

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



## Episode 39

Published: 7 October 2016

Host: Annemarie Cross

Annemarie Cross: You're listening to Women in Leadership podcast episode 39. Hi, I'm your host, Annemarie Cross branding communications 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 a leader in your business and career just how confident are you really in your skills and abilities. Have you've ever been in the situation where maybe you've gazed into your wardrobe only to think I've got absolutely nothing to wear or maybe you're just not sure whether that outfit you're wearing really does your professional image any justice. Maybe you just never really thought about it at all.

My guest today is Melissa Lewis. Melissa loves empowering smart, savvy business women to take pride in their personal brand so they can present themselves with greater confidence. On today's show, she is going to share if you want something you need to work for it, the importance of taking control of your professional presence, and why you need to invest your time and money wisely so you get the best rate of return out of your wardrobe. Welcome to the show.

Melissa: Thank you, Annemarie. It's a pleasure to be with you.

Annemarie: I know that this is a topic that you are very passionate about and an expert in. Sometimes we think about lots of different elements in our careers and in our business. Often when we talk about confidence, yeah, this is an area that well

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



we're just not as confident as we would like to be. What words of advice do you have about confidence for us?

Melissa:

For everyone confidence is a different thing. What makes one woman feel confident will vary. I think as we evolved through our career there is different elements of confidence. I find that I'm working with very credible experienced women and they're confident in their skill set but they're not confident in putting their hand up or positioning themselves or saying I deserve this much for this service.

So the confidence factor really – and you do keep evolving as a woman. So I think when you're feeling low in confidence it's really great to be supported by other women who have been successful and understand that you have high times and low times of confidence. Also invest in a professional that can just get you out of that stuck moment so it doesn't cascade.

That's the most important thing that you don't self sabotage because I see that a lot. Confidence really can hold you back because you can be the most intelligent person in the room, you can be wearing the most expensive suit but if you are not confident in your skills and your ability in who you are, you do get lost in translation.

Annemarie:

Yeah. Absolutely. I love the way that you've said and it's so true that when we do talk about confidence while some people may see us our approach and how we're really holding ourselves and the way we're interacting for us to be confident. But internally we maybe measuring ourselves against someone else and think no I'm not as confident as her so all different levels.

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Let's talk about the fact that you're saying that it is important if we want something we're going to need to put work and effort into it to achieve that. Let's talk a little bit more about that.

Melissa: Yeah. That's my philosophy for life. I mean I've been brought up with European grandparents. Our motto is nothing for nothing. If you want something you need to work at it. Now having a presence, having a grand, having skills for yourself everything requires you to work hard.

Now we seem to really invest the time in educating ourselves and building our skill set. But where we don't seem to focus the same is what does our brand look like. What are the messages we're sending out. Are they consistent? Are we self aware?

Because those are the things that can really inhibit us from growing forward even though we've invested all these hours and times in our skill set.

Annemarie: I think also studies have shown that yes we can have the best skill set, the best knowledge and expertise behind us and through our experience, yet unfortunately if our professional presence isn't at a certain level this can really hold us back to the point for women in their career they may not get a promotion. For women in business who are looking at clients this is really important. Studies have shown it, doesn't it?

Melissa: You're not attracting the right people. Yeah. Absolutely. I think it's really important to say okay and just give yourself the time and that's why the business

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



is growing so much cause these women are like why people are getting the jobs that they're getting. Why am I being overlooked? Why am I not being heard?

[0:04:59]

It was my days in Westfield especially in a male dominating industry that I realize that it wasn't enough just to be intelligent. You did need to have the skills to negotiate. You needed to have a presence that spoke volumes before you walked in the room.

Annemarie: Talk about some of the common things that you see that really are not supporting us in really taking care of our professional presence. What things do we need to look out for that are uh-uh we don't want to be doing these things?

Melissa: A lot of it is the body language cause you could be thinking one thing but if your body language is sending different messages then people are going to take your body language as the message. So you might be saying I really want to be here but your body language is saying no I don't. People look at that and they go okay she's not telling me the truth so it causes mistrust.

