team are aligned and their values, they're also excited about supporting people and in your instance, you know the expertise that you contributed along with your team when you collaborated, you created bridges that supported communities, that allowed them to get from one place to another which in actual fact if that was not available, some people it could really in some areas be the difference the matter between life and death if they are not able to get to a shop or something like that, so if we took emotion right out of it, if you weren't passionate, if you didn't inspire you team to get on board with the goal, maybe create vision boards together, this is what we're going to have to collaborate towards and work towards as a team, my goodness I would imagine that your team would have had completely different results yes?

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Lisa Askwith: Yes, I totally agree with that and just to making a confession there, I wish I would have known vision boards back then, that would have been just something amazing to have done with the team, but I guess instead we had pictures of the bridges we were going to design, the next cable stay bridge or the next suspension bridge, it was always amazing bridges so we used to do that in terms of having photo's of the bridges, but I would have loved doing a vision board with them back then.

Annemarie Cross: Yeah

Lisa Askwith: But the key thing that you just mentioned there, it is the passion, and it is that emotion as well, that people need to be connected emotionally, it's not, I mean for me it's not just business, and we're really talking about, at the end of the day we're talking about individual people and people connect on an emotional level so we're not just you know.

Annemarie Cross: That's right they are human beings that's what I commented, I thought that you know we are human beings and emotion is such an integral part of who we are. Emotion drives us, emotion has us, sometimes can offend us to the point that "you know what I'm standing for this, I don't agree with you and this is the reason why" you know and certainly I think emotion when harnessed really well I mean if there's a balance, there's a logic, there's emotions and you know there are instincts and gut feelings I think, that need to be when you approach leadership and your relationship with others as in this instance your team. When you have a balance and you're aware of that and you show compassion that you are interested in who they are? Your team is going to deliver a lot more for you, because they are empowered, because they're inspired.

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Lisa Askwith: Absolutely and I just have to say that my team, and the incredible team that I had, and they would go above and beyond, because they really believed in the vision, they wanted it, it was a case of saying guys, you want to, you know lets go for this amazing bridge that we've never designed before, you know really complicated type of structure, are you guys you know backing me, do you want to go for it, you know it means we're going to have to put in extra hours to get this, and to work on it and learn as well, and now we're just absolutely going for it and they wouldn't have been wanting to put in the extra hours or you know there is a bit of stress involved there as well, if they weren't connected to that vision.

Annemarie Cross: Yes.

Lisa Askwith: And that's where you need to show them the passion and not be afraid to show the passion.

Annemarie Cross: Yes.

Lisa Askwith: I'm not saying be overly emotional or anything, but just show them that you're real and why you want this for the team.

Annemarie Cross: Hmm, and these are obviously things that you did when you were overseeing your team, you know, you really did embrace who you are, that passion, you said you got that excitement and that really was exuded from you to the point that you really had all of your team members embracing that too and I think that, that really does take a confident person to do that because sometimes we look at, or we look at how other people are leading and they may have different styles, they may have different qualities and different characteristics, but I love the way that you were really authentic and you brought that into your team and that insured

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that the other team members just didn't feel that they couldn't also be enthusiastic as well. What are some other things that you believe as successful leaders how we can add value to our team and other people, what are some things?

Lisa Askwith:

One of the things that is really, really useful for a leader is to show that you really trust your team by empowering others to actually do things, so it's really letting go and really delegating and this was something that actually took me quite a long time to understand and to actually do and I remember for the longest time I was thinking "oh no I think it's better if I do it myself", I know it's going to get done right, I mean it was the wrong thing to really be saying, but if you actually trust other people amongst your team and empower them, you are actually adding value to their lives by doing that, you know you're adding value, you're showing them that you respect them, that you think that they can actually do it as well, and often times they come back and go above and beyond what you've expected, and it's just a case of; just by showing that you trust them.

Annemarie Cross:

Let me, let me ask you and this may seem like a silly question because it's obviously something that you do quite naturally, however I'm sure Irene that if we had conversations with a number of people they can all share times when they've been working with leaders that micromanaged and who did things that gave the perception to them as a team member that they weren't trusted, that their skills and strengths weren't valued. What are some things that we can do as leaders or aspiring leaders for us to demonstrate to our team that we do trust them and that; so that we can empower them? What would be some things that you would suggest?

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Lisa Askwith: Hmm great question yes because I have been micromanaged, so yes absolutely I understand it as well, I guess a couple of things what I like to do, and I'm doing it with my staff members as well, but what I like to do is to explain what the goal is for example, so you know set up the big picture and say this is where I want to be going and then ask for their input straight away, so ask for their input in terms of how does that goal resonate with you? What action steps would you actually take to achieve that goal? What do you think we'd be doing in this situation etc, and then just depending on how they're answering I might need to help them a little bit with that, but then I actually give that whole project over to them and say okay now it's yours and then just let them know that I'm trusting them with it and that you know I'm not sure how it's going to work out, but then it's a case of you run with it and you just touch base with me and keep me informed as to how you're going with it and I think that's one thing just to get their buy in right at the beginning, get them to think about what steps to take and then get them to come back to you rather than you just standing there looking over their shoulder or asking questions all the time. I think that's a really good way to show the trust in your team.

Annemarie Cross: And you know I think for a leader who may have recognised in herself that she hasn't quite yet created that environment where her team vow to the point, that real trust is there, and sometimes it's because the culture of the company itself has not really encouraged that I think hearing those examples could certainly; yeah be of immense benefit. So Irene what would be one last word of encouragement, I know that you have probably got lots, and lots, and lots, but if you were to narrow it down to one last piece of encouragement what would that be?

