

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Episode 19

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Host: Annemarie Cross

Annemarie Cross: You're listening to Women and Leadership Podcast, episode 19.

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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 a woman in your own business or a woman in a corporate role.

Now joining me on today on the show is Mary Jensen. Mary is one of eight children. She moved out of home at 15 and put herself through night school. She started working in accounts at the age of 15, finance manager at 20, and then became financial controller by the age of 25. She worked hard and did it as a way to survive.

After recognizing an interesting human behavior, through the development and trainings that she started her own business M Power Services in 2009 and as most small businesses, it has grown and changed. So Mary now works as a sales trainer incorporating personal development and public speaking.

On today's show, she's going to share resilience, never give up, there is always a way. People are people and need to be heard even if you think your idea is the best and change is inevitable. You could fight it all you want like swimming at a waterfall. So welcome to the show Mary.

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- Mary Jensen: Thank you. Hi. How are you today?
- Annemarie Cross: Really good. Wow, a child of eight. Tell me were they all boys or was there a mixture?
- Mary Jensen: I was in a mixture. We had four boys first and then four girls and I was the first girl.
- Annemarie Cross: Oh fantastic and look just the fact that you moved out of home at the age of 15 I mean nowadays some kids are still living at home mid20s even late 20s. I've even heard of some people early 30s even. That was really young.
- Mary Jensen: Well I've always been a go getter and being able to study and we had a small house. Being able to study in a small house with all those people. It was really, really difficult. It was just a really easy to choice. I've been a very capable child. I could cook for 10 people and look after myself. We all had to chip in and do things and it was an easy choice because I had been my own space to be able to grow, learn and study.
- Annemarie Cross: Wonderful. Now I know you've got some information and insights you want to share with us in a moment but what I wanted to touch on in your introduction, I mean you started at accounts at 15 then five years later you were the finance manager and then another five years you were the financial controller. So you really can see incredible progression in leadership and as you moved up the corporate ladder. What would you say looking back because inside is a fantastic too but looking back, what was some of the key whether it be mindset or things that you did that enable you to continue to develop and advance your career?

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Mary Jensen: One of the things that my mom told me at a very young age is a job worth doing is worth doing well. So I've always had that mentality. Whatever you do, give it your all.

I love learning. I still love learning. I'm always retraining and going to courses and events to learn as much as I can. I love. I don't think I'll ever stop learning until the day that I die. So that's got to be part of it. Wanting to know how to do things better. So right from the get go, right from working in finance at the age of 15, I was always what they call a change merchant. So I always looked at things and thought how can we do it better, how can we do it faster, how can we do it? I think maybe there is a bit of laziness that you might laugh at. But that kind of gives you, you know, find a better way, find a better way, find a better way. If it's a hard job and a hard task and repetitive, there's got to be some place that we can automate in there.

Annemarie Cross: Now thinking back to that time where you surrounded by mentors? What kind of support did you have? Because the reason I say this, so there's so many women whether they're in their own business or whether they are in corporate, they do get stuck in a rut. They do work hard definitely. I mean so many women who are listening to the podcast work extremely hard yet haven't quite seen the progression that you have in that short time framing every five years to really progress. What were some key support factors around that you had?

Mary Jensen: I definitely had some fantastic mentors. Back in my first finance days so between 15 to 20, there was a lady married Bettina and she was the financial controller of a company called Electronic Data Systems EDS. She set me down really airily and said, you know you're a real go getter and you can really go anywhere you want.

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Starting young in a business that gives you the opportunity to learn and grow is definitely... If I hadn't have sat down with her, I don't know where I would be because she was the one who suggested that I go to night school. Through that educating myself and being able to progress. So definitely there's find mentors, people that you look up to. See how they are doing things, model what they're doing if you want their results. In the same way bringing your own individuality as well because not everything that all my mentors did and said and taught are what I taught on board. I would absolutely take on board things that I thought were fantastic and would work and in the same token there were some things that just didn't resonate with me.

So I think that the key in there is make sure that you're authentic and being you at the same time as you're building and growing.