Another thing a woman let herself down in the way she presents. It doesn't need to cost a lot of money or time. I show women how they can have wardrobe, a capsule wardrobe, that's easy for travel, great for presenting, good for business casual and conference. Just make it easy and simple. But you need to have a wardrobe that does reflect to who you are because the moment you don't it does say different messages. So it's inconsistent.

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Now consistency and authenticity are the key things because we live in a very clever society where we are visual. Unfortunately, we're always marketing. We're either selling our product, our skills or who we are. It is about the whole package.

It is not just about you're really technically savvy but you can't have a conversation with intelligence and I can't bring you to a meeting because you don't look the part. You're not representing the company. So you can see its so many elements that need to be brought together.

Annemarie: I think also too that sometimes we may hear ourselves saying something so we're communicating. One of the things that you said is body language is so important that if there is some doubt where our self confidence is a level where it's not supporting us, we may even be saying something. But unfortunately the way we stand, the way we just hold ourselves can really detract and being almost what speaks so much louder doesn't it than the actual words we say.

Melissa: And eye contact. And the biggest thing I see is a weak handshake and that tells me from the moment I met a woman how insecure she is. We've all got self doubts or times where we feel more confident but if you're telling a complete stranger with a really weak handshake and hardly even looking at them that you're already doubting yourself, there's no way that you're going to have good negotiations in that meeting.

Annemarie: I think also you said eye contact. It's important because how many of us do tend to not really look someone in the eye. Talk a little bit more about that 'cause this is so important, isn't it.

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Melissa: This is important in business, in life, in every day communication because everything is about connections. I think that's what people are – you know when we talk about brand, we talk about presence, it's about real connections. Now eye contact is one of the biggest things and I even teach my daughter who is six now you must look at someone when they're talking to you. It shows that you're interested. Otherwise, don't be there.

Because really it lets your brand down enormously because people think she really doesn't want to be here. She's just disinterested. Or, I can't trust her because she's not even looking at me when she's talking. I mean no one wants to do business with someone they can't trust or feel that they connect with.

Annemarie: I think that the shaking hand piece too that you were talking about when you are shaking someone's hand for the very first time it's very important that you face that person too, isn't it. That's very much part of body language. What other stances or body language do you see is so critical when we're having communications with people we really want to impress?

Melissa: Yeah. I think when you're presenting I find that women's feet go out to the side and that often shows a sense of insecurity as well or if you're walking too much back and forth that can be really distracting so it should be done with purpose.

I mean as slouch in the seat really doesn't give the greatest impression that's like I'm not really motivated to be here. Different messages will resonate with different people as your body language. So it's just about look in the mirror before you leave the house. Look in the mirror.

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Would you do business with you? Are you happy with what you say? Is your smile saying of someone who is genuine and authentic and practice these things. Sometimes we don't even realize, you know, before I present I actually video myself and I'd be wow I didn't realize my hands are doing this or my head is doing that.

[0:10:00]

So it is about that self awareness piece. If you want to grow and if you want position yourself within business and personally you need to be self aware and critical and get coaches. I always got coaches that can give advice.

Annemarie: I know sometimes it's difficult for us to hear feedback and critic.

Melissa: Yes.

Annemarie: However, wouldn't it be better for someone who we are investing in their support like a coach or mentor or a very close colleague and friend or business colleague who we really do know, like, and trust to give us feedback? Rather than getting feedback from a potential client and unfortunately that feedback is no, we're not going to go ahead with it.

Melissa: Correct. So the difference between someone choosing you over someone else in this highly competitive environment and often you won't actually know the real reason. That's why I've developed a program with Katalin Howell leadership expert called Woman Who Leads.

It's all about getting feedback, getting self awareness, emotional intelligence, building your brand, building your visibility and influence in a safe environment in

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



a safe environment. Because more often than not we have lost that deal or lost that potential promotion because we haven't been given truthful feedback throughout our career.

Annemarie: Yeah. It's important I think also too I heard and I can't remember who it was that said this however you know if you're thinking about a woman who is negotiating. So whether they're negotiating a salary or negotiating and speaking to a potential client, the way that we do interact and approach that conversation is so important.