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Lisa Askwith:

As I was going to say it probably won't be one word but what I'd love to leave the listeners with is what I've found with leadership it's been an area I've been interested in for long so I've really studied leaders from all walks of life, and looked at my own self to see how I am as a leader as well, and what I've noticed there's certain characteristics that they all have like the successful leaders so I just wanted to leave a list, there is a list of ten actually, but we've touched on some of them and I think these characteristics are things that you can actually work on as well, these characteristics are the mark of a good leader,

- They need to have integrity, so they need to really be real, be themselves, have integrity and be genuine,
- They need to have a positive attitude and that's not to say that they gloss over things, but they need to just have that positive attitude and be balanced,
- They need to be trustworthy,
- They need to have courage, it takes courage to be a leader and to be doing things that maybe different to what your team actually wants to do, or to go into new areas

Annemarie Cross:

Mhmm

Lisa Askwith:

- You need to be focussed, so really and that's where all the goals come in, so be focussed on the goal is near the outcome.

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- You need to have a hardworking mentality, and I'm not saying become a workaholic and you know just work crazy hours but be ready to work hard when you need to do it.
- You need to have high energy, because that's something that really, really does help. So if you've got the energy that transfers to other people around you.

This one is key

- You need to be an expert in at least one area, so it's good to know about a lot of different things but to be a really effective leader you really want to be an expert in at least one area and in the other areas where you need help, that's where you've got your team around you.
- You need to be compassionate, because really I mean you're dealing with people and you need to understand them, be compassionate

And the last one which I think sums it all up is

- You need to be real, so really be you, don't be somebody else, just be real.

Annemarie Cross: I love those and what we'll do is we'll create an info graphic and we'll have that on the show page, the show notes and with all of those ten qualities and characteristics there so people can download those and perhaps even print that out as something that they can work towards. If some of those things they recognise need a bit of development.

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So thank you so much for coming on the show today Irene, it certainly has been a pleasure speaking with you. How can people find out more about you and get in contact with you?

Lisa Askwith: Yes thank you, well first of all thank you very much for having me on the show I'm very, very honoured to be here.

Annemarie Cross: You're welcome.

Lisa Askwith: People can actually get in touch with me directly; I'll give you my email address which you can put onto that info doc as well, so my email is irene@peakbusinessstrategies.com.au and yeah I'd love to get in contact and if there's any tips or hints or anything that I can help your listeners with in terms of leadership or you know how to actually develop their values or anything like that I'd be more than happy to help.

Annemarie Cross: Terrific, wonderful, now it's over to you, Irene and I want to know what's the one thing, what's the one insight, I know you've got many, we know you've picked up a lot today but what's one biggest insight that you've taken from hearing Irene share her insights and what's one action step that you're going to take in the next 24 hours to get moving on that. So to join the conversation and to have a look at the info graphic that we're going to create as well as the contact details to get in contact with Irene, all you need to do is go to annemariemcross.com/podcast9 leave you comment there below the show notes. We look forward to reading your comments and of course that link again is annemariemcross.com/podcast9

So we've got our inspirational message before we leave today's show and this is an interview tip to help you ace that interview brought to you by our sponsor acethatinterview.com.au.

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Now do you want to make sure that you have impressed the interviewer? A great question to ask them is that at the end of the interview to make sure that the achievements and the information that you've shared position you in the best possible way, so here's what you might consider asking " how do I measure up to your ideal candidate?" then stop talking and let the interviewer speak, if they pin point areas that they're not quite sure about or you maybe have had the opportunity to not explain stuff clearly that they understood, you've then got the opportunity to put their mind at ease by sharing an example relevant to what they just mentioned, and of course if you've built rapport and they've said "Oh yes as a matter of fact you've met all the criteria that we are looking for in our ideal candidate", you could smile and respond with "hmm that's wonderful, so when do I start?" and obviously you're adding some humour to continue building that relationship, however the interviewer has just confirmed that you do fit the criteria, and of course if you've got more opportunity to provide further information about concerns that's also there as well.

So if you've got an upcoming interview, and you want additional support, so you can communicate with confidence, and negotiate a salary that pays you what you're worth check out acethatinterview.com.au.

So that brings us to the end of another show and I do hope that you'll join me again next week, remember to subscribe to our iTunes channel the link to do that is annemariemcross.com/podcastiTunes, by subscribing to our channel means that you'll be the very first person to learn about our new episodes and be inspired and empowered each week like I know you were today listening to Irene. That link again is annemariemcross.com/podcastiTunes, while you're over there if you

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want to take some quick time to leave a comment and a rating as well, that would be awesome. See you next week, make it a great one. Bye for now.

[music]

Today's interview tip comes from our sponsor, AceThatInterview.com.au. Never discredit previous experience even if it's not in the same industry or similar to the role you're applying for. What you need to do is pinpoint how this experience has developed strengths and of course the value that you offer and how they are valuable and relevant to the role that you're applying for. Every single piece of experience, every challenge you've overcome, every concern that you handled well whether it was in paid employment or even voluntary work has developed you into the person that you are today and you've got to remember that. Now if you got an upcoming interview and you want additional support in this area so that you can communicate with confidence and negotiate a salary that pays you what you're worth. Check out www.AceThatInterview.com.au for more information.

Now that brings us to the end of another episode and I do hope that you'll join me again next week. Remember, subscribe to our iTunes channel, AnnemarieCross.com/podcastiTunes. By doing that means that you're going to be the very first person to learn about when a new episode is released and you can be inspired and empowered each and every week. That link again AnnemarieCross.com/podcastiTunes. While you are over there if you've got a couple of 3 minutes, leave a comment, what was the greatest a-ha from the show, write the show too. That would be awesome just to get us out in front of more inspired empowered women in leadership out there on iTunes.

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See you next week. Make it a great one. Bye for now, everyone.