



Finding the Gem Inside You

Women of Influence Luncheon Series
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Lorraine Mitchelmore was appointed Executive Vice President Heavy Oil effective October 2012, in addition to her role as President and Canada Country Chair.

Lorraine has over 25 years of experience with 12 years spent overseas in Australia and England, where she worked in various exploration and production roles spanning geographies from Australia, North Sea, Gulf of Mexico, Africa and the Middle East.

Lorraine worked with PetroCanada, Chevron, and BHP Petroleum before joining Shell in 2002. Since then she has held various Senior Management positions prior to her appointment as President and Canada Country Chair in 2009.

Lorraine holds a BSc in Geophysics from Memorial University of Newfoundland, a MSc in Geophysics from the University of Melbourne, Australia and a MBA from Kingston Business School in London, England.

Lorraine is a Board Member of the Conference Board of Canada, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, a member of the Catalyst Canada Board of Advisors, and the 2015 chair of the Governor General's Conference.

Good afternoon.

It is a real pleasure to be with you today.

I want to say two things up front: the first is I'm incredibly honoured to be asked to share with you some of the experiences I've had along the way in my career and, perhaps more importantly, some of the lessons I've learned.

As a woman in business, as a woman who works with many men and women, and as a mother of two daughters I'm very passionate about how women can achieve and enjoy success in their careers and balance that success with their personal lives.

The second thing is that one size does not fit all. This is the biggest lesson I've learned as a woman in business, and as a business executive who happens to be a woman. There is no magic recipe for success. The challenge is to learn about yourself, discover your talents, and to use them in the way that brings out the best in you.

With my exploration background I often describe this process to my daughters as finding the hidden gem inside each of us. It's also about learning, through trial and error, about what works best for you. Every person is different and every situation is slightly different. We each have to create our own recipe for success and be flexible in the face of changing circumstances.

Sometimes we need to lean in. Sometimes we need to lean back. Sometimes we need to lean sideways. Sometimes we don't need to lean any way. We just need to stand tall and hold our ground, and that is sometimes challenging enough.

Today I'm going to be sharing my experiences and my thoughts, my analysis of various challenges and problems, and what has worked for me.

But hopefully I am able to highlight some core principles that can be applied no matter what kind of organization you find yourself in, no matter what type of work, no matter at what stage you are in your career.

Let me take you back to the beginning.

Have you all heard of that great poem by Robert Fulghum, "All I really need to know I learned in kindergarten"?

Well, it would be oversimplifying to say I learned everything when I was child, but I learned a heck of a lot growing up in a very small town in a family of five children: me and four brothers.

Much has been made of the fact I grew up in a small outport town in Newfoundland. Green Island Cove had about 200 people when I was growing up and has about 100 today. Some people think it is somehow surprising that a girl who grew up in a tiny coastal town should end up working around the world before joining one of the world's largest companies and returning to Canada.

In fact, I don't find it strange or surprising at all. Although I certainly didn't know it at the time, my family situation and my small-town upbringing gave me an incredible start in life and what really became my career.

I had a great relationship with my parents and my four brothers. Their love and support (which often included a friendly challenge!) gave me a grounding that I've carried throughout my life wherever I've lived or worked, whether London or Australia or Angola.

But there were other benefits as well. Although I never thought about it at the time, when you grow up as the only girl in a family with two brothers on either side of you – two younger and two older –

you get a crash course in how to succeed in a male environment!

You learn how to hold your own, you learn to speak louder if people don't hear you the first time, to trust your judgment and opinions, and to know what you want. Even at the early age of five I didn't want to be bound by stereotypes: I wanted to play with trucks not dolls! All that practice of sticking up for myself has stood me in good stead throughout my career.

If there is one piece of advice I give to young women starting out in their careers – and to young men – it's to trust your judgment and have confidence in yourself. This doesn't mean that you know everything or that you don't have a lot to learn. Of course you have a lot to learn. You always will.

But it means if you're in a meeting and the team is planning a project and something doesn't seem right to you, perhaps you think the team is missing something important, don't assume you're wrong and everyone around the table must know better. Trust your judgment, trust your instincts and speak up. Perhaps ask a pointed or provocative question.

