

Transcript / You Next with Dr. Commander Mary Kelly and Meridith Elliott Powell

Melody King: 0:01

Everything rises and falls on leadership. The ability to lead well is fueled by living your cause and purpose. This podcast will equip you with the tools to do just that Live and Lead with Cause and Purpose. And now author of the book The Anatomy of Leadership and our host, Chris Comeaux.

Chris Comeaux: 0:23

Hello and welcome to the Anatomy of Leadership. I'm excited because I have two incredible dynamic ladies, two incredible leaders. Today they're actually return guests. Welcome, we've got Commander Mary Kelly. Welcome, Mary, it's good to have you,

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 0:36

Great to be here, thank you.

Chris Comeaux: 0:38

And Meridith Elliott Powell, my good friend and longtime mentor. Welcome back, Meridith.

Meridith Elliott Powell: 0:43

So good to be talking to you, Chris.

Chris Comeaux: 0:45

Yeah, so let me read from both your bios real quick. So, Dr Mary Kelly. She's the CEO of Productive Leaders. It's a firm dedicated to leadership and economic development. After graduating from the Naval Academy, Mary spent 21 years on active duty in the Navy, mostly in Asia, as an intelligence officer. She's currently listed as one of today's most influential economists and business strategists, and she's also has been named as one of the top 50 motivational speakers in the world. Mary is also one of the only 150 people named to the Speaker's Hall of Fame. As a high energy keynote speaker, Mary focuses on using data, research, laughter and experience to help professionals excel. She's an author of 18 books on business growth, leadership and today's economy, and as a business advisor, she's worked with hundreds of organizations and companies across the globe. It's good to have you again, Mary.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 1:36

Great to see you, Chris, thank you.

Chris Comeaux: 1:38

We had a lot of compliments on our last show together, and so let me read from Meridith's bio. And so, Meridith actually this may be her third or fourth time only a couple of times with Anatomy of Leadership, but when we had TCN Talk, she was with us a couple of times. She's an award-winning, best-selling author with more than nine books. She's not just a game changer, she's the one rewriting the rule book. Oh, and did I mention she's currently the chair of a National Speakers association, bringing a touch of class and leadership wisdom to the speaking world. Meridith is not just a speaker, she's an interactive guide and her techniques are well-researched, proven, providing a roadmap of success in the ever-shifting business landscape. Meridith's sessions always leave you with a proven formula, which is awesome, and the unstoppable confidence needed for business growth, irrespective of market fluctuations. Meridith teaches that in the safe zone, no firewalking, board breaking. She's just powerful information, actionable techniques, ready to implement immediately. And besides her professional prowess, meredith's an avid mountain biker, hiker, golf enthusiast, proving that balance and inspiration go hand in hand in life. So welcome again to Meridith.

Chris Comeaux: 2:47

And so having both of you is like I'm just thinking like the energy. I think I'm kind of high energy, but I feel like I'm low energy around both of you, and so I can't remember exactly what the. I think I reached out to Mary about something and she said hey, you know, meredith and I are writing another book together, and I'm like you are, and so I have. So the folks looking here on YouTube here we go looking on YouTube, so the title of the book is you Next. So, ladies, I'm curious what inspired you to write this book together? You Next,

Meridith Elliott Powell: 3:18

Mary, take it away.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 3:21

So we identified a gap between the succession planning process and the people who were the young professionals, the top talent in the organization. And our concern was when top personnel were leaving, moving, taking jobs other places or being promoted. Sometimes the people with them would leave at the same time and all of a sudden these folks maybe third tier down need to step up, but nobody was paying attention to their leadership and matriculation. And then the folks below them were largely ignored as well.

So all of a sudden, we've got this huge demographic shift. It used to be about 10,000 baby boomers retiring a day, now it's over 11,400. The peak time for baby boomers to retire is age 65. Now the Gen Xers are retiring earlier, between 61 and 65. So all of a sudden, in the next few years, we've got this huge succession planning crisis where there's nobody stepping up.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 4:24

This is where this book came in. This is the follow on to the succession planning book. Who Comes Next? And this is for those young leaders who are looking around saying I want, oh, you're so good, you're so good. These are the young leaders looking around saying I've got to be prepared, I want to take charge of my own career. I'm not so sure how? But I know I want to be successful. How do I start?

