



Preface

I Am a Leader

For much of my career, I struggled to give myself a label because I felt I wasn't anything. I'm not a doctor, engineer, firefighter, hairdresser, lawyer, accountant or any other type of professional with a certification and a prescribed set of technical proficiencies. However, while I did eventually gain a degree, I realised I already had a vocation with technical proficiencies.

I am a leader.

When I became conscious of the importance of leadership and the skills needed to be the best leader I could be, I became more deliberate about exposing myself to, and inserting myself into, situations and environments where I could learn how to be a great leader. That included watching, talking to and learning from leaders near and far away. It involved reading many books, particularly biographies of leaders, so I could discover the secret sauce of leadership. It meant attending conferences and events where keynote speakers would expound on the virtues of great leadership and how to 'do' leadership well. It led me to put my hand up for any training courses and professional development opportunities that came my way.

I also learned on the job and from the leaders I reported to, and sought out opportunities to stretch and grow through the new leadership roles I applied for and was appointed to.

One thing characterised my leadership journey: I learned my leadership craft largely from men. Why? Because I didn't have a woman boss (at the executive level) until I was a senior manager in my late 30s. Given I'd been in the paid workforce from the age of 15, that's a lot of years learning from a lot of blokes.

When I look at the representation of women in CEO and executive roles worldwide in 2023, there are certainly more women than when I started navigating my career, but still not enough. Men still dominate leadership.

The political sphere, arguably the most powerful and influential leadership sphere in the world, is dominated by men. Just 13 out of the 193 member states in the United Nations have women as heads of state.

Similarly, when I consider the biographies of successful leaders across all sectors, men still dominate the titles. It is the same for business books. And don't get me started on the speaking circuit and the media – when it comes to talking about leadership and business, men dominate there, too.

The paucity of women in these arenas means that women today are still learning the craft of leadership from one relatively homogenous group. And that is just not good enough.

The leadership compass

When people ask me what I do, I tell them that I do three things:

1. I fix workplace systems that prevent women and organisations from reaching their full potential.
2. I help women navigate the systems in their workplace to reach their full potential. I am like a human compass to guide women towards success.

3. I advocate for the rights of women and girls, particularly in the sporting sector.

Each of these pillars ensures I live my purpose: to close the global leadership gender gap in my lifetime.

This book is a compass to help women navigate more rapidly towards leadership at every level with guidance from a woman who has been there and done that. It is also a tool to enable those already in leadership positions with great authority and influence to take action to close the leadership gender gap in their organisation.

But most importantly, this book is a no-holds-barred look at leadership through the lens of my career as a woman who is, and always has been, a leader.