Annemarie Cross: So true and you know, I just want to commend and thank you for sharing that because at a young age to recognize that is incredible. You know thinking back to what you were saying your mother was like she really empowered you to do that. I remember when I first started my first role I was working in an office which I swore I would never do but an accident kind of led me down that path, long story for another day.

I got a pay rise. Similar to you, I was nurtured and mentored in the workplace and it wasn't long before I got a pay rise and then another pay rise as my role progressed. I remember going to speak to my mother about getting a car. She

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said, oh you can't really afford it anyway. It was then that I explained to her. So yes, the environment, someone that believes in you and gives you that opportunity I think is really important which is a great lesson for people to think about what environment are you currently in, is it supportive and if not maybe it's not the best environment for you. Would you agree?

Mary Jensen: Oh absolutely. I first started in an office so before then when I was just talking about at EDS, I first started in an office as junior accountant. We did everything manually at that stage. I was the youngest person there which meant I was sort of the gofer in the dog's body. Anyone that didn't want to do a task that was tedious they gave it to me. There was no computer and no progress and I could see very quickly that that environment was not an environment for me. I remember when I left the managers that I worked for they refused to give me a reference yet the sales manager in that company noticed how different I was. He wrote me a reference and he said it's Mary's growth and go getter attitude that has taken her from this company to a company that has computers.

Annemarie Cross: I love it. Absolutely.

Mary Jensen: Now I gave away my age a little bit you know, before computers and after computers.

Annemarie Cross: [Laughs] That's all right. We're all in the same boat so absolutely yeah, I can understand that. Look that is another insight. If you recognize that the environment in which you are currently in is not supporting you make a decision and make a move. You know, don't hope that something is going to change. Sometimes you do need to make that change and that may mean changing

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companies. Maybe you can change your own business that you can see. Currently what you're doing is just not working great, great insights.

Let's dive in. Resilience. Never give up, there is always a way. Share more about that.

Mary Jensen:

Well that is my key for living life, resilience. So being one of eight children, finding the voice and being heard was probably difficult especially being the. I mean I sort of came after everybody, you know, everybody is ranking up before me and the ones even after. So I think that resilience, learning resilience, tasks are never going to be exactly what you want. I mean there's so many times that you do something and you learn more from the way you went about doing it to find a better way than if you got it right in the first place.

So I used to talk to my staff a lot about mistakes and I used to say I believe mistakes, what people deem mistakes are fantastic in a process or a procedure situation because you can strengthen that procedure or that process so that those things don't happen again. So the resilience to always look forward, to always find a better way even if things seem to be a disaster right now. To have a 360-look at the disaster that you're in and see what you grab from it because that's where the gold is.

Annemarie Cross:

So often when people talk about mistakes or failure or things not going right, it becomes a blame game doesn't it or I'm a failure and it really can keep them stuck if we're not careful. To hear you say well look this can be a really great opportunity for growth and learning and expansion.

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For some people it really does challenge their mindset. Would you say that that is something that continued to learn and develop in you as a young child or was it also modeled? Because I would also imagine that being one of eight, all of those your siblings would have been trying to have their voice heard amongst the crowd so to speak.

Mary Jensen: Yeah, absolutely. Learning to fight for your rights and fight for yourself and fight to be heard and it was a bit of a fight. Now I know that there's way different ways to go about it. So there's ways to be heard now without being loud.

Annemarie Cross: Yes.

Mary Jensen: There's way to be influential without even making a noise sometimes. So all those sorts of skills, I mean absolutely coming from eight children has given me a grounding in a multitude of human behavior. And then being so young and moving out of home and then progressing in a career and managing and mentoring and training staff for such a long period of time. You just get to know the different types of people that there are and the different ones' needs. You know there's people who really want to talk and there's people who really don't want to talk. There's people who like to be trained by seeing things and there's people who like to be trained for hearing things. Some people need a lot of direction and some people don't need a lot of directions. So all those different environments that I've been in across the time have taught me a lot about resilience. Resilience in so many different ways.

Annemarie Cross: Yes. What you've just said there I wanted to just highlight to people in case they've missed and this is one of the key steps. You're talking about not just yelling and being the loudest person to kind of analyzing the situation and often

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it's because of our relationships with people in the workplace or our team. And recognizing the ways in which they communicate so that you can then communicate in a way that they listen, that they appreciate and that the conversation can be one where there is to and fro. You know, where there is a collaboration and coming together and understanding even if that means and we're going to talk about that in a moments, even if you think the best idea is your own allowing people to be heard.