Chris Comeaux: 4:49

So, and I imagine, just knowing both of you, there's something in your own just journey, your life, your experience, that probably shaped the book. Is that true?

Meridith Elliott Powell: 4:58

Oh, absolutely. I mean, when I think about the book, I always tell my clients because it was true for me you're lucky if in your life you work for one good boss I mean for me, mine was Jeff Ward, probably the only really good boss I've ever worked for. You spend a lot of your career working under people who you don't respect or are just okay or don't take an interest in your career. And, quite frankly, Chris, I mean I think this book is bigger than career. I think people need to start to think about leading their own lives, solving their own problems, defining their goals and then not waiting for somebody to show up and help them get there. I mean, you know, if I think of anything about this book, I mean I think the power of it is to realize that you're always in control, you always have a choice, you can always take the next step and, as much fun as it is to whine and complain about your circumstances, it's a waste of time.

Chris Comeaux: 5:56

First off and I love that you brought Jeff into this I'm just sitting here marveling. Jeff was actually the person who cast the vision for Four Seasons. He was on the board of directors and said this will be one of the best hospices in America and, lo and behold, that's what attracted me and I moved my family from Pensacola, Florida, and the other thing that I'm just sitting here processing. So we have five kids Meredith, you remember and so now they're getting engaged or going into the workforce. And what hurts my heart is I've spent a lot of my life trying to create high-performance leaders, high-performance

organizations. There's still more of the exception than the rule. So then you see your kids going into an organization. It's like I want them to be part of a great organization where they're going to learn and grow. So I love this. In fact, I think I need to go and buy copies now for all of my kids. So what are some of the takeaways that you think they would get from this book or gain from the book?

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 6:50

Specifically with this book, Chris. There are interactive exercises, questions, assessments, guides, planners that help you figure out that question. What do I want to do? When I grow up, I remember retiring out of the Navy. I was 41 years old and I looked around and thought I have no idea what I want to do with my life. I don't know what I want to do for a career.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 7:15

And there's that part of you that says, okay, I can do all of these things, these several hundred things, but is that what I should be doing? Just because you can get pregnant doesn't mean you should get pregnant. I'm just pointing that out. Just because we can do a lot of things doesn't mean we should do all the things. So this book helps you identify where do you want to go and how do you want to get there. And what I love about this is it starts with you, your values. What's important to you? What do you really care about? There's some organizations that will be a terrible fit for you because their values are nowhere close to your values. And I'm not saying that every organization has to fit every single check in your box, but it should be close and if you know that the people working at a certain organization are sharing your values, you are more likely to be successful there.

Chris Comeaux: 8:06

So what you're after is so they're looking for like an alignment with their own personal values. Do you juxtaposition that at all, Mary or Meredith? I'm just thinking in my own journey. It's a chicken or the egg Like. I think I had a sense of my values, but I also think that I discovered them more in the organizations. I also probably felt like, well gosh, this is not a good fit, I need to move on. But at some level I understood them better because I was on the journey. So it feels like a chicken or the egg question, like how much is it identifying your values versus get out there, get a job and you start to discover them more? Do you want to clean that up at all?

Meredith Elliott Powell: 8:46

Yeah, I really think it's a combination. I really think it's a combination. I really would set me down at the beginning of my career. I said, Meredith, you need to really think about what you want. You need to think about your values. I'll give you a great example.

Meridith Elliott Powell: 9:06

Yesterday, with a group of students, I worked until I was 36 years old to get the promotion that I thought that I always wanted. And I got the promotion in the big corner office with the two country club memberships and the big money. And I walked in there and realized that I was living in a town I didn't want to live in. I was away from my family. I wasn't married at the time. I really wanted to be married, I wanted to be involved in my community and I didn't want to spend my life in meetings. So I had spent 36 years working for an opportunity that I didn't want.

