

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



## Episode 32

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Host: Annemarie Cross

Annemarie Cross: You're listening to Women and Leadership Podcast, episode 32. Hi, I'm your host Annemarie Cross branding communication strategist also known as the podcasting queen. Welcome to another episode of Women in Leadership podcast – the podcast that empowers you to reach your full potential.

As leaders in our business and careers the challenges that we face and the constant decisions that we have to make can sometimes have us questioning and doubting ourselves. Do we really have what it takes to be an empowered leader? Joining me on today show is Sonia McDonald. She's the CEO and founder of Leadership HQ.

She's an entrepreneur, thought leader, dynamic keynote speaker, executive coach and also of the book Leadership Attitude. Sonia was recently named in the top 250 influential women across the globe by Richtopia, and she's also Australia's leading leadership notes. As a keynote speaker, she's spoken across the globe on leadership, diversity and neuroscience.

On today's show she is going to share focus on what makes you rock. There is cool neuroscience behind it. If she can do it, we can do it. Leadership is about courage. Don't take no for an answer and see yourself as a leader and choose your attitude. Welcome to the show Sonia.

Sonia: Thank you. It's great to be on here. I appreciate it. I feel very honored.

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Annemarie: Fantastic. We're really looking forward to catching up on all of the wisdom and insight that you share. Because as I said earlier on in the show no matter where we are leading or serving in a leadership role with the challenges that we're often face with that really can have us doubting our abilities and questioning do I have what it takes to become an empowered leader.

Before we dived all the greatness that you're going to share today, just want to share some of the success that you've seen throughout your career. So you've launched and you've built and you've grown a company all from a blog. Well done. Congratulations. You've also launched and grown your leadership magazine and that's Leadership HQ. Yes.

Sonia: Yes, it is.

Annemarie: Tell me your first book which is Leadership Attitude that is launching in one week.

Sonia: Yes. It's very very exciting.

Annemarie: It is and then of course you've also built a speaker career. So before we move on to some of the questions today, looking back at the achievements that you've had, and you know hindsight is such a valuable tool, what are some things that you learned along the way whether it's about yourself or whether about just putting one foot forward and going for it?

Sonia: If I reflect back on my career and where I am today I never expected to be where I am today. However, where I am today is exactly where I need to be. I fell into what I'm doing by accident and I fell into it because I put myself out there. I believe in myself. I'm not saying I'm this confident 24/7.

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But I believe in myself and I really made sure that put myself out there to talk to people, create opportunities for myself to create my own density and path. I think for me looking back, and the reason why I wrote this book was it's a book that I give my younger self. I think that we spend so much time trying to be successful.

I get that being successful is really important whatever success mean to you. I wish if I look back into my younger years that I spend a lot more time in self awareness, getting to understand who I truly am and my strengths and what I'm passionate about and my talent and what makes me tick. You know what are my triggers? What is really unique about me?

It wasn't until my world fell apart about a decade ago. I was living in Shanghai with my three-year-old daughter and my whole world fell apart while I was over there. I had to move back to Australia with very little money in the bank and had to move in with my parents at 34 and I thought, oh my gosh, what am I going to do now.

Even though I had a successful career before I moved to Shanghai, it was a real shock to me. It was really devastating and it was because I put myself out there and I thought you know what. I need to move forward. I need to focus on creating life for my daughter and being able to provide for the both of us. So it was really around having that self belief and confidence to just take action and look at really what I really love to do.

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I suppose when I created Leadership HQ from a blog – and I got into the leadership space and I completely fell in love with and I started the blog. I

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remember when I was little I used to love to write. It's funny how we forget what we love to do when we're little. We let go of that but I used to love to write so much when I was little.

That's why I started the blog and then I had that courage. Mind you I had another of people around me that were pushing me as well. I think it's really important.

Annemarie: So having support there; people that really lift you up and really believe in you. Yes.

Sonia: Probably the biggest thing I've learned is really surrounding yourself with those cheerleaders with your tribe and giving back to them as well. I've been really blessed with the people cause there's been times, Annemarie, that I thought I'm superwoman and I can do it all.

Then there's been times when you get your knocks and your challenges and you really need that support network around you. It is so important.

Annemarie: Yeah. Thank you for sharing that because so often we look at successful women and they're out there doing things, we can compare. I think what you said about recognizing what makes you unique, your strengths, your gift doing this self exploration and the self awareness because everyone of us, and I'm a true believer in this, we all have our own gifts and our own talents and our own strength.

When we start to leverage those and really continue to expand and develop on those, that's when things just really click into place and there's a level of

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greatness that we can achieve because we're leveraging that. There are so many qualities in other women that I admire. I think oh gosh I wish I was a little bit more like that.