You could say Green Island Cove is a world away from West Africa or the Australian outback but the funny thing is that growing up in a small town prepared me surprisingly well to work around the world. Growing up in a small town means you are really part of a community. You know everyone, they know you, you know how and what they think. At a very early age you learn how interdependent everyone is, and how everyone must learn how to get along.

We very much value diversity at Shell, and thankfully the world is a very diverse place. But I learned something surprising when I worked around the world. No matter where you are, no matter how different

the customs, languages, and cultures might be, the human fundamentals are the same everywhere. And for me, at the heart of that human dynamic is the ability to listen.

Importantly for someone who would end up in the kind of career and company I did, I found that people in Green Island Cove had time to listen. As a society, and in business, we often focus on the importance of talking well, of getting your point of view across. The ability to express yourself is certainly important. But I've found that the ability to listen is even more important.

As we take on more senior roles, there's a tendency for executives to want to talk more than we listen. But I've found that listening is a powerful tool, and as you become more senior the ability to listen well becomes even more critical.

As I said at the beginning, we are all different, thankfully, and we all thankfully come from different backgrounds. But the lesson for me is to be proud of where you come from. You might think you lack something in your background, in your education, or in your experience. I certainly used to think that way, but you should never see your background or your experiences as a disadvantage. Draw strength from your background whatever it might look like. You can't choose your family or your hometown or how you grow up. But you can choose to draw strength from those aspects of who you are.

Let me now flash forward to starting and planning my career.

I'd like to tell you I had a plan for how to succeed in my career. I'd like to share that step-by-step plan with you today.

But I didn't have one.

Well I sort of did but it didn't fit the traditional career plan you might find

in a book or article. My plan at the beginning of my career was very simple. And it's about the same today as it was thirty years ago. To put it bluntly, my plan has always been to learn. To grow. To develop my knowledge and skills. The learning came first. The positions and responsibility came second. And my plan also involved taking a certain attitude to everything I faced. An attitude of curiosity.

Even before I started my career, back at university when I was the only female geophysicist in my class at Memorial, what drove me was a love for physics. I was fascinated with the way things worked and I wanted to understand it. I've never lost that passion.

But as I travelled the world working in the energy industry, I realized I had another passion: for the energy industry itself. Even after thirty years in the business, I continue to be amazed by the sheer complexity of our industry, with its significant geopolitical and strategic aspects, with the importance that oil plays in global affairs, with the way the supply and price of oil influences and is influenced by world events. It is very professionally rewarding to be part of this industry.

Some people have a very deliberate career plan, to go from point A to point B to C and so on. And that works for some people. Remember that we all have to make our own recipe! For me, building my career was really a matter of following my curiosity and being crystal clear on my criteria for what I wanted to learn, or developing my portfolio of skills. This allowed me to take charge of my career.

A large part of my career journey has been dependent on a willingness not to be perfect, in fact perhaps even a desire not to be perfect but instead

to continuously push myself out of my comfort zone. I've always sought out roles where I thought I could add value to the company and learn and stretch myself.

Whenever I find myself comfortable in a role, it's time to move on. In the first year of an assignment you learn about how all the pieces fit together. In the second you focus on embedding the vision, and the third year is about delivering. I don't want to have 10 out of 10 of the prerequisites for a role. I want to have 7 out of 10.

If I'm a hundred per cent sure I can succeed in a new role I don't take it. I look for the role where there is the possibility of success but also some risk of failure.

Sometimes I think that my discomfort zone is my true comfort zone! And part of that probably comes from the mindset you need to have in the exploration side of the oil and gas business where I've spent much of my career. In exploration you have to be able to live with the fact that not every hole you drill is going to be a success.

This willingness to not always feel I have to be perfect, which has been so important to me during my career, brings me to my next learning.

Work-life balance is always a popular topic for women. And increasingly for men too, and that's a good thing. What is the point of having a wonderful, exhilarating career if it comes at the expense of your personal life?

I can't tell you how often I get asked how I balance my demanding professional life with my equally demanding family life with my husband Kevin and our two daughters. For me, it's all about balance, whether you're a woman or a man. It's also about being there for each other, and, going back to what I said earlier, it's about knowing yourself and what works for you.

We have a concept in our home we call the "Four Family." It's a recognition that there are four of us, and that we're not going to succeed unless we all pitch in to help to balance our individual interests. It's also about being there for each other and how I choose to balance my home and my work life.