Meridith Elliott Powell: 9:35

And so I feel like this book really helps you determine not just what you want out of your career, but what do you want out of your life. Not just what you want out of your career, but what do you want out of your life. And I personally am a believer if you are intentional and clear, you can have it all. But one thing I want to add to the question you asked before, and that is what are the takeaways from this book? And Mary is right. I mean, there is a workbook, there are exercises, this is roll up your sleeve and hands on. But the biggest thing I think you're going to gain from this book is the paradigm shift that what you want in life is your responsibility. And I say that because I think once you understand it's your responsibility, you get all the power. And when you have all the power, you can accomplish anything.

Chris Comeaux: 10:22

That is so good, Meredith, and I'm thinking about the current generation of just how needed that is actually for them. Are there a specific just exercise or tool that you think of in the book that is like got the potential to be very transformative for them.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 10:38

Oh, my favorite is the gap assessment. This is where you look at where you are and you have to be very, very honest with yourself. You may need your friends, it may need to be a group exercise, but you look at where you are right now. What are your strengths, what are your weaknesses, what have you already done either in education, certifications, milestones, progress, and then you look at that. And then you look at where you want to go, or a job that excites you or an opportunity that might come up, and then you look at what you need to do to position yourself to get into that place. Do you need another

degree? Do you need just a certification? Do you need some mentorship? Do you need better connections? Do you need to maybe read more books?

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 11:25

Sometimes it's join your local chamber of commerce, do better networking. So sometimes it's it's educational, which a lot of people focus on. But it's more than that. It's other actions you can take to position yourself well, to take advantage of opportunities that might pop up. But you have to be very, very honest with yourself. Am I good at keeping up with my network? A lot of people say, oh, I'm great at that. Really, who have you talked to in the last week? Who have you talked to in the last month? And all of a sudden we go, oh ouch. So we're looking for those ouches. We're looking for those moments of honesty where you look and say I can do a little bit better, if only I fill in the blank. And that's what the gap assessment is.

Chris Comeaux: 12:12

So is there like an ideal audience? Because listening to you, I'm thinking, man, this could be great College students, maybe, like gosh, I wish I would have read this, maybe when I was in my first job and I was wrestling. Or is maybe people like second, third career, like, do I need to make that change? Who's the ideal reader? Yeah, absolutely.

Meridith Elliott Powell: 12:30

You know. It's so funny as I was sitting there listening you're asking Mary, you know what her favorite exercise is. I'm sitting here thinking there are so many exercises in that book that I still use that I feel like really transformed my life. I mean I do my vision every year. I'll get my vision every single day. I think about building my network. You want to talk about transformative. I mean, Chris, look at the relationship we've had and how long that has been and what it's done for both of us. So it's really funny.

Meridith Elliott Powell: 12:58

I mean, I believe that when we wrote the book, our mind was for those people wanting to move up in an organization. But I was speaking at High Point University yesterday and giving away these books Before I left I probably had 50 with me and before I could get out the door, the staff and faculty were taking a look. These are people that have. You know, they were like, I mean, I didn't want to take them home, it was fine with me, but it's really made me think that, aren't we always like? Is there nothing better than feeling like you have control and the power to achieve what you want? And that's really what the book is about. So I do think we had somebody in mind when we wrote it, but it turns out

it's a perfect fit for anybody who would like to do something different or go another level in their career.

Chris Comeaux: 13:46

That's awesome. I'm also thinking you guys might need to get it translated into multiple languages. We're working on a couple of interesting global projects and so you might need to this one might need to go global, because I also getting the fact that the succession planning problem of what's in the pipeline and I can now see how, because at first, whenever Mary mentioned, I'm like was sitting there going why would you guys be writing that book? Because you're just such you're both so incredible with your toolbox of tools, especially around leadership. So, does leadership tie into this? Have you woven leadership development into the book and maybe how that relates to their growth, their learning plans, anything along those lines?