Often women we don't have that self confidence that allows us to have communication about that. It doesn't mean that we're arguing or disagreeing. We tend to often take the first offer for us or if someone says no we take it on face value.

We don't ask for the clarifying questions to find out a little bit more. Cause sometimes it is just a little bit more clarity around something needs to be communicated. Do you find this too in your own practice?

Melissa: Absolutely. I worked a lot with my clients who are very credible and experience but giving that confidence say no you've got that value. Stop thinking you need to check all this boxes before you get that pay rise. Understanding your value proposition is key brand and that is how you can stand out.

Because once you're clear about yourself, the value you bring to an organization or to your own business, you and your unique selling proposition what really is your X factors and knowing what you're great at. That's when you can really leverage your skills. I show women how to commercialize their skills because at



# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



the end of the day you're not working hours and spending years of development not to get paid what you deserve.

Once they've got their skills I mean I worked with great women. They're intelligent. They're savvy. Once they get the skills they are positioning themselves and gaining the jobs they want. It's amazing to hear the constant results which is just I'm very lucky women to work with such incredible women.

Annemarie: Yeah. You know a couple of people I've commented to have had colleagues that have gone forward. You can use this across the board whether they're in career and working for an organization or if you're in your own business talking to a potential client that often to be able to voice the value, the expertise, the achievements that you've contributed and so forth.

It's sad when women say I work really hard and I believe that am worthy of this level of investment. Look you may know the exact hours and knowledge and experience that you bring to the table. The other person may not be aware of it.

Melissa: Correct.

Annemarie: So we need to be confident in being able to explain that value. That's key, isn't it?

Melissa: Taking ownership of your destination. If you want to get noticed, if you want to be heard, if you want to be promoted, if you want to get out there then you do have to take ownership. In the Women Who Lead program actually there's a whole path on how do we self promote but with style. We don't need to be aggressive. We don't need to be masculine.

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



It's maximizing what our feminine energy is great at at empathy, at getting results or organization, listening. So it's maximizing that. And then when you are putting yourself in position for a pay rise or putting yourself for the next client, knowing actually how you've contributed is really imported. So you need to know your numbers and be really clear.

Coming from a finance background, I'm able to help to women transition in we can do this and we have contributed 60% on this and we increase our client percentage by 30%. So getting really clear on the facts puts you in a great position for getting that pay rise that you deserved and that promotion.

[0:15:05]

Annemarie: Yeah. Love it. Let's talk about the reasoning behind why it's so important for us to invest our time and money wisely so that we can get the best rate of return on our wardrobe.

Melissa: Yes. That's my favorite topic and I think so because my background is my grandfather is a couture tailor. I run shopping centers for Westfield so I've been able to really understand retail and know that you don't need to spend all your money and time to look fantastic. It's about investing in great pieces.

Now as we get older, we become moms we have less time. So we gravitate towards the same pieces. So it's about investing in great pieces. It doesn't mean it needs to spend a fortune. I love high low. I combined a top from Target and a jacket from Scanlan Theodore and match it and it looks fantastic and then you get your own unique style.

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



But it's investing in a small capsule that you wear that you love that fits you, that suits you, and that compliments who you are. Most of all appropriate for the environment you're in.

Annemarie: Yes. Cause how many of us will go out and get bargains and so forth and we've got our wardrobe jammed pack to the point that we can't even fit anything else in.

Melissa: I know. I used to be a shopaholic myself, Annemarie. So I've actually come up with five tips to shopping smart which we can send to all your listeners at another point. They really have saved women thousands and thousands and thousands dollars. Cause I was sick of seeing women investing in clothes because the shop assistant said it looked good. It was on impulse. It was sale. You know the fear of not having an outfit.

So now I set women up to make sure that if you do have a cocktail dress because nine times out of ten you're always going to be asked to an event so you've got a dress that you can dress up and down. You've got a few outfits if you do present. You've got outfits that don't crease for traveling.

So it's really getting clear what does your professional and personal life looked like and making sure with the many hats that we wear you have clothes that easily mix and match. We don't need it complicated. But I do set up a story and I think that's where women get it wrong. They buy a piece here, a piece there and nothing ever works together and then you end with the wardrobe full of clothes but nothing that you really love or feel great in.

