**SPEECH 1**

Thank you for that lovely introduction and for the opportunity to speak with you all today. I am really thrilled to be asked to be part of your leadership discussions and I absolutely love our theme for the day. For me, the most important thing about leadership is your character and the values that guide your life. And the very first job of a leader is to inspire trust. Trust is the single most essential element to our ability to deliver extraordinary results in an enduring way.

So today we’re going to talk about trust, and the things I believe are important to explore to get to the point of trusting yourself and the trustworthy behaviours that build a culture of trust. Because trust is the response. Trustworthiness is what we have to judge.

If organisations are to sustain peak performance, their culture must be permeated with trust.

And where does the responsibility for developing this culture of trust fall? Squarely on the shoulders of leadership. Leaders must first gain the trust of those they lead.

A lot of leadership literature tells us that among all the attributes of the greatest leaders of our time, one stands above the rest: they are all highly trusted. You can have a compelling vision, rock-solid strategy, excellent communication skills, a skilled team, but if people don’t trust you, you will never get the results you want. I believe trust affects a leader’s impact more than any other single thing.

One of the mistakes a leader can make is to assume that others trust him simply by virtue of their title. It’s not a benefit that comes packaged with a nameplate on your door. It must be earned, and it takes time. As leaders, we are trusted only to the degree that people believe in our ability, consistency, integrity, and commitment to deliver.

We hear it a lot, don’t we; without trust any relationship will break down; at work, in our romantic relationships, in our friendships.

Now, you can’t have trust without being authentic. Because when you’re not authentic, you can be inconsistent. You can’t be authentic if you don’t know who you are. Or what your deepest held beliefs and values are.

Trusting yourself is about sharing your knowledge and your wisdom. It’s about allowing those around you to experience the real you, not the title.  When you trust yourself, you don’t hesitate to share the harvest of the momentum that you are building with others.

When you really trust yourself, you bring your authentic self to work every day in everything you do and how you do it.  Trusting yourself is much more than just confidence.  It is part of what you stand for and how you define yourself as a person.

And that’s really the starting point for thinking about how important it is to demonstrate trustworthiness to others and how your trust of others will foster high performance, collaboration and consistent conduct in others.

If we think about some of the greatest achievements in the world’s history, it would be hard to imagine the Thomas Edisons, the Ben Franklins, Walt Disneys, the Steve Jobs waking up in the morning, putting in the long hours, doing all of the hard work it takes to get extraordinary things done without completely having their hearts in it.

In his famous Stanford University commencement speech Steve Jobs himself said love what you do.

Now, you don’t work in the same organisation for almost 20 years without loving what you do. I’ve worked in the same organisation for almost 20 years because my values align to that of the organisation.

When I applied for the job at Workpower - I had finished my social trainer’s qualification and I was ready to work. I had seen a job for a job support worker and there was this catch phrase on the advertisement that said support people to make their mark in the world. And for some reason that resonated with me. So, I drove my 1978 little red Toyota corolla into Workpower’s head office in East Perth, brought my mum with me, left her in the car down below, and bounded up the stairs. I got the job, I was 21 years old.

Over the next ensuing 5 years, I was a supervisor, and then a manager; I worked across all divisions of the organisation. I put my hand up for committees, and projects, I was hungry to learn all that I could. I took as many opportunities presented to me as I could. Guided by people along the way that would say, you going for that job I hope Lee. They believed in me. I sat at the executive table at 26. I felt valued.

The access to opportunities presented to me over this period of time were significant. I could walk into my boss’ office and say, I’ve had an idea, and he would say, you go for it Lee. I was completely trusted. To make decisions, to explore new ways of doing things. I now give that same trust and opportunity to make decisions and explore innovation to my people.

It wasn’t always happy days. We had tough times to get through. Some of us would go head to head at the executive table. But there was always a difference between intellectual debate and personal attack. We respected each other’s differences, personalities, leadership styles. So, when we left the room, we still trusted each other, because we had each other’s backs. I felt respected.

I have always been driven by the work we do. I have never had a job in all these years with Workpower I haven’t loved. I believe in the work we do to create opportunities for people.

But - when I bounded up those stairs at East Perth all those years ago, never did I imagine that I would one day be the CEO of the organisation. It never entered my mind. Why would it?

I never thought I would be a CEO because I never had the ambition to be one. And there is nothing wrong with being ambitious, but to me, the passion I have for the work, the drive I have to continue it, that’s why I am the CEO of the organisation. It was the next opportunity for me to continue this work that I believe in.

Over the years, in the different roles that I have held I have learnt a great deal from each and every one. But there are two things that have always remained consistent; 1 - my personal belief in the work we do. Some people may call that a passion. I call it drive.