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 14:28

There is one chapter on leadership and it is short, and the reason it's short is because we've each written several leadership books. We do reference some of those books in the chapter, but what we say is in order to move forward, you have to be a leader, both for yourself and the people around you. And here is a quick action guide on what to do. There's just one chapter on it and we don't want to overwhelm people. We could write 10,000 pages and not blink twice and it would make the book wildly unreadable. But there's just a thing in there that says leadership isn't a position. There's no chief leadership officer in any company. No, you're supposed to figure out leadership along the way, and the hard thing about that is it's like breathing. A lot of people just assume you're going to figure it out. Until you can't, now what do you do?

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 15:22

So in the book we mentioned, you've got to accelerate your leadership ability. You've got to accentuate your leadership skills, and leadership is something you work on every single day. You can't just wake up and say, okay, I'm 35 years old, I'm a good leader, that's good enough, I don't have to do anything else. Leadership is like going to the gym. You go to the gym every single day to well in my 20s I went to get stronger and faster and better, and now I go to not get worse. So I think leadership is the same way. We study leadership, you work on leadership, you strive always to be a better leader every single day because, like breathing, you got to do it every day and if you're not getting better, you're getting worse.

Jeff Haffner / Dragonfly Health : 16:05

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Chris Comeaux: 16:53

What I love about both of you. You're both incredible storytellers, so my guess is you probably told some great stories throughout the book. Is that true? And what might be some of your favorite ones that you had in there?

Meridith Elliott Powell: 17:03

lesson that I think is transformative and, Chris, you'll love this because it has to do with Jeff Ward but when I went to work for Jeff, he totally treated me as his second in command. I mean, I worked really hard for him, and he gave me opportunity, and I believed I was in a position to move up, but I thought that if I worked hard, he would notice. Fatal mistake. Long story short. Notice Fatal mistake, long story short.

Meridith Elliott Powell: 17:42

When I saw others be promoted, I got mad. I got passive, aggressive. Finally, somebody tapped me on the shoulder and said go, ask for what you want, and when I asked for what I wanted because I had performed performance always comes first I was able to actually get an unbelievable opportunity, but I also signaled to leadership I was looking for opportunity. The most important part of that lesson that you pull out of that story, though, is I asked for what I wanted. I did not demand what I wanted, and that's a big difference in there. So there's stories of our clients, there's our personal stories. I think that Mary and I are qualified to write the book, because we failed at a lot of these, and it took us a long time to learn them and to adapt them. And now we are on the backside of our careers, kind of looking and saying what do we wish people would have told us, and what do we wish we would have known?

Chris Comeaux: 18:38

How about you, Mary? Any story in there? That's awesome, Mary. Any story you had in there, Mary?

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 18:43

Well, I think many people accidentally become successful and other people accidentally are not. And it's the lack of mindfulness and intentional. And when I was in the Navy I never had a choice. I did not get one choice in 25 years as to the job I was going to, the location I was going to be in or the person I was working for. That's why they call the military orders and you salute and you go. But once I got into the civilian world I realized all a sudden you get to take charge, you get to figure this out.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 19:19

And one of the stories I love came from one of our examples, because it was someone who kind of accidentally realized that they didn't have to settle for the job they were in.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 19:33

They didn't have to settle for the location they were in, that the organization they were in had locations all over the world and while they were still in their late 20s and adventurous and wanted to go explore things and didn't have any real commitments, they could go in and ask for an overseas job, they could go ask for a different job.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 19:52

And it never occurred to them until they chatted with us that hey, I can take charge of my career. And that's one of the things I loved was people say they just didn't know. They didn't know they had this power, they didn't know they had the ability to negotiate their next job or a similar job in a different location, or they didn't realize their bosses are actually waiting for them to step up and be more responsible at work, be a better team player, take on more responsibility, and that's what I really loved. This one particular person wound up being so happy, went to London, is having this great life in London right now, been there six months. And then she sent a note back and said I would never have done this if you hadn't told me to take charge of my career.