There are different strategies for this, and there is no right or wrong recipe. For example, I know some busy women and men who don't go to all their children's hockey games or dance performances, but when they do go, they tune everything else out and they are fully present for that time. That works for them.

I prefer to go to every activity I can when I'm not travelling. My daughters know that when I'm on the soccer pitch I will be watching them, but when they go on a break I will also be doing work for the next day. It's a choice that works for me and my family and everyone has to choose what works best for them.

How I watch my daughters play soccer is a powerful reminder for me of a key lesson in balancing work and home that is equally applicable to our careers.

It's tough for us to say it, let alone try to live it. But here goes:

Don't expect perfection. Men don't. But too often we women put it on ourselves.

There's a lot of self-imposed pressure on women who work outside the home or inside of it or both, to be perfect. To be Super-Businesswoman or Super-Mom. What I think about most when I'm raising my two daughters is to show them that I'm not a supermom. Of course I love them and I work hard to do the best for them, but I'm never going to be perfect. There is no such thing and that's ok. And that is one of the greatest examples I can set for them: that you won't be perfect but

you can still do a great job, whether as a mom, or at work, or both.

Part of not being perfect is coming to terms with mistakes. One of anybody's greatest fears, whether in our personal lives or at work is the fear of making mistakes.

Like anyone who has been involved in a number of things, I've made my share of mistakes. I've learned a lot from each one but what I've learned most is that we make mistakes for a reason: to learn from them. I believe you shouldn't dwell on mistakes and you shouldn't make the same ones twice but you should learn from them.

So while you need to avoid making the big mistakes that can have severe impacts on your organization, if you're learning and growing you're making mistakes. The key for me is to do all the hard work and diligence to avoid the big mistakes but to be resilient in the face of the mistakes that all of us will invariably make in our careers. That means never hiding a mistake nor hiding from one. It means having the courage to take accountability and lead the effort to fix things.

Along with trying to be perfect, one of the biggest mistakes we can make is to think we need to know everything.

Which brings me back to close to the beginning of my story.

I've already mentioned that I grew up, not in a small town, but in a tiny town. A village really. Well, when I was eighteen I went away to the very big City, St. John's and to Memorial. My first year of university was a nightmare. I entered university with top marks and a scholarship and with a certain level of self-confidence that came from holding my own with my four brothers. But the people I met at university were so bright, so well spoken, so articulate. I remember thinking "Oh my gosh, what am I doing here?"

But after getting to know people I realized I knew as much as them. I just needed more practice in speaking out and not feeling self-conscious about what I sounded like. And I learned that the only way you learn is by being vulnerable, by letting people know you don't know, by having an insatiable hunger for knowledge that will override any self-consciousness. And you have to seek those situations out: it's the only way you learn and become the competent leader you need to be. Vulnerability also makes you authentic.

So, to quote a famous philosopher, "Become who you are." Or, in my down to earth language, find that gem inside you.

In closing, I'd like to leave you with one more thought. I've talked a lot about my personal and professional journey and what has worked for me, and the importance of understanding yourself. But we all know it's not just about us. Each of us needs a higher purpose at work.

I've always had one, and it hasn't always been the same. It has changed or evolved throughout my career. But it's important to have one. It functions as a bit of career North Star, when things get difficult or confusing as they always will at certain points. Your career North Star is also often where you blend your personal and your professional beliefs.

As anybody who knows me and works with me, I'm intensely competitive. I like to win. And in business, winning is often measured by your profit and loss statement. By the projects you deliver on time and on budget, by the shareholder return you create. But as competitive and focused on the bottom-line as each of us may be, we get out of bed each morning for other reasons as well.

As a Canadian working in the energy industry here in Canada for more than a decade, my over-arching goal is to help Canada become a leader in managing both the economy and environment.

I'm very much an outdoors person and I value the environment both at work and outside work. I also value the importance of a strong economy for our society. But too many people think economic and environmental performance are somehow in contradiction, and this belief colours how we think and talk about economic and environmental issues.

I want Shell to be known for changing the conversation about the economy and the environment in a way that will help Canada become both a global energy and environmental leader. I want to see Canada leading by example, and I personally want to play a part in that.

That's my higher purpose at work.

Thank you.

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