But then I remind myself. You got other gifts and talents so you make sure that you focus on those and use those to serve and support others. I think that that's such a great lesson that you shared with everyone today.

Let's then focus on what makes you rock. Because you said that there's neuroscience behind it. So share more about this.

Sonia:

I think sometimes we tend to especially women, I'm not painting everyone the same brush here, we tend to focus on things or ruminate around things that aren't right about us. I have this weakness or I have this gap. We're not perfect.

What makes us imperfect is what make us perfect. It's the imperfections. We're all imperfect which is amazing. It's interesting when I train or coach leaders. They're constantly coming in and saying I really need to fix my weaknesses and I go wow okay.

I don't kind of focus them if they really want to focus on weaknesses. However, it's a lot more fun to focus on your strengths and your talents. Also from a neuroscience perspective which I studied and researched and I like to boldly neuroscience everything I do because it gives that sort of scientific research behind it.

Annemarie:

It's proven. It's validated, isn't it?

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Sonia:

Yeah. It is and people kind of go you're not kind of spinning some soft and fluffy stuff with me. It's about science. I talk about the different areas of the brain and there's a part of the brain called the RAS. It's called the reticular activating system.

So our brain can take in million bits data per second but we can only really take in say seven units give or take a few units data per second. But it's up to us, cause I say we're the director of our brain, to determine where we focus.

So it's like when you decide to buy a new car and then all of a sudden you've gone looking at all these cars and you decide to buy so for instance like red BMW convertible. You're out in the road and you know you're going to be the car in a few weeks and you see red BMW convertibles everywhere.

You go oh my gosh, I didn't realize there are so many red BMW convertibles. You know how your brain does. You've made a decision. You're really excited about BMW and then you just see the car everywhere.

Every time I share this story and goes oh yeah. It's like if you ever have kids like you fall pregnant then you see pregnant women everywhere. It's the way the brain operates but you determine how you set your RAS.

So therefore you set your RAS BMW convertible I see that data because you've set your RAS to see that data. You've set your RAS to see the red BMW everywhere. It's the same with if we focus on things that don't make us rock. We're going to see that data.

If you come into me and you say I just want to focus on my weaknesses and focus on my gaps and my development areas then if I go yeah let's focus on that cause

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that's pretty important then you're going to be out there walking down the street, walking around the office going there's a gap. There's a weakness. Cause you set your RAS to that.

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So I turn everyone's RAS and I say you are the director of your brain. You set your RAS. You need to set it to focus on what makes you unique. What are your strengths? Don't become a little things that you feel aren't right. I'm sure no one else sees it but it's about you. It's about focusing on your data and focusing on your RAS to see the data that makes you rock. Does that make sense?

Annemarie:

Absolutely. That is so true because we do start to recognize our strengths and let's face. Sonia, I don't know about you but my whole career previously was around in career – career development, career management, career counseling. That's where we started to really gain self awareness and help other people gain self awareness.

We're not often clear around our strength. Cause often it comes quite natural to us and we can tend to then brush it aside. Organization, it meant everybody is organized. That's easy. So discrediting that and we're so good at doing that that then doesn't allow us to focus on hey that key skill of being organized to someone else who may be disorganized and maybe looking at us and thinking I wish I was more like her.

She's so organized. Always on time at meeting. She's all so put together. I wish I was more like that. So if we discredit it, we don't realize that that's a key strength as well as all the others. We're not able to allow our RAS to really notice that so

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that we can really bring that out more intentionally, more purposefully in our careers.

Sonia: It makes such a difference. It's like when you wake up in the morning. This is where meditation and mindfulness is becoming – there's a lot more research around the power of it. If wake up in the morning and sit there and think to yourself today is going to be a crap day. You know how it ends up being not a great day.

Annemarie: Exactly.

Sonia: Focus on today I'm going to be the best I can be and I'm going to focus on what rocks about me then you start to see. I'm telling you you will.

Annemarie: Sometimes stuff does happen. It does happen. Recently we, and still going through it by the way, had technology challenges to the point we didn't have any internet. You know they say things happen in threes and I'm thinking. Okay. So I'm looking out for the next thing to arrive. That's the third one. All right, no more kind of thing. It didn't work but anyway. But it's true.

Sometimes you just have to look at it and go it is what it is. I'm just going to work around it, through it, whatever and just move forward because you're so right. Whatever you tend to focus on that is just going to increase. If it's negative and it's bringing you down, goodness, we have the opportunity to change that.