Chris Comeaux: 20:38

That is awesome. It was actually just reflecting, Meredith. I think you've written nine books, Mary, you like 18. I'm a slacker. I've just wrote my first one, but I will say that I'm different because I've written a book. Dr Thayer, who was my mentor, used to always say that I write books to figure things out. There's something that changes in the process. Was that true for both of you in the writing of this book?

Meredith Elliott Powell: 21:01

Yeah, absolutely. I mean I think that's true in the writing of every book. But I would say the biggest thing that I gain when I write a book is I gain confidence. I love the fact that Dr Thayer says I write it to figure it out, because I think that here is like Mary and I do a lot of work in the succession planning place really extending.

Meridith Elliott Powell: 21:22

You know, you've got leaders retiring, people moving on, get those next level leaders ready. All of that is the corporation's responsibility to prep those leaders. Well, there's something missing from that, and that missing from that is that the leaders need to raise their hand, they need to build the skills, they need to be ready when the opportunity presents itself. And I think what you know.

Meridith Elliott Powell: 21:45

For me, what I figured out from writing this book was I was doing such a great job of speaking at the executive level and convincing them why they needed to do this, but now reaching down to a generation and saying, look, there's going to be more opportunity than ever in the next few years and if you take the responsibility now, if you do what you need to do, the world's going to be your oyster. And I could say that, but I just I needed a way to be able to back that up and say here's how you do it. And that, to me, is the biggest thing I really gained from that book is so much confidence in saying I've got the answer if you want it.

Sona: 22:27

Good employers know that health benefits can make or break your business. But while employers are looking out for their employees' best interest, who is looking out for theirs? Employers are looking out for their employees' best interest. Who is looking out for theirs? Sona Benefits is an independent pharmacy benefit manager who partners with employers to optimize their pharmacy benefits while supporting their business goals, but by offering no spread pricing, contract, guaranteed rebates and the SonaMax program. Clients are regularly able to save 20% to 35% off their total drug spend. The result Pharmacy benefits that improve employees' well-being and employers' bottom line.

Chris Comeaux: 23:07

That is good Mary. How would you answer that?

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 23:10

So many people say they're frustrated at work. Oh, I don't like fill in the blank. I don't like having to go back to the office, or I don't like this policy, or I don't like this. Or I don't like fill in the blank. I don't like having to go back to the office, or I don't like this policy, or I don't like this, or I don't like that. And my answer is okay, be the person in charge and make good decisions. And people are usually surprised by that.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 23:30

There was some advice that I got when I was in the Navy and I remember being I don't know I was 30. So I knew everything. And the boss made a decision that, frankly, a lot of us did not think was a good decision. And one of the other senior people pulled me aside and said I saw you react to the decision. First, be careful when you react in a meeting, because apparently I was like, and so that was a good lesson. And then the second thing was I know you're frustrated, we're all frustrated, so, and I said but what can we do about it? I feel so helpless and I feel like I'm just a cog in the wheel and I'm frustrated. I want more, I want better out of this organization.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 24:13

And she looked at me and said good, work hard, become the person in charge, because then you get to make those decisions. You get to make the difference then. And it was a little bit of a kick in the behind, because you kind of go, you know what. There's a lot of people love to complain at work or I don't like this policy, I don't like how we do this, I don't like what the boss did, I don't like this. Well, good, then go be in charge and then you run it in a better way. And all of a sudden people go oh, it is up to me If I want this organization or another organization or if I want to found an organization to be different. It's up to me.

Chris Comeaux: 24:48

That is so good. I think Meridith might know this, but whenever I was getting my master's in leadership under Dr Thayer, he would have us watch the Devil Wears Prada Remember that movie? And one of the most potent scenes that he would focus on is that he would call it the mentoring session, when Nigel and if our listeners haven't watched it, go back and watch this movie. This movie has leadership lessons. I totally missed the first time, but we actually and we ended up. It was part of one of my capstone projects, my last year is we turned it into a whole day leadership training, which is vignettes from that movie.