But I think recognizing different situations and reacting differently and with intention certainly it sounds like that made a difference in how you approached your relationships and in the workplace. Would you say that's true?

Mary Jensen: Absolutely. I worked in manufacturing for a long period of time which was very male dominant. A lot of the communication styles that I love to use today are a combination of what I saw that worked and also what I saw that didn't work.

Annemarie Cross: You know, with the communication styles and differences, what may sound as a critique but quite a hard critic may just be the way some person communicates. So the resilience is also never take things personally otherwise that can certainly limit your self-confidence as well.

Mary Jensen: Oh, absolutely. In my view, there's four types of people in the world. so I talk to people about the strong people so the assertive people who really know what they want and go and get what they want. They communicate in the Nike just do it way.

Annemarie Cross: Yeah.

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Mary Jensen: And then there's the fun communicators who were all about fun and excitement making sure everybody is included and having it all done together. And then there's the kind type of people and each different type of people has a different language that draws the meme. To be able to change and then of course there's the detail, logical type of people and they really prefer not to have many conversations at all. They are often misunderstood because they just love to get on with doing the detail and the work of what they want to do.

So knowing that there's different types of people and they have different ways to communicate and changing your way to listen to them. Because when we want to communicate that's the key, the communication.

Annemarie Cross: Yes, absolutely.

Mary Jensen: We want it to be both ways. So to be in a relationship that's communicating be it business pleasure or otherwise, to have the ability to converse two ways and learn to understand that everybody is different and with that comes value. That's just one of the lessons that life gives us and it's phenomenal.

Annemarie Cross: Yeah, absolutely. You know I was talking at a networking event today to a lovely young lady. She was saying that one of her colleagues rang up. She was in corporate and was really quite heartbroken because they've been a round of promotions and she was not part of the team that was asked to step forward and that. So she was really, really hurt. She says, "Oh, you know, I've been working so hard and these are the things that I've delivered. I just believe that I'm due a promotion."

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So many women, men too but women in leadership that's what this show is all about, they struggle to communicate the value that they offer. So whether it is talking to a prospective client or talking to a senior manager, putting forward your case and reasons why you believe that you should be offered a promotion, it's all about communication isn't it and about ensuring that what you're communicating is getting the right message across. And that's where resilience and never giving up is so important. Isn't it?

Find a different way. What's a different communication that you can use that really taps into that communication style with the other person?

Mary Jensen: I think that that is exactly a big key in the business and for me my opinion and it is only my opinion, if you go into a situation always focusing on what you can give. So what you can give to that position, what you can give to that company, what you can give to your fellow colleagues. That puts you in a much better stead for a promotion than having a mentality of I've worked hard and I've done my, ticked my list and now it's my time to get.

Annemarie Cross: yeah.

Mary Jensen: I believe if you go always trying to improve yourself and your job, whatever the job is back that to that if a job is worth doing, it's worth doing well. If you have that mentality to keep giving and keep doing to the best of your ability I believe that the promotions will fall.

Annemarie Cross: Absolutely and be able to communicate it in a way that is deliver or showing how you delivered value and continue to.

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Mary Jensen: Absolutely.

Annemarie Cross: Do so. So let's dive into the next area. People are people and need to be heard even if you think your idea is the best. This can be really hard for us sometimes particularly the people who do like to share their ideas. Let's speak a bit more about this.

Mary Jensen: Oh this one is the one. This one is the close to my heart. For a long period of time because I've progressed so quickly I suppose, I had really high opinion of myself and...

Annemarie Cross: Thank you for your honesty. That is...

[laughter]

Mary Jensen: It's true. I know, this is really the catalyst part of my biggest growth in communication in human behavior. I was the type of manager that never missed a deadline. If my team wasn't going to make it, then I'd drag them. I really would. I saw how people acted and reacted in those situations. I put a lot of hard work into myself and looking at how I like to be treated, how I liked to be managed. Those types of things to learn that there's a much better way.