So thank you for sharing that. It's a great reminder for all of us. So something that you have said which I love too is if you can do it, we can do it as well and leadership is about courage. Don't take no for an answer. This can be so hard for



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many women to move forward even after they have had a no. So share some insights around this please.

Sonia: Oh my gosh, Annemarie, I get so many no.

Annemarie: And thank you for your honesty. I tell you why. Because so many of us when we do get a few no, it's like all right. It just impacts our courage to the point we don't try again. So thank you for your honesty. Yeah.

Sonia: It's really easy for the brain to focus on the threat response. That's very easy for the brain to get a couple of no and go whoa and just go into this sort of vortex of my gosh.

Annemarie: They don't like me. They don't like my product or services. I mean that resonates with me.

Sonia: However, this is where having your tribe or your support network is really important. Also reverting back to thinking to yourself going you know what. They've said no. This has happened. That's their lost. The universe is saying to me there's someone out there that needs what I'm doing a lot more.

Or I look at it in the respective round there are so many yes I get and the way I'm able to influence and empower and educate is by those yes. So I focus on the success and the significance that I create. When I do get the no or I do get those knocks, I go okay what do I learn from that. What opportunity is in there? What would I do differently?

Because I have learnt some amazing lessons from my stuff up so from my no. I just put it into perspective because you're not going to please everyone. Not

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everyone is going to like you. As much as sometimes that can hurt or it can bring you down, having your support network is so important to go you know what, I'm struggling or this happen today. I think as women we really do and we need to be supporting each other I feel a lot more.

Annemarie: Yes.

Sonia: Just don't own it. Just let it go. Reframe and go okay. They say no. No. Next.

[0:15:02]

Annemarie: That's right.

Sonia: You couldn't stop me.

Annemarie: Yeah. Someone once told me and I love this that no really stands for next opportunity. I love the way that you've said cause I think we have similar values in that okay if we did receive a no maybe there is something that we can change, we can learn, we can make something even better.

Sometimes that no is not a definite no but rather not yet. So when you do go and refine it and you take whatever it is that you're developing or sharing to the next level then the next time around that person may end up chasing you and going you know what, I wasn't quite ready yet. But I love what you're doing. It's making a real impact and influence out there. We need to talk.

Sonia: It is about that. You just never know. I've got so many stories of people that have said not to me. In June I flew down to Sydney and I went on The Mark Bouris Show, the podcast show to talk about my magazine and it's on YouTube.

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Anyway, I went down there and I was really excited. I was a bit anxious and nervous as we all get especially cause I really care about it. I said dam on The Mar Bouris Show talking about my magazine. Literally, he didn't slam it. He was just very Sonia I just don't know. I don't think this is the right direction. Even though the magazine is great I don't – and he gave me some tips and tool and some kind of some insight.

I was gutted. I left that show. My heart sank. I went to myself oh my gosh. I just made a fool of myself and he said no. I rang up one of my dearest friends. She does amazing gifts and thank you gifts and appreciation gifts and I rang her. I said oh my gosh I just completely made a fool of myself. I just failed and I thought what am I doing? This is what I coach in. I need to reframe this. What did I learn from this?

She goes Sonia you can do this. What you're doing is great. So we sort of talk to. We ended up sending Mark Bouris and I send him a gift of lollipops and I put on the box. So you thought my idea sucked at least you have the balls to me. He sent me an email and he said thank you so much for your gift.

I invited him to my book launch in Sydney next month and he replied back. Sonia, this is brilliant. You've done this book. I can't make it but at least, you know I look back at it now and laugh that at least now I got a connection. I'm sure if I send him an email and said hi. I don't know. I know you're busy but if you're interested in coffee or you know. You just don't know what will come out of it.

Annemarie: You just don't know.

Sonia: Yeah.

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Annemarie: This morning I just came back from a networking event and there was a video there talking about something about that you know, similar topic to what we're talking about today. There were two examples. There were three but I can only remember two off the top.

Did you know that someone, and I won't say the name yet. You may already know the story. But this particular person was not backed and was told you're not suitable. You'll never make it on TV. You'll never guess who that was. Oprah.

Sonia: Yes. I had heard that story.

Annemarie: Someone else, this person I won't say who it is, she was told sorry you can't sing. You don't have a very good voice. Want to know who that is? Beyonce.

Sonia: Wow.

Annemarie: So when you go full circle and your magazine and your book takes off that you're the next Oprah and the next Beyonce then you can go back to Mark Bouris and say thank you for that because that gave me the stepping stone that I needed to soar. These are all lessons that we learn.