Chris Comeaux: 25:22

But Nigel had a mentoring session with Andy where she was like oh, she's so hard on me and he just you know I'm not into fashion, but he called her into the cause and purpose of

fashion and kind of said what your leader just said, Mary. It's just a poignant scene and we've actually used it in a couple of training moments with, within the work that we do, what would be some just action that listeners can take today where they may start applying some of the lessons that you have woven into this book. I want them to go get this book. I think they want to go get it just based upon what you've said so far, but maybe give them just a couple of practical nuggets are in there.

Meridith Elliott Powell: 26:03

Yeah, I think you know. I really think the first thing I'm going to follow up a little bit on the conversation we were just having, because I think it's a piece of it is that you have to make this shift in your mind, that you're no longer going to blame, whine or complain, that if you want something different, you're going to get from this book, and an action that you need to take is today is the day that you start relying on the one person that you know can get you there, and that's you. I was listening before we did this podcast. I was listening to an interview with Jamie Diamond and they were interviewing him about, you know, the economy and government and all those types of things, and he's talking about all the things that he thinks could happen, and they were giving him every negative reason why it would never work.

Meridith Elliott Powell: 26:57

Can sit on the sidelines and complain about this and complain about that, or you can come to Washington and fix it, but I only want to keep this conversation. If you're going to come to Washington and fix it, and I think that's kind of the biggest premise of this book is that so many of us are waiting for somebody else's peace, and that is a waste of time and energy. So I feel like that's the biggest. It's just get in your mind that today's the day you're gonna take ownership of it and you're gonna take action.

Chris Comeaux: 27:22

That's good. Well, and a lot of the folks that listen to this podcast are leaders themselves that have younger people. You know that was at five. They call it 5G five generations in the workplace. If I'm a leader, how might you foresee me getting this book and then using it? What would be some tips you might have?

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 27:39

Right now, your employees are desperate for three things. They are desperate to know that you care about them and their development. Getting them a book that helps them advance their career helps do that. The second thing is they are desperate for you to have an honest conversation with them about where you see them in the future. They want

your opinions, they want your insights, they want your guidance, they want your feedback, they want you to help them grow personally and professionally. And number three, they're desperate for your attention, and by attention I mean they want you to be vested in them and the things they care about.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 28:20

So one of the things I'm doing at one organization is a mid-level manager got this book for about 100 of their folks and they are broken down into 20 groups of about 25 groups and they are using this as a book club about 20 people at a time. You got to pick your group based on the leader, and it all worked out remarkably well. I was a little worried that one person was going to get a whole lot and the other person wasn't, but they're using this as a book club to walk through the book chapter by chapter, exercise by exercise, and it's an eight week program, so they're meeting once a week at lunch for about an hour and they're working through the book. Now I know what people are thinking Mary, I don't have time to read a book, I don't have time to work through anything, I barely have time to grab lunch. We got you. There's a website that goes with this book, called you Next Now, and on that website we have the book club resources, which is the book club guide, the book club facilitator's guide, the workbook especially for some of my folks short on time chapter summaries, and they're done in cartoon form. I had a great graphic designer and she had a great time with it. She's 30.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 29:37

And the idea was look, you've got to get the information in a way that works for you. And as a mid-level manager who recognized this, he said you know what? I know I've got to do something for my people. I know I've got to do something to help them start the year right. I know I've got to do something to help them start the year right. I know I've got to show them that we as an organization care about their development, their matriculation and their future. So by structuring this, he literally put like icing on the cake by bringing in lunch once a week for everybody to do this, so that they would get together. Hey, we're going to have pizza, we're going to have sandwiches, we're going to have Mexican food, and he mapped it all out. So the people get excited about food, and then do the book club as well. So I'm super excited that he's doing that, and we did those resources with him and his organization in mind. So it's done for you in a box.

Chris Comeaux: 30:29

That is so awesome. We're going to make sure we include the link that Mary just said. When did the book actually get released and then when did the website come out? Was this all like beginning of this year?

