



Women & Leadership Australia eNewsletter

Profile questions

What's your name and role?

✉ Indira Kennedy

Director

Conscious Leadership

Questions

Two or three short sentences would be great for each answer.

1) What path has your career taken to date?

✉ I initially trained as an English and Drama teacher with a psychology major and taught for four 4 years. I took a part-time job as Publications Coordinator in the computer industry after having my two children and doing a bit of contract work from home. After divorcing and a retrenchment I fell into fundraising for a non-profit. Feeling stifled after 18 months, I went out on my own with the 'formula' I had developed. It was a huge leap into consulting in such a short time, but it worked brilliantly as a single mum because I had a full-time income from part-time work. I could attend the school functions and go to 'reading' and cope physically myself. 16 years later I still consult to nfp's and have continued to develop my skills into areas that inspire me, including formalising my interest in personal growth by qualifying as an Executive Coach and facilitator. My current drive is for greater involvement in corporate social responsibility and the power women have to make a difference with their own money and skills through the non-profit sector, the people with the means to make it happen.

I have just written a practical book for women's spiritual growth and a novel. Underpinning this has been a dedication to meditation and yoga as a way of life. It has helped me embrace life and be enthused by what is possible.

I sit on the Board of Prasad Australia, a non-profit supporting women and children at risk of AIDS in India.

2) Where do you find inspiration? Who have been your role models?

✎ From people who have created businesses that have benefited many. Women who openly shine and point the way for others.

I read many, many personal development books, especially those that have deeper, spiritual contexts that shine the light on behaviours and mindsets. Love is the key to life.

I have always sought the best teachers in anything I want to learn.

My greatest inspiration is life itself. It is important to engage with nature, stay connected to our basic truths, explore creativity, love and play. I have a strong spiritual connection that I nurture daily.

3) Do you see yourself as a role model to other women? Please elaborate.

✎ I get so excited when I get an insight into my own behaviour, apply it and see the change in my own life. I immediately want to teach others so they can benefit too.

As a teacher I must practice what I preach, and as a mother it's my duty to my daughters to provide a strong platform they can launch from.

It is our responsibility to speak up about our experiences so other women can have some guidance along the way. It helps to create courage. A great example is the 4 minute mile – impossible until someone finally broke it, and then so many followed on so quickly. It's nothing now. Women need to see what can be achieved by other women; we can't hide our successes any longer if the world is to progress quickly out of the upheaval that's been created.

Without those who have inspired me I don't think I would have had the courage to be adventurous and face the obstacles along the way. I can return that favour.

4) What experiences are you really proud of? Highlights, achievements, celebrations?

✎ Setting up my own business and still running it 16 years on.

Growing and learning as I discovered new interests and desires.

Setting up one of the first after-school-care programs in Victoria at my children's primary school.

Raising mostly alone two very capable and beautiful daughters to adulthood.

Helping many people uncover their own greatness and seeing what it has done for them in their lives.

Raising millions of dollars for non-profits to provide a better quality of life for their clients, and helping those organisations to be more sustainable long term.

Having the courage to face my own demons and keep going when it all seemed easier to give up, and getting the right help to do it. I have met some incredible

people as a result and used what I have learned from my own experience to help others.

5) What has been your biggest challenge? What have you had to struggle with in your career?

✂ Running my own business as a single mum, relationships breaking up and having to bring in the money while dealing with the changes.

Having a sense of what is possible in career while creating the life I want for myself. I have had to keep a lot of my ambitions to myself, because the naysayers would be happy to keep me in the box with them.

I am always looking for the bigger picture and networking has been the answer. I have always fallen on my feet when I have taken the leap to make it work the way it suits me. The challenge is always to think big enough for myself!

Perhaps the greatest challenge is still the 'unknown' when growing and changing. It all seems so much harder when you can't see ahead, but feel the drive to do it anyway. My mentors have helped to remove the imaginary hurdle that seems so high at the time. It's OK to raise the bar but sometimes you have to lower it in your mind to get over it.

6) What advice would you offer other women who are struggling to reach positions of leadership?

✂ Learn to lead yourself first! Get some skills to build inner strength and resilience. Always look at what you need to learn while on the job. Don't wait to know it all – experience is the teacher so risk getting it wrong and move on.

Get a mentor, someone who is where you want to be, someone who is your private secret-keeper. You must have a confidante so you can complain and dream at the same time, and have your hand held right through the process.

Keep a strong sense of who you really are. Listen to your desires and ambitions – they are guideposts. Detach enough to keep perspective on things.

Do a reality check. Get to know really quickly who or what is the barrier and create a strategy to overcome it. What does your circle of power and influence look like?

TAKE ACTION! Too many women sit back and hope they will eventually get there.

Do you want it now, in ten years, by retirement? You soon get to see how slowly you are moving because of your own lack of confidence. Move up or move out.

Believe that what you want is what you should have. My greatest moves have been when I have said, 'That's just what it takes to live the way I want!'

Use the right language – in the computer industry I soon learned to say 'I think' and never say 'I feel' even though I am a 'feeling' person on the Myers-Briggs scale.

Listen to the way men speak about things – you will soon pick out the visionary

intuitives, versus the methodical empiricals. Get over feeling you are giving something up of yourself if you have to adjust to someone else's way of operating; but know how YOU operate best.

