

The Hon. Helen Coonan

“HOW TO KNOW WHEN YOU’RE EXECUTIVE READY”

Excerpt of Address to Executive Women Australia

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So, if you spot an opportunity, are you ready to lead? Can you already taste it, or are you worried about the responsibility?

What attributes will mark you out as the talented performer who is ready for the executive suite?

Of course, there are no magic formulas and leadership is not an exact science. Each of us will have our personal leadership style and different levels of commercial acumen. Some of us will have better judgment than others and some will find decision making more difficult when it’s all down to us.

The common attribute however and what it really boils down to, is whether you are ready to lead from the front. If you are authentic,

can effectively communicate your mission for the organisation, can inspire your team to give it their best shot and bring people with you on the journey, you are there!

Having been in a workplace that now spans three careers, in law, politics and now business, I have been around the park many times in many different capacities. I do have a few tips - personal strategies and tools if you like - to enhance your preparedness and prospects of advancement to leadership roles, and then when you have got there, a few survival strategies never go astray. I will share them with you now:

- (a) Tip number 1, is whatever it is you dream to be, set a strategy and a realistic time frame in which to achieve it. Timing is more important than you can possibly imagine. You will be primed to recognise opportunities and just as importantly it will help you to recognise when to move to Plan B. It is important to keep up the momentum (don't be afraid to move sideways and take a different direction to move ahead);

- (b) Two, it never hurts to be recognised for the right reasons. Put up your hand for the tough assignments and then do a great job. Next time you will be a natural choice;
- (c) Three, find a mentor and, if appropriate, a sponsor. They are not the same, but as a sounding board and a promoter respectively, each can be invaluable. It never hurts to have someone who has your back;
- (d) Four, embrace who you are and what stage of your life cycle you are at. You will not always fit the mould or be what someone else expects you to be. You have to do what is best for you and that will change from time to time with family, career advancement and other responsibilities . The good news is, yes, you can have it all, but perhaps not all at the same time!
- (e) Five, develop your EQ! Try to self-assess the impression you create and build trusted relationships;
- (f) Six, Network! Network! Network! And again, never stop networking. Enough said!

- (g) Seven, don't be disheartened by the odd setback. As the saying goes, "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger". So learn the lessons and build on your experience. You won't make the same mistakes. It is important that you don't roll yourself into a ball and become risk averse.

- (g) Finally, and most importantly, back yourself in! Build on your strengths. You have unique talents so make the most of them! Make at least some of your own luck and ask yourself, why walk when you can fly?