This drive saw me work very hard for many years. So hard that I didn’t always have the balance right. My life balance was pretty much non-existent.

And then I moved houses. I went from travelling over a couple of hours a day. In the car I would make all of my phone calls on the way in or on the way home. I was constantly working. I would work late to ‘finish something off in the peace and quiet’ or to ‘miss the traffic’. But once I had moved closer to where I was working, I’d still work long hours but if I kept to the same timings, I suddenly had myself some extra time at the beginning and the end of the day. So I got a dog. And then suddenly I was expected to be home to walk the puppy, feed the puppy, love the puppy. And I got a little bit of life balance back. This is important to share with you, because in doing this, I had to relax and let go a little bit, and it was imperative that I had an extraordinary group of people in my executive team. That I trusted.

My leadership style and approach is to set the direction and clear expectations and then let people be. Let it be, I like to say. I may not choose to do it that way, but if the outcome is the same and the process has integrity, I am comfortable. I give my team a lot of autonomy and space to do their work. And they respond positively to that level of trust and responsibility. In fact they shine. As long as I feel informed. That’s a very known factor about keeping Lee happy. Sometimes I think I’ve made myself redundant and then I remember a saying that Lao Tzu said… Chinese philosopher.. “A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves”.

What’s changed for me as I’ve grown as a leader is that I probably don’t drive people as hard as I once did. The expectation is the same but I am more patient and relaxed about waiting to hear about the outcome rather than being alongside every step of the way.

Let it be ☺

The other thing that has never changed are my high expectations. As a leader, I am known for having high expectations of behaviour, of delivering outcomes people are employed to achieve. I achieve this by modelling the behaviour I want to see. I can’t expect others to keep to a timeline if I don’t model that behaviour. You are what you allow. If you don’t want it happening, call it, and don’t do it yourself.

I’m very transparent about what I expect and my intrinsic value of equality and my unwavering sense of justice and fairness is evident in our discussions at the executive table. When new members of staff commence I induct every one of them personally. I outline expectations to them all – I tell them whether you’re here for a short time, or a long time, everyone is expected to follow the same set of behaviours.

Our organisational values are behavioural based. So, when we introduced them over 13 years ago and consulted with the staff group at the time, staff requested a clear set of behaviours that state examples of what to do and what not to do.

In our organisation, our values are deeply seeded in everything we do. We hire on values, JD’s are written against them, we run competitions and campaigns on our intranet about them, and importantly, we focus our individual development plans and performance reviews on them and manage day to day performance based on them. We have let people go for breaches of them. And this is consistently applied. There are no exceptions.

People perform better when they know where they stand. When they are clear on the outcomes they are expected to achieve and the behaviours everyone is expected to display. When they are trusted to do the work you employed them to do. There are no muddy waters, no favours - it allows people to just get on with the job at hand.

My great grandmother was one of the first suffragettes fighting for a woman’s right to vote in 1913 in the UK. I am assured she was of the peaceful kind.

Her daughter, my grandmother met her husband at a political rally, raised three children and owned and managed a bookstore in Perth in the 1940’s – through to the 1960’s. In 1969 she was arrested from the bookstore having refused to remove the book Portnoy’s Complaint. She was wholeheartedly against censorship and she believed in a consumer’s right to select the literature they wanted to read. Foolishly, or independently, depending on your view, she refused representation and represented herself in court and the case (for her and others) was thrown out. She loved what she did; she worked in that bookstore for 20 years.

I share these snippets from my archives of my ancestry to illustrate two points.

Our history is what shapes us... what guides us.

I believe that great leaders lead by their beliefs and values. Values are enormously important when running an organisation. The people who work with you, those who look to you for answers, your own people, people in the community, even your competitors have a right to know how you see the world. If you want people to follow you, they have that right.

My great-grandmother not only stood up for what she believed in, she actively fought for it. My grandmother, too, actively stood up for what she believed in. It doesn’t take much to figure out that by being raised with these kinds of stories around me that I too would develop strong beliefs and not be afraid to communicate or live them.

Leadership about the powerful influence of our own behaviour. Which comes from our values, our deepest held beliefs and principles. They’re the stuff of our character, our convictions about the things we deem most important. This is about finding your truth and your voice as a leader.