But from the Oprah and Beyonce they were told way back when a no and it wasn't just a no. It was you can't make it on TV. You don't have what it takes and you can't sing, you don't have a very good voice. Imagine if they had believed those people and said well I'm going to change my career. We would not enjoy all of the wonderful shows and messages Oprah brings us and we wouldn't enjoy the music that Beyonce brings us so there you go. I love that story.

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Sonia: Yeah and they're such great stories. I share those sort of stories all the time. So many women say to me, Sonia, you are the most resilient person I know. I actually [0:19:43][inaudible]

Annemarie: Resilience is important, isn't it? Don't you think that kind of drives you?

Sonia: Pardon.

Annemarie: Resilience is so important.

Sonia: It is and I really believe in my purpose. I always revert back to my purpose and my why. I always say to everyone I say if I can do it you can do it. We only live once. You don't want to look back on time and go I wish, I wish, I wish.

[0:20:07]

Success to me is creating a life that you really want to lead. And I really want to be significant to others and I'm doing that every day. When I get my no and my knocks, I just go okay next.

Annemarie: Yes. Love it. Love it. So the next point, this segue beautifully into what you're going to be speaking about now is that we really do need to see ourselves as a leader and it's important that we choose our attitude. Would you say resilience is part of that attitude? It needs to be a good part of that attitude.

Sonia: Definitely I think so. I think that we're all human and this is where I'm also I think there's power in vulnerability. Life isn't perfect and we're going to have times in our lives that we're going to have challenges and we're going to have those knocks along our journeys or our journey could take different parts.

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However, I look back in where I am today and I remember when I was in Shanghai. At that time, I had a choice. I had a choice where okay I can let this define me or I had a choice okay this has happened. I'm going to work through it. I'm going to move through it.

I'm now going to create a different path for myself, a different journey, and I'm going to put myself out there to do it and I choose that. I choose that attitude. We choose that attitude. We are the director of our brain. We're the director of our thoughts.

And mind you, we all get our ANT, automatic negative thoughts. We all do but just dump on them. Don't believe the stories. Resilience I think is really important. In terms of looking back and what I've created today it was because of that belief and resilience. I have a billion ideas and people around me, my team looked at me and go Sonia can you stop with all the idea.

Annemarie: Just stop. Write it in the book and we'll come to that later.

Sonia: This big ideas that have completely crashed and burn. Okay. I gave it a go. I gave it a go. You know what. That's cool. You just have to give these things a go and put yourself out there. So I think resilience is really important.

Annemarie: Yeah. For sure. You know I love the way that you say about choosing your attitude. Because if it's an attitude that is a little bit foreign to you at the start then you can say okay if I'm choosing resilience, what does that resilience mean to me. What kind of action steps do I need to then take?

You can almost then pull around you. What does it look like? What do I need to do? So the behaviors and then the actions and then when you start to do that

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and take one step and another step, we then become that more to the point where we now are more resilient in just how we show up.

That's the way I kind of look an attitude or behavior that I want to integrate. There's a few that I'm working on myself. Cause we have a choice. We do have a choice.

Sonia: Absolutely. That's why the book was really important to me. That's why I called it leadership attitude cause I want everyone to have an attitude where leadership isn't about role or title. Leadership is about mindset. It's about behavior. It's about attitude.

See yourself as a leader. See yourself being out there and making difference and having the courage to go through your dreams, to inspire and empower others, to collaborate, whatever you want to do. Just do it.

Annemarie: Yeah. Love that. Love that. So how can people find out more about you to find out where they can get a copy of your book? What's the best way to connect with you?

Sonia: All the different social media, platforms, LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook. I got a Sonia McDonald and Leadership HQ professional pages. I've also got a Sonia McDonald and Leadership HQ websites. So sign up to the newsletter. You can get the book, pre order the book which is going to launch in a week's time.

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Definitely connect with me on LinkedIn. I put up a lot of great quotes and inspiration and blogs. So there's lots of different platforms that I'd love to connect with you and hear your stories and see how I can help you as well.

Annemarie: Fantastic. Of course, we'll put all of those links for you Sonia on our show notes. Our show notes today [annemariex.com/podcast32](http://annemariex.com/podcast32). Please reach out to Sonia. Get a copy of her book. Because I think we can always and develop and grow.

And as we continue to do that as leaders, we get to influence and impact the lives of those people around us and inspire them to influence and impact other as well. It has been such a pleasure speaking with you today, Sonia. Thank you for coming on the show.

[0:25:05]

Sonia: Thank you. Thank you. I feel very honored. Thank you.

