

Leading with Heart: Anne Leets of The Leets Consortium On The Power of Authentic Women's Leadership

An Interview With Pirie Jones Grossman



Pirie Jones Grossman · Follow

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In today's dynamic world, the concept of leadership is continuously evolving. While traditional leadership models have often been male-dominated, there is a growing recognition of the unique strengths and perspectives that women bring to these roles. This series aims to explore how women can become more effective leaders by authentically embracing their femininity and innate strengths, rather than conforming to traditional male leadership styles. In this series, we are talking to successful women leaders, coaches, authors, and experts who can provide insights and personal stories on how embracing their inherent feminine qualities has enhanced their leadership abilities. As part of this series, we had the pleasure of interviewing Anne Leets.

Anne Leets has first-hand knowledge of what it takes to be effective in a global organization, achieve sales, profit and distribution targets, develop global brand strategy, build teams, lead change and accomplish large scale, corporate initiatives. Throughout her career, she has consistently led national teams to record results despite significant economic challenges, reorganizations, downsizing and corporate takeovers. As an executive leader in Sales, Marketing, Operations, Product Development and Training, she gained operational knowledge and business acumen serving at Fortune 500 companies with iconic brands. She has achieved success in Chief Executive Officer and Company President roles. Her coaching effectiveness is enhanced by her hands-on experience in highly competitive and fast-paced corporate and entrepreneurial environments. She joined [The Leets Consortium](#) as a coach and speaker in 2014 and now serves as CEO. TLC is Woman-Owned Small Business and a Certified B Corporation.

Thank you so much for joining us in this interview series. Before we dive into our discussion about authentic, feminine leadership, our readers would love to “get to know you” a bit better. Can you share with us the backstory about what brought you to your specific career path?

A rewarding career in Fortune 500 companies with iconic brands gave me opportunities to build my experience as a senior leader in sales, marketing, operations, and as a company President.

When I joined my husband, Peter, at TLC in 2014, I was delighted to find I could share my knowledge, insights and business acumen through my coaching and speaking engagements.

It's very exciting and rewarding to connect with leaders, or those aspiring to be, and help them discover and embrace opportunities to enhance their capabilities, thrive in their careers, and become effective leaders.

This "consultant" role is my signature on a legacy I've built supporting the success of others.

What do you think makes your company stand out? Can you share a story?

Every decision we make, everything we do, and everyone on our team is guided by our values...we live our mission statement every day. Early on, we decided it was important to give back to the community that supports us. Each time we thank a client for their business, we donate a wheelchair in their name through Free Wheelchair Mission. We find our clients share our passion for changing lives and each year we give hundreds of wheelchairs to people in need.

You are a successful business leader. Which three character traits do you think were most instrumental to your success? Can you please share a story or example for each?

AUTHENTICITY. Leaders who can find ways to be honest and true to their values in a wide variety of situations can gain the trust and the support of team members, colleagues, and leaders.

WORK ETHIC. There is no substitute for commitment, perseverance, and high-quality hard work. It's also essential to recognize when your best is enough and when perfectionism becomes your enemy.

GENEROSITY. Share your knowledge, skills, experience and expertise generously as you will only be as good as the people around you. Recognize when you support the success of others, success will be yours.

Leadership often entails making difficult decisions or hard choices between two apparently good paths. Can you share a story with us about a hard decision or choice you had to make as a leader? I'm curious to understand how these challenges have shaped your leadership.

Difficult decisions are often not a choice and the hardest ones most often impact people. Leaders must find ways to bring the team along and execute what's required. Listening to their concerns and responding with empathy and support can help people move through the issues and support the organization. They may never agree with or even like the decision but getting them "comfortable with what needs to happen" can be powerful. Without that, you won't get the compliance and execution needed to make the decision worth it.

Ok, thank you for that. Let's now jump to the primary focus of our interview. Can you share a personal experience where embracing your unique leadership style, which might not align with traditional expectations, led to a significant positive impact in your organization or team?

Early in my career, women seemed to try and emulate male leaders...we even wore dark suits with floppy bow ties! As it turns out, women have many advantages and just need to leverage their best strengths to have an advantage and establish value in the workplace: communication, collaboration, empathy, relationship building, work ethic, organization, negotiation, and critical thinking. Those innate skills have served me well as a woman and as a leader.

In your journey as a leader, how have you balanced demonstrating resilience, often seen as a masculine trait, with showing vulnerability, which is equally powerful, but typically feminine? Can you give an example where this balance created a meaningful difference?

Resilience is a critical competency in the fast paced, highly competitive and ever-changing world we live in. It's essential to cultivate resilience in yourself and in others. The foundations for this are positivity (see the upside and possibilities) as well as confidence (knowledge we can do it and thrive). As a leader, we have a responsibility to communicate honestly but in a way that encourages resilience, especially when it comes to change.

As a woman in leadership, how have you navigated and challenged gender stereotypes, especially in situations where traditional male-dominated approaches are the norm? What strategies have you employed to remain authentic to your style?

The first thing I did was stop dressing like a man! I decided it wasn't me and felt downright silly! We all need supporters and I found opportunities to gain the support of mentors and sponsors, some of which were men. From all of them, I observed what success looked like and found ways to do it "my way". Leveraging my strengths in communication, collaboration and empathy, I soon built a reputation as a team player and an influential leader (even if I didn't have the title).

How do you utilize emotional intelligence and active listening to create an inclusive environment in your team or organization? Could you share a specific instance where these qualities particularly enhanced team dynamics or performance?

We used to call these "people skills" and that's what they are. If we are aware of our own emotions and the emotions of others we can be highly effective and influence the outcomes we are looking for. Active listening leads to empathy...empathy leads to influence...and influence is leadership. Placing a high value on this is reflected in many of my interactions with family, colleagues, clients and friends...and I work at it every day.

What role has mentorship played in developing your authentic leadership style, and how do you communicate authentically to inspire and empower both your mentors and mentees?

So many times, I think about what I do as a leadership coach and wish I had one as my younger self! I sure made a lot of mistakes! But what I did have were many examples of good leaders who inspired me to do my best work. That's what I try to do...encourage and inspire others to try, fail, learn from mistakes and get better with each experience. I never encourage perfection...it's over-rated!

Ok super. Here is the main question of our interview. Based on your experience and research, can you please share "5 Ways Leading Authentically As A Woman Will Affect Your Leadership"?

- 1 . Have integrity. People will trust and respect you if you stay true to your values .
- 2 . How you communicate is significantly more important that what you communicate. Words matter. Consider how your message will "land" and what you would like the outcome to be. That will help you communicate strategically and with purpose.

3 . Demonstrate empathy in your interactions, by actively listening and responding thoughtfully. Be able to see the other person's point of view, even if you disagree.

4 . Build relationships and the skills of the people around you. There is only so much you can do by yourself. Teams are the heart of organizations and help you "scale" success.

5 . Do consistent high-quality work and do what you say you will do when others are counting on you.

Are there potential pitfalls or challenges associated with being an empathetic leader? How can these be addressed?

Yes...real pitfalls. Empathy must be balanced and isn't "one size fits all". Too much empathy for individual concerns can compromise what's best for the organization or even other team members. Approach all situations with empathy, listening and acknowledgement of concerns. Follow this with a "call to action" emphasizing the "why" and "benefits". Ask team members for their commitment to support the final decision.

You are a person of great influence. If you could start a movement that would bring the most amount of good to the most amount of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger. :-)

Kindness. We have a significant shortage of it in the world today.

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Thank you for the time you spent sharing these fantastic insights. We wish you only continued success in your great work!