In preparing for this I canvassed my executive and asked them – can you say off the top of your head what I stand for? Loyalty, trust, equality and justice. All 3 of them came up with one or two of those variations each. And I didn’t even have to pay them much! ☺

I learnt from my parents by the way I was raised. My parents wanted my brother and I to feel that whatever we wanted to accomplish in life was possible, nothing was off limits as long as we found what we loved to do. They were also realistic that we live in a world in which conflict, racism, injustice and other forms of bias continue to affect us. They raised us to celebrate and value diversity, to be proud of ourselves, of our family traditions, to always follow the golden rule of respect and that meant respecting other family’s traditions and to value people regardless of the colour of their skin, their physical ability, the language they speak, the people they love..

So, for me, it was inevitable that I would find my vocation working to give people a voice, making life a little bit easier and meaningful for people who may not as easily have the opportunities to do so or who may be silent or unheard or misunderstood from stigma.

My upbringing has shaped me and guided me and where my values – a strong sense of justice and equality, and my passion and compassion have come from.

Perhaps also my strong will and stubbornness :-P

I think people can sometimes have a misguided notion that leadership is about everyone else. It isn’t. It’s about ourselves. But if we don’t journey inside first to be clear on our values, strengths, passion and purpose, our lack of grounding and trust in ourselves will undermine our leadership effectiveness every step of the way. Our ability to know ourselves, trust ourselves, know what matters and act in accordance with who we are as people will make us trusted leaders.

By putting your own identity and integrity into your leadership style, it enables you to create an environment based on what you truly believe. It’s the difference between being a divided person or one with integrity.

I truly believe everyone has the right to access the same opportunities as everyone else – I truly believe that – and the people that work for me know that. If what people see on the outside is not authentic you then they will not trust or follow you. If you show your vulnerabilities - that you don’t know everything, that you are willing to look to others, admit that you may not have the answer this time, people will be open to trusting you – because you’re stripped down and showed them who you are inside.

But, we’re all human and we’re built to be flawed. We’re learning every step of the way. So, in terms of self-management, to monitor your own behaviour, for me it’s about mindfulness.

As a leader, I have to be conscious and mindful about the influence I have on others.

Having a powerful level of influence comes with a caution. I don’t think there is any trivial comment or action. I appreciate that everything I do can have an impact on others. I may forget if I behaved badly when the going got tough, others will not. I have to know my impact. I have to be mindful of that, I have to know that something I may not even remember saying may have a devastating effect on someone who looks up to me or respects the position I hold.

Conversely, something I may have said years ago may have been inspiring to someone else. This mindfulness about impact and influence is important to building trust.

What happens in the wake of our actions, determines the story that is told about each of us in the organisation. It happens when you aren’t there. Leadership is enduring. The story that’s told about you when you leave the room and the story that will be told about us after we’re gone. It matters because when you’re conscious about that you have more ownership over two things: what you create and what you allow.

The same thing can be said about trust, right? Trusting others. It’s a social construct. It doesn’t exist outside of another person. Trust can be based on a feeling that you have the other person’s back when he or she is not in the room. It may be the confidence you will advocate the other person’s point of view with clarity and understanding.

Now:

For people to invest their trust in a leader, or in an organisation, **1** - they must feel safe. Not just physically safe, but emotionally and psychologically safe. We do all this hard work to minimise physical hazards in the workplace. We should be equally determined to create a safe zone; an atmosphere free of cheap shots, mockery, stereotypes, angry outbursts, threats, manipulation, humiliation, sarcastic remarks, and belittling humor.

The goal is to promote an atmosphere which is so safe that people offer suggestions, make observations, voice concerns, or raise questions without any worry of rejection, or recrimination.

**2** - For people to trust they need to feel informed. When we are routinely “left in the dark,” we quickly come to resent it. And resentment never breeds trust. In the absence of information, we “make sense” of things by speculating. Unfortunately, speculation is not a friend of trust. This is why managers and leaders must tirelessly communicate. Keeping people informed short-circuits any opportunity for speculation, anxiety, and fear, to choke out trust.

**3** - People are more prone to trust if they feel respected. Or to put it another way, people are not likely to trust if they are treated dismissively or derisively. And it’s not just the obvious ones - the tone of voice, the smirks or eye rolling. It’s emails and phone messages that go unanswered, or thumbing through papers while someone is making a point. Or checking email and text messages during a colleague’s presentation. These are all signs that people are not truly listening. And when people do not listen to us, we interpret it as a sign of disrespect.

**4** - In order to trust, people need to feel valued. When people help us feel good about ourselves, we reciprocate with good feelings about them. And feeling good about people is the first step in coming to trust them.

And, finally, and this is probably my biggest tip - if people are to trust, they need to feel understood. TRUST GROWS WHEN WE FEEL UNDERSTOOD.