If the team arrives triumphant as a team, it's so much better to be in there than you arrived at the front and you dragged everybody with you.

Annemarie Cross: Yeah. Everybody is looking a little bit disheveled and that going what the heck just happened. [laughs]

Mary Jensen: It's so true. So now I know that I am so strong at the strongest outcomes is a combination. There's been so many times that I've been so closed down in my

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mindset thinking that this is the way I want it to be and I'm at the top and I have that right. When I learned to listen to all the other angles because I'm so, I'm very big picture focused and I would look at the big picture and our overall outcome and there was so much value in listening to the detail of how to do it best. I really would have...you know, the outcome might be the same as the outcome I thought it was going to be but the steps to get there as a team were way different than I imagined.

When I learned that and I probably learned, started learning that, when I was a financial controller. And when we were moving into mergers and acquisitions and purchasing businesses where we were melding all the different teams and all the different personalities. You know sometimes I had the view that the way our company did it was the best way. I learned so much stepping into those other smaller companies and finding out wow, no, actually that way is a better way.

So that was a real eye opener.

Annemarie Cross: Mm-hmm. And so that the lesson for you there, the insight was to really take the opportunity to listen to what the team was saying to you which I think is absolutely imperative. Because even if this decision at the end of the day is something different than what they had explained or someone else had explained and shared, they still felt listened to - didn't they? They still felt part of the team and valued.

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Mary Jensen: Yeah. and even sometimes in the merger and acquisition space, when I was encouraging staff members to come on board and stay when they really weren't

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happy about things, sometimes I even took their idea if I thought it wasn't exactly the best one yet it was going to work as a way of strengthening a team.

Annemarie Cross: Yes, yeah. and I think that's very important to watch your language too, isn't it? There's one word and I'm sure in your training you would have heard this too. There's one three-letter word that can absolutely derail the team, derail the conversation and that word is but. So if you replace that word but with and it can absolutely change.

I'll give you a situation scenario and this is probably similar to something that you've just said Mary. If someone brings something to you or one of the team members, you might say, "Joe, I absolutely love that idea and if we brainstorm a little bit around this particular area, I think that that might just work." So it's kind of building on maybe that Joe didn't quite hit the mark but rather than saying but because that completely just you know, shatters what he's just said, you would use the word and. You can really expand it and take the conversation so people can continue to brain storm and come up with a solution for you. Is that something that you found as well?

Mary Jensen: Absolutely and there are some other minimizing words as well that you can use in a conversation when you...

Annemarie Cross: OH yeah.

Mary Jensen: ...want to acknowledge somebody's idea and move it in a different direction.

Annemarie Cross: Yeah.

Mary Jensen: Absolutely. Yeah.

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Annemarie Cross: All right. There we go. So listen and that's such a great reminder. People need to be heard. Let's talk about change. I know that for many people sometimes change can be frightening but what you've said and I think it's true. If things were in the workplace, with things in business, change is inevitable and we can fight it if we want like swimming up a waterfall. There's an easier way let's talk about this.

Mary Jensen: So in every situation I look for the gold. I look for the good. whenever there's something that is disappointing you, disheartening you, and you don't have the mindset around moving forward or being positive about it, there's always going to be something in it. There's always some way to find a silver lining. Usually if we learn to retrain ourselves to start looking for that, we find more than one silver lining.

So I talk about it a lot like and there's a dot and the dot...so there's not one dot and another dot. One dot is right and dot is wrong. I think there's one dot of how it's being done now and there's all this space around the dot is all the other possibilities.

Annemarie Cross: I think the people who are looking for silver linings and they say, "I just can't find it," they're just not looking deep enough, are they or wide enough or...?

Mary Jensen: Yeah. There's something. There's going to be something for every situation. So recently I was my children who I've gone three learners back to back. And we were driving a particular way with my son, they stayed in the car. That particular direction is horrendous. There's always parked cars, cars zipping in and zipping out. It's just a treacherous stretch of about 500 meters. I said, "mate, we've got to leave early to make sure if we're held up in that stretch, we'll arrive on time."

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Annemarie Cross: Um-hum.

