

MAKING WAVES: A LEADER WHO HAPPENS TO BE A WOMAN

Sarah McArthur

In November 2022, I was thrilled to go on my very first cruise. Invited as a special guest of then CEO of Celebrity Cruises Lisa Lutoff-Perlo to the inaugural sailing of the cruise ship Beyond, I was excited to experience a new (to me) type of travel. Lisa asked me along so that I would be more knowledgeable about her and “cruising” to better help her as we took on the challenge of writing her book *Making Waves*.

Telling family, friends, and colleagues that I was going on a cruise as research for writing a book brought countless smiles. No one felt in the slightest bit sorry for me when I explained to them that my job was to enjoy myself as much as possible and in that I had done a very good job.

A Leader Who Happens to Be a Woman

When I first started working with Lisa, I understood her wanting to focus on her leadership journey more than on the fact that she is a woman who has achieved a level of leadership that many other women have not yet been afforded. I shared with Lisa Frances

Hesselbein's response when introduced as a "woman leader" as if her gender was the most important attribute of her leadership.

Frances would reply to the introduction that she was rather "a leader who happens to be a woman. I am a leader first." With that simple statement, we immediately understood that her focus on being a leader was more important to her than her gender.

Lisa loved this story and with it we were immediately on the same page with Frances to describe leadership from Lisa's unique perspective as a leader who happens to be a woman in a male-dominated industry.

Another Frances story I shared with Lisa that cemented our working together relationship as one of purpose and fun I have shared with many others before and since. And I am excited to share it here with you.

Frances always listened to understand and then she would distill what she heard into a sentence or phrase or what I call a *Francesism*. She had a way of simplifying the most complicated subjects and making them easy to remember and fun.

Over the years, Frances and I would often meet for lunch at our friend Alex von Bidder's Four Seasons Restaurant in Manhattan or at the cafeteria in her office building, the Mutual of America headquarters at 320 Park Ave.

I was always so struck when after our lunch she would search through her big black handbag for her lipstick. Finally, pulling it out of the bottom of her bag, she'd remove the cap, turn to look me right in the eye, and share with me, confidentially, this very important piece of wisdom that I'll share with you now:

"You always know a woman by the name of her lipstick," she would say. Then, she would expertly and deliberately apply the lipstick to her lips. No mirror needed.

When she had finished, she would say to me, "Mine is *All Heart*," and then she would put her lipstick in its barrel and plop it back into her purse.

When she shared this with me, I was in awe that everything about her exuded who she was as a leader

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and a person, even the name of her lipstick - All Heart.

"Let me check mine!"

Pulling my lipstick out of my bag, I read its name "Relentless Ruby!"

We'd laugh. Yes, that suits me to a T. Now, put our lipstick missions together, and what do you get? Love that will not quit!

And it really is true. Those who know me know I have been relentless in my determination to learn from Frances. And, many times, at a proverbial fork in the road, I have chosen the unknown path because Frances's mentorship has encouraged me to do so.

That is the thing about being mentored; it is one thing to find someone who we want to mentor us, to find someone we want to be like, who does something we want to do. And, then it is up to us. We have to put in the work to develop the relationship and follow their guidance as it applies to our own lives. They cannot do it for us—we have to do it.

There is an old anonymous quote framed on the wall in Frances's den that I love. It says, "Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." Frances did this herself and she has emboldened us to do the same.

Lisa Lutoff-Perlo is one who has gone where there is no path, and she has left a wonderful trail for us to follow. She has through diligence, determination, and a lot of heart, courage, and smart "scaled the corporate

ladder” and become a great leader. More than that, as one who includes, inspires, and encourages she raises the rest of us up with her. It is extraordinary to learn about who she is and how she has led, which I am excited you will have the opportunity to do when you read her article in this issue of *Leader to Leader*.

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Sarah McArthur is editor-in-chief of Leader to Leader, thought partner and trusted advisor to world-class leader former CEO of Boeing Commercial Airplanes and Ford Motor Company Alan Mulally, and executive producer of Defining Moments: a documentary about the life and leadership of Frances Hesselbein. She is editor and author of numerous books, including Making Waves, Work Is Love Made Visible, and Coaching for Leadership, advisory board member of the Frances Hesselbein Leadership Forum at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA), founding member of Marshall Goldsmith's 100 Coaches, and former chief operating officer of Marshall Goldsmith, Inc.