The first requirement to build trust is to connect through understanding the other person. But, people do not trust us when we understand them. They trust us when they understand that we understand them. What that means is not “that we get it. What it means is that “They get it that we get it”. For that to happen, we have to listen and understand where they are really coming from, and truly connect with them, showing them that we understand. So that they know they have been connected with. That takes time and attention. They need to feel it.

Trust is all about relationships, and relationships are best built by establishing genuine connection. Ask questions, listen, and above all, show gratitude—it’s the primary trait of truly talented connectors. Grateful people are not entitled, they do not complain, and they do not gossip.

To finish up, the trust that leaders place in those they lead allows both the leader and their followers to excel. It is important to remember that it is not a momentary event but a series of investments over time that truly allows success.

To this end, leadership is a gift and its responsibility a privilege.

Your leadership, whatever may be your passion, can be used to benefit something bigger than yourself - for me it’s the broader community.

Now, to tie it all up - The wonderful Stephen Covey said:

Contrary to what most people believe, trust is not some soft, illusive quality that you either have or you don’t; rather, trust is a pragmatic, tangible, actionable asset that you can *create.*

So, to sum up;

* Know who you are and trust in that. To do this;
  + Understand what’s shaped you and guided you.
  + Draw from that your belief and values set and communicate that. Then, live by that, and set clear expectations of others. Be consistent.
  + Work hard to connect with and understand others.
* Trust others – let it be ☺
* Create a culture of trust
  + Make people feel safe.
  + Make people feel informed.
  + Make people feel respected.
  + Make people feel valued.
  + Make people feel understood.

From personal experience, I can guarantee some of these strategies really do work. Trust me.

**SPEECH 2**

My great grandmother was one of the first suffragettes fighting for a woman’s right to vote in 1913 in the UK. I am assured she was of the peaceful kind.

Her daughter, my grandmother met her husband at a political rally, raised three children and owned and managed a bookstore in Perth in the 1940’s – through to the 1960’s. In 1969 she was arrested from the bookstore having refused to remove the book Portnoy’s Complaint. She was wholeheartedly against censorship and she believed in a consumer’s right to select the literature they wanted to read. Foolishly, or independently, depending on your view, she refused representation and represented herself in court and the case (for her and others) was thrown out. She loved what she did; she worked in that bookstore for 20 years.

I share these snippets from my archives of my ancestry to illustrate two points.

Our history is what shapes us... what guides us. I believe that great leaders lead by their beliefs and values. Values are enormously important when running an organisation. The people who work with you, those who look to you for answers, your own people, people in the community, even your competitors have a right to know how you see the world. We know that the ideas that form the basis of your leadership will develop in a number of ways. We also know that the role of parental influence in leadership is not common to any of us.

* My great-grandmother not only stood up for what she believed in, she actively fought for it. My grandmother, too, actively stood up for what she believed in. It doesn’t take much to figure out that by being raised with these kinds of stories around me that I too would develop strong beliefs and not be afraid to communicate or live them.

My leadership story is actually my life story. Every character, every twist and turn in my personal plot, every bit of my leadership is shaped by my life story. Understanding the past and present will help me shape the future chapters and answer the question: ‘How do I want my leadership story to end?’ Because of course, that is entirely up to me and those chapters are not yet written.

Now that we’ve got the back story out of the way, I am going to share three chapters of my story with you today.

**The first chapter is about understanding, as leaders, the powerful influence of our own behaviour. It’s about our values. It’s about the little things.**

I learnt from my parents by the way I was raised. My parents wanted my brother and I to feel that whatever we wanted to accomplish in life was possible, nothing was off limits as long as we found what we loved to do. They were also realistic that we live in a world in which conflict, racism, injustice and other forms of bias continue to affect us. They raised us to celebrate and value diversity, to be proud of ourselves, of our family traditions, to always follow the golden rule of respect and that meant respecting other family’s traditions and to value people regardless of the colour of their skin, their physical ability, the language they speak, the people they love..

So, for me, it was inevitable that I would find my vocation working with people. Giving people a voice, making life a little bit easier and meaningful for people who may not as easily have the opportunities to do so or who may be silent or unheard or misunderstood from stigma.

I feel very fortunate to have had that upbringing and I understand how the influence of my parents and upbringing has shaped me and guided me and where perhaps my strong sense of justice and equality, passion and compassion comes from.

Perhaps also my strong will and stubbornness :-P

Now, as a leader myself, I have to be conscious and mindful about the influence I have on others. I not only need to set the direction, but communicate that direction. I must bring people aboard, excite them about the vision and earn the support. If I do that right, they, in turn will inspire those around them and soon everyone will be focusing on the same goal. Expressing ideology, what you believe in, what the vision is and how to get there, is one of a leader’s more powerful tools.