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

Now, by the way, if you are a Microsoft Service Pro user or maybe you've got a favorite app that you've been using and it's really help you streamline your business, let me know so I can share it on the show and give you a shout out. Send an email to [podcast@annemariex.com](mailto:podcast@annemariex.com). Let's dive in to today's tech tip.

So today I have asked Leanne Berry from Love Your Numbers to come back and share another tech tip with us. So welcome again, Leanne.



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Leanne: Hi, Annemarie. Thanks again.

Annemarie: So what tip do you have to share with us today?

Leanne: Today, I got a couple of really really simple tips that are available in Windows 10 and when you got our Microsoft One Note installed on your devices, the first one is Sticky Notes. So if you type sticky into your Windows 10 search bar and ask her for stick notes out pops a Sticky Note.

Now we're all looking at ways to a capture important information and how often is it that we'll grab a piece of paper, write down a phone number or time for an event or something like that and then lose it or the dog would chew it up or something like that. Think of sticky notes as your electronic notepad. It's fabulous. Give it a try today.

Annemarie: Yes. Can you have a number of different Sticky Notes on your device?

Leanne: Absolutely. Once you got sticky notes what I'd say is you install it to your taskbar or add it to your taskbar so it's always available on your taskbars in Windows. All you need to do is click on the sticky notes on the taskbar and it will bring up a note for you.

Type it out. And if you want to add another note, just press the plus sign and it will add another note for you. You can have your desktop absolutely full of sticky notes if you want.

Annemarie: What about different colored sticky notes? Cause I know some people just go to town on this. Yes.

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Leanne: Absolutely. So you can just right click on the sticky notes and change the color. I think it's got probably five or six different colors depending on how you're feeling or what you want to do. So it's a really really simple, simple, simple way to have some electronic notes and forget about paper on your desk.

Annemarie: Yeah. Fantastic. I love that tip. You got some details that you've sent through. We'll put all of those on the show note as well. You also have another note that you want to share with us. Which is that one Leanne?

Leanne: Another one that's good for electronic notes is Quick Note. So Quick Note is installed with One Note and it's available from the pop up on the taskbar. It's very similar way you can see Quick Notes to One Note and have them stored in One Note and all you need to do is press Windows key plus the end button to bring up a Quick Note.

Once you bring up that Quick Note you can also use the toolbar that's available in One Note. So you just press on the three little ellipsis at the top of the note and that will bring down a toolbar that will ask you to change fonts and formats and assign task or important information to the Quick Note. The beauty of this is that once you done that Quick Note it's stored in the Quick Notes location on one note so you have it forever.

Annemarie: Not to mention that you could use Quick Note if you've got some ideas and you haven't yet got time to really flush out. You can just write a couple of notes to jog your memory. They're stored there in One Note and you can go back to that and continue developing that idea. Is that how you're using it?

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Leanne: Yeah. Look on my Service Pro I have that in bed with me at night. You know I do a bit of brain dump on things that I thought about or wake up in the middle of the night with a brilliant idea like all of us business people do. I'll just start up a Quick Note and just type that idea quickly in, get it out of my head and then I can go back to sleep.

Annemarie: Yeah. Great idea. So couple of ways in how to take those notes so we can store for future use so again Sticky Notes and of course Quick Notes as well. Leanne, if they will want to reach to you and connect with you, how will they do that?

Leanne: They can find me on Love Your Numbers on Facebook and I'm also available on Twitter on Leanne\_Berry and LinkedIn. So you can search for me and you'll generally find me if you do a Google search as well.

Annemarie: Fantastic. Thanks for the tip.

Leanne: Lovely. Thanks Annemarie.

Annemarie: Before we end this particular show just a reminder for those of you are in service based businesses and you want to start to develop products and programs such as VIP days or a longer term three-month program, six-month program or maybe even put together a home study program and you haven't quite yet nailed your signature program that is something that we can certainly help you out with.

[0:30:04]

All you need to do is go to [annemariex.com/yoursignatureprogram](http://annemariex.com/yoursignatureprogram) for more details on how you can get support. That brings us to the end of another inspiring

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show. I am sure you take down lots and lots of note listening to Sonia's insights and wisdom.

If you haven't already please subscribe to our iTunes channel [annemariex.com/podcastitunes](http://annemariex.com/podcastitunes). Doing that makes sure that you are alerted each time that we published another show and we do that on a weekly basis.

I really do encourage you while you're over there to not only subscribe but also leave a comment and rating because that allows us to get our message out into the ears of this many other women as possible. Our goal is to inspire and empower women across the globe. Thank you so much. Have a fantastic week. See you later, Sonia.

Sonia:

Bye. Take care.

[0:31:11]

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