Mary Jensen: Anyway things happen as life does and we didn't leave at the time I wanted to. We got out to the top and there was an accident. There was a fire truck and there was an ambulance. I turned around I said, "Mate, this is why I wanted to leave early. " he laughed at me and he said, "Mom, if we were early, we might have been in that accident."

Annemarie Cross: Wow.

Mary Jensen: So there's always a different way instead of my perspective then was coming from you know, we're not going to get out there on time and we could use our time differently.

Annemarie Cross: Yes.

Mary Jensen: His perspective was you know, we could have been in that accident.

Annemarie Cross: Yeah.

Mary Jensen: It was true. I couldn't deny that fact.

Annemarie Cross: That's right. I mean the reframes or the situations that seem absolutely desperate can be turned into situations. The way we look at them quite differently just through the reframe. There was a beautiful little poem that I read once about someone having bare feet. You know, to a barefoot person, all they want is a pair of shoes. For someone who's got a pair of shoes, they want a nicer pair of shoes. But to the man or the woman who has no feet, he would long just to walk barefoot. I mean it's powerful isn't it when we think about it. No matter what

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situation we're in there can always be a positive way to look at it even in your situation.

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You know what let's just enjoy the time together. Let's have a chat while we're sitting here. We can't move so what can we do. That was such a great, great lesson. Mary, what's one last word of encouragement that you would like to leave with people today?

Mary Jensen: I want women to know that we don't have to make a choice between a career, being a wife, or being a mother or being a friend. We can choose to be happy. We can choose just to be happy being us. We're not defined by what we do. We are defined by who we are. So be who you are not who you think others want you to be.

Annemarie Cross: Wow that is powerful. Mary, how can people get in contact with you?

Mary Jensen: I have a Facebook page M Power Services and I also have website which is www.mpowerservices.com.au.

Annemarie Cross: Fantastic. Look thank you so much Mary for joining us today. It has been a pleasure speaking with you.

Mary Jensen: Oh I always enjoy our conversations.

Annemarie Cross: Yeah, absolutely. Now it's over to you. Mary and I want you to join the conversation to let us know what is the biggest a-ha. I know you've had many. You've had several I know from the conversation that Mary has shared with you

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today. But we want you to select what's the biggest one and what are you going to do in the next 24 hours to get that into action.

To join the conversation, all you need to do go to AnneMarieCross.com/podcast19, podcast 1-9. Leave your comment below the show notes and we look forward to reading them. Thanks so much Mary for coming on the show.

Mary Jensen: Thank you so much for having me and have a really wonderful week.

Annemarie Cross: You too.

Now before we go, we have our inspirational tip from our sponsor Breaking The Confidence Barrier. Confidence is something you create within yourself by believing in who you are. Believing in yourself, the strengths and talents you bring to your clients or bring to the organization is something that I see many women struggle with. They have the talent however they just don't recognize it yet and they struggle to communicate their value in their marketing and in their conversations that they have with prospective clients.

Now do you struggle with your self-confidence? Do you find it difficult to express the value you offer in your marketing and of course when you're speaking with a prospective client. It is frustrating we know but it doesn't have to be. That's because one of my gifts and strengths is being able to help you identify and capture your message, a message that instantly connects with your ideal client and showcases the incredible offer that you have and has them thinking I need to talk to you. If you're at the point where you are frustrated and you've been doing lots of things but it's just not working to attract new clients in your business I

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encourage you to sign up for one of my business breakthrough sessions so we can pinpoint where the gaps are and the steps that you need to take to break through your confidence barrier.

To register for a breakthrough session, go to www.annemariexcross.com/breakthroughsession,
annemariexcross.com/breakthroughsession.

Now that brings us to the end of another show. I do hope that you have enjoyed it. I'm sure you have. You've got lots of insights and techniques that you're going to implement within your business.

If you haven't already subscribe to our iTunes channel, go ahead and do that. The link is annemariexcross.com/podcastitunes. Plus, subscribing to our channel means that you're going to be the very first person to learn about our new episodes and be inspired and impact every week like I know you were today. The link again, annemariexcross.com/podcastitunes. While you're there if you got a couple of minutes, we would love it if you would leave a rating, leave a comment, and share the show with as many other incredible women all over the globe. See you again next week. See you Mary.

Mary Jensen:

Thanks Annemarie. Bye.