Having a powerful level of influence also comes with a caution. I don’t think there is any trivial comment or action. I appreciate that everything I do can have an impact on others. I may forget if I behaved badly when the going got tough, others will not. I have to know my impact. I have to know that something I may not even remember saying may have a devastating effect on someone who looks up to me.

Conversely, something I may have said years ago may have been inspiring to someone else. This mindfulness about impact and influence is important. Recently I had cause to issue someone with a final written warning. After receiving their notice, they turned around at the door, and said, thank you for listening to me and making me feel heard. So despite having received a fairly serious consequence, and accepting the responsibility of that I am sure, what they felt from that experience was heard.

What happens in the wake of our actions, determines the story that is told about each of us in the organisation. It happens when you aren’t there. Leadership is enduring. The story that’s told about you when you leave the room and the story that will be told about us after we’re gone. It matters because when you’re conscious about that you have more ownership over two things: what you create and what you allow.

Sometimes if I feel I need to get a message across with clarity and conviction, I will ask myself – what do I want them to remember when I am gone. And I will say only that. Sometimes of a morning, when I get into my office early, I will ask myself, who need to hear from me? Who needs to know what I appreciate about them? And I might send an email or make a call or send a card. I want people to know that I value them choosing to do the work they do. That they’re important and I appreciate them. That probably goes to my approach and style.

Recently my Chairman collected some performance feedback form my executive after my first year in the gig and one of the things my team members said, Lee really makes people feel like she cares about them. That was meaningful for me, because I do care and if that’s what people feel when I’m not there, then maybe the culture is pretty good.

***Find your passion. Love what you do.***

I’ve worked in the same organisation for the past 16 years because my values align to that of the organisation.

Now, you don’t work in the same organisation this long without loving what you do.

When I applied for the job at Workpower - I had finished my social trainer’s qualification and I was ready to work. I had seen a job for a job support worker and there was this catch phrase on the advertisement that said support people to make their mark in the world. And for some reason that resonated with me. So, I drove my little red Toyota corolla into Workpower’s head office in East Perth, brought my mum with me, left in the car down below, and bounded up the stairs. I got the job, I was 21 years old.

Over the next ensuing 5 years, I was a supervisor, and then a manager; I worked across all divisions of the organisation. I put my hand up for committees, and projects, I was hungry to learn all that I could. I took as many opportunities presented to me as I could. Guided by people along the way that would say, you going for that job I hope Lee.

The access to opportunities presented to me over this period of time were significant. I was also very fortunate to have the respect and influence of my predecessor where I could walk into his office and say, I’ve had an idea, and he would say, you go for it.

He had created a climate where people could learn by doing, learn from experience, take risks and have a shot. The fact there was an internal candidate in the running for his position when he left us last year is a testament to his own leadership and I learned a lot from him.

I have always been driven by the work we do. I have never had a job in all these yes with Workpower I haven’t loved. I believe in the work we do to create opportunities for people.

When I bounded up those stairs at East Perth all those years ago, never did I imagine that I would one day be the CEO of the organisation. It never entered my mind. Why would it?

I never thought I would be a CEO because I never had the ambition to be one. And there is nothing wrong with being ambitious, but to me, the passion I have for the work, the drive I have to continue it, that’s why I am the CEO of the organisation. It was the next opportunity for me to continue this work.

In the same way that those opportunities were made available to me, I see it as my responsibility to provide leadership to my organisation and to the community to ensure that opportunities is just as easily presented to those who may not easily have access to them. I continue to be passionate about that, about creating opportunities for people. I continue to be inspired by the hope that our work gives people a chance and opportunity to make their mark in the world.

**My final chapter is about responsibility.**

I read a book recently – write this down if you like a good leadership book – Boundaries for Leaders by Dr Henry Cloud. He coined the phrase (and developed a concept) that leaders are ridiculously in charge of a whole range of things (read it if you’re curious), but I loved that phrase, because it kind of feels like that sometimes.

One of my more recent leadership learnings relates to my first 12 months as CEO.   I believe I had a fairly well-developed sense of responsibility already (in fact one therapist once told me I had an over developed sense of responsibility), and prior to becoming Workpower’s CEO there were times where I acted as the CEO.

It wasn’t until I was actually in the job, and in fact driving to work on Day 1, that I realised what the responsibility of being a CEO actually felt like.  The things that kept my predecessor Shane awake before now kept me awake and that weight at times can be overwhelming.

There are two things that I feel heaviest, the safety of everyone in the organisation and the financial health of the organisation.  I sat at the exec table for 10 years so in the past I shared a responsibility for these things and I felt the accountability when things did not go right, but I have to say it is a completely different level when the buck stops with you.