Pave the way - one of my male executive coachees was so impressed by his woman team leader who went home to her family at 5.30pm, took her time to listen and respond, remained calm in a crisis, and encouraged personal time to reflect. Don't be afraid to be the change you want to see. Be strong and show how it improves working life.

Think outside the square - leadership and fulfillment isn't always about 'reaching the top'. Sometimes it's about being more spherical and whole. What other facets of your self could be benefiting in a different arena?

7) What do you look for in recognition for your achievements?

✎ I have always had a good sense of the value of my offerings and achievements and what feels like the right exchange of money in return. So I am careful to know what industry standards are paying, and where I sit with my capability, service and potential impact. Fair exchange is important.

I have a responsibility to share my knowledge with others, so I always get a buzz when someone openly acknowledges the benefits they gained. It gives me a greater sense of purpose. I love to see people flourishing and moving forward, so feedback is great.

'Thanks' is a powerful word for me. It is just as important to know how to receive as it is to give.

I am product oriented, so completing something well is hugely rewarding. And I have learned to celebrate my own successes – it builds the 'success' muscles and I can get out and face the next challenge!

8) Have you ever mentored/provided support to other women around leadership issues?

✎ Yes. I am an Executive Coach and have run many workshops on Leadership. Women experience loneliness as leaders that is expressed as fatigue, guilt, frustration, feeling inauthentic, contraction. Young women correctly assume the right to be all they want to be. Yet they too fall prey to a sense of having to prove their worth far more than a man is asked to; the inherent culture soon emerges and they become confused.

9) Have you ever been mentored? Please elaborate.

✎ Yes. Where mentoring is concerned I have always looked for people who are at least one step ahead of me and can lead the way with experience and insight; someone who knows the territory I am navigating, can create context and offer

support. Then I look at what I need to discover for myself as a creative and personal path. No-one can really know where you are going. It must remain a personal journey, so I never discount my own wisdom.

I have my own coaches, one in particular who I have worked with a lot and lives in Hong Kong. We phone coach, which works quite well because the body language isn't masking the truth of the voice – but I still prefer face-to-face coaching where possible.

The most important choice for me is someone whom I believe can connect with me at a deep level, someone who is intuitive, frank while compassionate, and can open the box to greater consciousness and awareness.

10) What hurdles do you think women face today?

Having the confidence to put up our hands for leadership without having all the answers before we start. We are creative and intuitive yet seem to mistrust it right when we could be bringing it through into greater solutions and empowerment.

Finding meaning and fulfillment in our many roles so we are nurtured, whole and able to make the world a better place through our incredible talents and vision.

Learning to bring our masculine self through to act on what our feminine self knows to be right. There are many single women across all age ranges who must be independent and the stat's for women living well in older age are grim. Yet there is still the little Princess within who feels let down when the Prince doesn't come through! We must learn to live well with our selves as a powerful equal.

That said, there is still a strong 'boys club' socially at work that a woman can't enter easily if she is one of few women among many men and it's very isolating.

Being strong on the Path – the reason I wrote the book 'Gorgeous All Over' is to assist women to make daily choices that give them a strong body, sharp mind and emotional balance so they can contribute powerfully and feel fulfilled. I see too many women looking bereft because they are not 'actualising' their true power. Men too of course! But without a strong vehicle you can't make the journey with joy and arrive in great shape. Some don't even get started and remain stuck in the same old conditioned paradigms. But life forces change and we become victims of life circumstances.

We MUST take greater responsibility for our quality of life, self-sufficiency, financial freedom and sense of purpose and meaning. We have so much to give that sits going to waste and we will suffer for it in very tangible ways, such as how well we live before and during retirement.

11) How do you think women can support each other in their ambitions?

Form a network. We don't have to do it alone!

We need to take action in our own lives and push each other to do so.

Australian women tend to listen well yet sit back for too long. We need to speak up in ways that can be heard, no matter our gender or race – it's about learning effective communication. Help a friend by challenging their belief systems –don't support staying small.

Women still make it hard for each other, especially those who have sacrificed personal needs such as family for career. A healthy future depends on healthy children, on all levels, and we should be able to function at least as well as men at work without feeling guilty about what's happening at home. It starts with us.

12) What challenges are on the horizon for you?

✍ Taking my life and work experience to a new level of practical application that can have greater positive impact globally, particularly for women. I see the upliftment of women as the umbrella solution to so many of the world's issues such as poverty, lack of education, inequity. If we thrive, so many more will also. I can't do it alone, and want to form a powerful team of equal individuals who can contribute their own skills and insights for greater good. I work in the non-profit arena and so many brilliant associations are doing amazing work. But it is time we all took deliberate steps in answer to, 'What can I do personally, to make a difference?' It's the only way we will all get to benefit, globally. And where are the wonderful women who could be contributing to this?

13) Is there a quote you stand by or rules of thumb you live by?

✍ 'Everything is within.'

When I lose faith in myself or can't see the wood for the trees, I remind myself I have all the answers right here, within my own consciousness. I just have to get quiet, ask the right questions and the answers naturally arise from there. It calms me and detaches me from the melee of possibilities 'out there'. And it is far more creative, because 'out there' is only what has already been created.

It reinforces my ability to be totally responsible for my own life, and remember I am always supported.

Please email this document to bzipper@wtaa.com.au.

Thanks for your time!