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



That impacts how you relate to other people. That impacts who you will approach. Will you put your hands up? Are you sitting at the front of the table or at the back of the room?

Annemarie: So key. We'll certainly in the moment share how people can get in contact with you and how they can get access to those tips because I'm sure we could all learn so much from that and save money that we're not investing.

Melissa: Save money. Save time. We work hard so it's about investing smart. If you're a business women be a business for your wardrobe, be a business women for yourself. I think often as a woman we just leave ourselves to last. So we need to just change that mindset and believe you me I never had a woman not be happy with my services because it's life changing.

Annemarie: It is. How often do we really just stand there gaping into our wardrobe thinking I really don't know what I'm going to wear? But as you said if you've got some key pieces that you know can really mix and match beautifully together, you've got some key accessories so that you can really style it differently, how much more confident can we be. Time saving too I'm sure.

Melissa: Time saving. And to go one step further, Annemarie. I know how busy these women are so my job is to make sure that they can concentrate on doing what they do best so I actually create a look book where they can have it on their phone. So on their way home they know yes I'm going to wear that for this meeting. That's going to be for tomorrow. This is what I'm going to pack. So it's about making it easier because I understand what the working woman life is I've put in methodology and systems to do so.

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Annemarie: That sounds wonderful. What last words of advice would you like to leave with everyone today?

Melissa: Not to focus on anyone else and to really focus on what your gifts are. What are your skills? What do you love to do and maximize that? Maximize it with your figure. Maximize it with your brain because it's all about being happy internally.

When you're happy internally and love what you're doing that is reflective in everything you do. If you're listening today and you're saying you know what, I'm not a 100% happy. Well that's time to think okay what will make me happy? What do I want my brand to stand for?

[0:20:00]

What do I want the messages that I'm sending out to say because that's really important and evaluation. You know constantly evaluate yourself because that's when you get the best results.

Annemarie: Yeah. Absolutely. So how can people get in contact with you and to also access that checklist?

Melissa: Fantastic. Annemarie, I'll send you the checklist so you can send it to all your listeners. But anyone can contact me on my website which is [www.styleconfidante.com.au](http://www.styleconfidante.com.au) and I also got a blog on LinkedIn empowering women under Melisa Lewis. So I look forward to connecting with anyone that's listening today.

Annemarie: Fantastic. Yes, what we'll do is we'll put the checklist downloadable from all of the show notes as well. So all what people need to do is go to

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



[annemariex.com/podcast39](http://annemariex.com/podcast39) and they'll be able to access those fantastic checklists as well as click through to the different sites that Melissa just shared. So thank you so much for coming on the show.

Melissa: Thanks Annemarie for having me. You know I love watching what you do too with the business branding. It's just so important. It goes hand in hand. So it's been great to be on your show.

Annemarie: Thank you. So just before we go if you are struggling with networking and you know that its holding you back in your career or in the growth of your business, don't forget to check out and access my checklist its network with confidence. So, network with confidence to grow your network, your relationships, your business or career.

So there are suggested ice breakers so that you can start a meaningful conversation even with people you've not yet met before. How to create that powerful introduction. You know the one that has people go tell me about that. I think I need to work with you. So you can access that checklist by going to [annemariex.com/networkwithconfidencechecklist](http://annemariex.com/networkwithconfidencechecklist).

That brings us to the end of another show. I know you've got lots of notes. Make sure you do check out and connect with Melissa. Lots and lots of expert advice on how you can be much more confident and in your professional appearance and presence as well which is very important.

If this is the very first time that you have joined us today, thank you. It has been an honor that you've spent some time. We have another guest expert next week. I do hope that you will subscribe to the show. All you need to do is go to

# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



annemariex.com/podcastitunes. That means each time we do publish a new show, you don't need to come to the website to have a look if it's there. We push that out to your smartphone.

While you're over there subscribing, why not leave a comment and a rating as well. That allows us to get our inspired message out to lots of other women so that we can all together support one another to reach our greatness. So make it a good one. Have a great week. See you later, Melissa.

Melissa:

Bye.

[0:23:14]

End of Audio