I now know and have apologised many times to my old boss (all in good humour) for the lessons I have learnt that can’t be taught, they must be experienced.

Now when I try to pass on those messages and sense of responsibility and accountability to my executives and staff, I do so with the wisdom that comes with that experience.

An example of this was when I got the phone call, Lee just reporting in that Julie Bloggs has absconded from her workplace and we can’t find her. Intellectually, you know you have good people taking care of it. You ask the right questions. You hope with everything that this person will be OK. And at those times of crisis you need to be calm when others around you are not.

But inside, the moment from that phone call to the moment she is found, you know that’s on you if something terrible happens. And you allow yourself to think about informing her family, informing the board, getting your media advice and going on TV. Because it happened on your watch. That’s something you carry with the responsibility that comes with being in charge.

That said, responsibility isn’t bad. Leadership is a great privilege. Despite all of the pressures, despite all the problems that end up with you as leader, I’m not sure there is anything more enriching than to give meaning to others. And whether that’s creating an opportunity for someone who needs some support to access it, or allowing an executive to have free reign on an innovation. It’s a wonderful thing giving responsibility to others around you, it really is.

So let’s sum up the morals of the story.

* Understand what’s shaped you and guided you.
* Draw from that your belief and values set and communicate them.
* Know your impact.
* Know that the small things matter.
* Love what you do.
* Acknowledge and embrace the responsibility.

The end. For now.

**SPEECH 3**

Thanks for having me this morning; it’s always great to be involved in leadership WA.

When I was having a think about your theme for the day and what I might share with you, it struck me that the principles around your personal brand, authentic leadership, values driven leadership – they’re all about you. I think for all the wonderful articles and journals and literature on leadership, there is often a misconception that leadership is about everyone else. Leadership is, first and foremost, about you. If we don’t get to journey inside first to be clear about our values, strengths, passions and purpose, we won’t have the necessary grounding to be effective or credible. I believe that our ability to know ourselves, to know what matters to us, what we stand for and then act in accordance with who we are as people is key to great leadership.

If we are grounded in that understanding of who we are – it becomes an invaluable compass for decision making, making the hard decisions, figuring out the best team composition, navigating complex issues, etc.

I believe that great leaders lead by their beliefs and values. The most admired leaders throughout history - Mandela, Lincoln – they had strong beliefs about matters of principle. Values are enormously important in leadership, because they are the stuff of our character. The people who work with you, those who look to you for answers, your own people, people in the community, even your competitors – they have a right to know how you see the world. If you want people to follow you, because that’s what leadership is about – influence and impact – then they have that right.

I have worked in the same organisation for the past 17 ½ years – I have held different roles in that time – but I’ve worked there that long because my values align to that of the organisation. And because I wholeheartedly believe in the purpose of the organisation. I am passionate about the work we do – I truly believe that everyone has the right to the same access to opportunities and I see it as my responsible to provide leadership to my organisation and to the community to ensure that opportunities are just as easily presented to those who may not easily have access to them. I continue to be passionate about that, it’s not just a job to me it’s a belief in the work we do. Giving people a voice, making life a little bit easier and meaningful for people who may be silent or unheard or misunderstood from stigma. I continue to be inspired by the hope that our work gives people a chance and opportunity to make their mark in the world.

I am very fortunate to have my purpose and passion. There’s a genuine peace that comes with being in a place where you’ve chosen to be and where it fundamentally suits you. It’s very grounding AND you can more easily weather the ups and downs. People that don’t have that grounding can potentially get thrown around by the winds of change or pander to whatever audience is putting pressure on them. That undermines your credibility – staying true to who you in in times of change and challenge brings credibility. If we aren’t authentic, we most certainly cannot achieve credibility.

There’s a couple of leadership authors – Kouzes and Posner – that have written together for over 30 years – they developed a model known as the 5 practices of exemplary leadership. They’ve undertaken an ongoing study over that time, that they have tried and tested and restested over 3 decades and each time they have reached the same resounding conclusion – that credibility is the single most important characteristic in leaders that people want to follow. Regardless of the type of organisation you work in, regardless of the culture or political environment, when people want to follow their leader they become more engaged in their work.

When it comes to effective communication strategies, I think it’s important to be conscious and mindful about the influence we have on others. As a leader, we not only need to set the direction, but communicate that direction. We must bring people aboard, excite them about the vision and earn the support. If we do that right, they, in turn will inspire those around them and soon everyone will be focusing on the same goal. Expressing what you believe in, what the vision is and how to get there is one of a leader’s more powerful tools.

Having a powerful level of influence also comes with a caution. I don’t think there is any trivial comment or action. I appreciate that everything I do can have an impact on others. I may forget if I behaved badly when the going got tough, others will not. I have to know my impact. I have to know that something I may not even remember saying may have a devastating effect on someone who looks up to me.

Conversely, something I may have said years ago may have been inspiring to someone else. This mindfulness about impact and influence is important. Recently I had cause to issue someone with a final written warning. After receiving their notice, they turned around at the door, and said, thank you for listening to me and making me feel heard. So despite having received a fairly serious consequence, and accepting the responsibility of that I am sure, what they felt from that experience was heard.

What happens in the wake of our actions, determines the story that is told about each of us in the organisation. It happens when you aren’t there. Leadership is enduring. The story that’s told about you when you leave the room and the story that will be told about us after we’re gone. It matters because when you’re conscious about that you have more ownership over what you create and what you allow and what and how you communicate.

Sometimes if I feel I need to get a message across with clarity and conviction, I will ask myself – what do I want them to remember when I am gone. And I will say only that. Sometimes of a morning, when I get into my office early, I will ask myself, who need to hear from me? Who needs to know what I appreciate about them? And I might send an email or make a call or send a card. I want people to know that I value them choosing to do the work they do. That they’re important and I appreciate them. That probably goes to my approach and style but I share that with you as an example of communication and also perhaps my values in practice.

My organisation recently undertook a rebranding exercise – in order to have the right messaging and imagery, we went through a process of describing the fundamental truth of the organisation – what is it we stand for and how do we do that – how do we act in accordance with our purpose and values. Defining your own personal brand is no different – what is your fundamental truth? People need to believe you are the real deal if they’re going to follow you. If you know who you are, your values, strength, passions and purpose, and you act accordingly, then what you project to the outside world will align with the inside, with your true self, you will be authentic and you will be credible and most certainly as a leader.

**SPEECH 4**

Good morning everyone it’s always great to be part of a leadership WA experience.

Leadership and the heart.

Kouzes and Posner.

Despite the fact that I find it difficult to say their names, I have a soft spot for these guys. Their 5 practices of exemplary leadership was what my employer sent me off to study on my first supervisory training course some 16 years ago. But the thing I love about them, is that they repeatedly undertake leadership study, they test and they retest – they’ve done it for 30 years. And the thing that comes back repeatedly as the attribute people are most likely to follow in a leader – credibility.

Now you can’t have credibility without being authentic. You can’t be authentic if you don’t know who you are. Or what your deepest held beliefs and values are. Or if you’re not living by them.

Let’s start with a hands up exercise to get the blood flowing. Put your hand up if you care about something? OK, that’s no brainer.

Keep your hand up if you are absolutely in love with something or someone? For me, it’s a 5 month old puppy.

Now, keep your hand up if you are absolutely in love with what you do at work.

Now as mature adults we will all know that it’s not enough just to love or be in love, you have to show it. And to show it, you have to care.

If we think about some of the greatest achievements in the world’s history, it would be hard to imagine the Thomas Edisons, the Ben Franklins, Walt Disneys, the Steve Jobs waking up in the morning, putting in the long hours, doing all of the hard work it takes to get extraordinary things done without completely having their hearts in it.

In his famous Standford University commencement speech Steve Jobs himself said love what you do.

I’ve worked in the same organisation for the past 16 years because my values align to that of the organisation.

Now, you don’t work in the same organisation this long without loving what you do.

When I applied for the job at Workpower - I had finished my social trainer’s qualification and I was ready to work. I had seen a job for a job support worker and there was this catch phrase on the advertisement that said support people to make their mark in the world. And for some reason that resonated with me. So, I drove my little red Toyota corolla into Workpower’s head office in East Perth, brought my mum with me, left in the car down below, and bounded up the stairs. I got the job, I was 21 years old.

Over the next ensuing 5 years, I was a supervisor, and then a manager; I worked across all divisions of the organisation. I put my hand up for committees, and projects, I was hungry to learn all that I could. I took as many opportunities presented to me as I could. Guided by people along the way that would say, you going for that job I hope Lee.

The access to opportunities presented to me over this period of time were significant. I was also very fortunate to have the respect and influence of my predecessor where I could walk into his office and say, I’ve had an idea, and he would say, you go for it.

He had created a climate where people could learn by doing, learn from experience, take risks and have a shot. The fact there was an internal candidate in the running for his position when he left the organisation after 20 years is a testament to his own leadership.

I have always been driven by the work we do. I have never had a job in all these years with Workpower I haven’t loved. I believe in the work we do to create opportunities for people.

When I bounded up those stairs at East Perth all those years ago, never did I imagine that I would one day be the CEO of the organisation. It never entered my mind. Why would it?

I never thought I would be a CEO because I never had the ambition to be one. And there is nothing wrong with being ambitious, but to me, the passion I have for the work, the drive I have to continue it, that’s why I am the CEO of the organisation. It was the next opportunity for me to continue this work.

In the same way that those opportunities were made available to me, I see it as my responsibility to provide leadership to my organisation and to the community to ensure that opportunities is just as easily presented to those who may not easily have access to them. I continue to be passionate about that, about creating opportunities for people. I continue to be inspired by the hope that our work gives people a chance and opportunity to make their mark in the world.

There’s a peace that comes with being in a place where you’ve chosen to be and it fundamentally suits you. It’s very grounding. And when things aren’t going so well, you can certainly weather the ups and downs more easily.

My great grandmother was one of the first suffragettes fighting for a woman’s right to vote in 1913 in the UK. I am assured she was of the peaceful kind.

Her daughter, my grandmother met her husband at a political rally, raised three children and owned and managed a bookstore in Perth in the 1940’s – through to the 1960’s. In 1969 she was arrested from the bookstore having refused to remove the book Portnoy’s Complaint. She was wholeheartedly against censorship and she believed in a consumer’s right to select the literature they wanted to read. Foolishly, or independently, depending on your view, she refused representation and represented herself in court and the case (for her and others) was thrown out. She loved what she did; she worked in that bookstore for 20 years.

I share these snippets from my archives of my ancestry to illustrate two points.

Our history is what shapes us... what guides us. I believe that great leaders lead by their beliefs and values. Values are enormously important when running an organisation. The people who work with you, those who look to you for answers, your own people, people in the community, even your competitors have a right to know how you see the world. If you want people to follow you, they have that right.

My great-grandmother not only stood up for what she believed in, she actively fought for it. My grandmother, too, actively stood up for what she believed in. It doesn’t take much to figure out that by being raised with these kinds of stories around me that I too would develop strong beliefs and not be afraid to communicate or live them.

And as leaders, it’s about the powerful influence of our own behaviour. It’s about our values.

Values are our deepest held beliefs and principles. They’re the stuff of our character, our convictions about the things we deem most important. This is about finding your truth and your voice as a leader. The most admired leaders throughout history had strong beliefs about matters of principle – Mandela, Abraham Lincoln,. Do you know what yours are? Who do you admire and why?

I learnt from my parents by the way I was raised. My parents wanted my brother and I to feel that whatever we wanted to accomplish in life was possible, nothing was off limits as long as we found what we loved to do. They were also realistic that we live in a world in which conflict, racism, injustice and other forms of bias continue to affect us. They raised us to celebrate and value diversity, to be proud of ourselves, of our family traditions, to always follow the golden rule of respect and that meant respecting other family’s traditions and to value people regardless of the colour of their skin, their physical ability, the language they speak, the people they love..

So, for me, it was inevitable that I would find my vocation working to give people a voice, making life a little bit easier and meaningful for people who may not as easily have the opportunities to do so or who may be silent or unheard or misunderstood from stigma.

My upbringing has shaped me and guided me and where my values – a strong sense of justice and equality, and my passion and compassion have come from.

Perhaps also my strong will and stubbornness :-P

I think people can sometimes have a misguided notion that leadership is about everyone else. But if we don’t journey inside first to be clear on our values, strengths, passion and purpose, our lack of grounding will undermine our leadership effectiveness every step of the way. I believe our ability to achieve greatness as leaders hinges on our ability to know ourselves, know what matters and act in accordance with who we are as people.

Putting your own identity and integrity into your leadership style enables you to create an environment based on what you truly believe. It’s the difference between being a divided person or one with integrity. I truly believe everyone has the right to the same opportunities as everyone else – the people that work for me know that. If what people see on the outside is not the authentic you then they will not trust or follow you.

Leadership is a gift.

If one of the goals of this program is to influence people to get off their proverbial bums and do something, to contribute back, then I am sure it has.

Your leadership, your passion, can be used to benefit the broader community. A couple of hundred years ago, Benjamin Franklin shared with the world the secret of his success. 'Never leave that 'til tomorrow,' he said, 'Which you could do today.' I think of that saying often.

You can remember this experience what it’s been – enlightening, challenging, wonderful - or you can take it one step further and take what you’ve gained and do something with it. It doesn’t end here; you are a part of something now, something great. And, I have no doubt there are great things ahead for WA with all of you out there making your mark.

So, find what you love – how can you inspire without being inspired?

Understand what’s shaped you and guided you.

Draw from that your belief and values set and communicate and live by them.