Meridith Elliott Powell: 30:42

Yeah, pretty much beginning. You know, got it done about the end of next year and then just officially released it and I think we're going to do another big push for it right around. You know college graduations and things like that. I want to add too that you know I think one of the most important things that you can do as a leader is tell people there's opportunity in the company and give them permission, like to me. If I had this book and I were part of a growing company, what I would do and I would say we are growing like crazy. There is going to be opportunity. Here is a book Follow these strategies. This will put you in position and then see who rises to the top.

Chris Comeaux: 31:22

Yeah, I'm just sitting here reflecting again, kind of having read some of both of your books prior and just knowing about your work and your speaking engagement. It just shows both of your hearts, like I can see. You probably could have spent the rest of your career just continually writing leadership books, but it just shows your heart and your passion for number one people to be on a journey to be a better version of themselves, but caring about those next generations that are coming up. I just hats off to both of you. Have you gotten a lot of good feedback so far? Reviewers? Hats off to both of you. Have you gotten a lot of good feedback so far? Reviewers? Anything along those lines.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 31:53

We're so blessed and so fortunate that right out of the gate, we got some great reviews. We're sitting at several really great reviews on Amazon. We're always looking for more, so thank you so much. If you're in a position to help us out, we love that. And what people are also saying they're using it for is their managers are using with their people saying, hey, there's this part in this book that I think might benefit you. Take a look at this chapter. And then I want to talk about this at our one-on-one Boom.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 32:26

Everybody knows you're supposed to have one-on-ones with all your people, but sometimes it goes like this hey, how you doing Good, Okay, Good talk, and that's the end of it. Nothing really happens because people don't know what to say. Totally get that. The other part in this book is we say mentorship is important, but you've got to have two-way mentorship. The mentors, the baby boomers, the Gen Xers they're so tired of being told you should go mentor people. Well, nobody mentored us and now you're just telling us we need to do more work. Thanks, no, thanks.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 32:59

Well, we try to make it easy. First, we very much emphasize that this is a two-way street. Both people have to benefit from the conversations. And then the other thing we did is we put together a list of mentorship questions so every week when you're having that mentorship meeting, that one-on-one, you've got something to talk about and both people can share information. Both people can answer the questions and it creates stronger relationships within the organization and I just love that. That's a great tool that folks that the book wasn't really designed for but these baby boomers and Gen Xers are also finding it valuable.

Chris Comeaux: 33:40

That is so great. I'm just sitting here processing. Is there one major message or just piece of advice from the book that you would want our listeners to walk away with?

Chris Comeaux: 33:51

Piece of advice from the book that you would want our listeners to walk away with.

Meridith Elliott Powell: 33:59

Yeah, I would say I'll jump in with my two, and my two is if you have somebody in your life who is struggling or starting out or feels disempowered, let them know you got the answer for them, and then give them this book and tell them just to follow the steps. I mean, one thing that I love about it problem is, I need to make a change in my life, and once people accept the fact that they need to make change, then their next question is always how do I do that? And this book answers both of those questions is you know, it literally. It literally gives you, you know, basically gives you the plan. So I think, really, that message, the other thing, that the other message and this is the one I kind of started with is that to really understand that your responsibility is your freedom and once you take owner of that, where you're never beholden to a leader or a company, ever, ever again, and I think that, to me, is the greatest gift of this book.

Chris Comeaux: 34:59

Now that's really great. How long have you guys been working on this project? There's no way you just like I'm thinking about when Mary mentioned it. I'm thinking this must have been years in the making. Is that accurate?

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 35:10

It was years in the making. After we wrote *Who Comes Next? Leadership Succession Planning Made Easy*, we realized that there needed to be a follow-on. So, we undertook

the project of doing original research. We used Jason Dorsey, the senator out of Florida, to do research on succession planning. But what those job applicants were thinking, what the young people were thinking, what the young talent wanted? And then we conducted our own research in 2023 and 2024.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 35:42

And we asked senior leaders where are the gaps in your organization, not just in the jobs that you have now. We don't want to fill Bob with another Bob. We're looking at Bob's position, how it's going to change in the next 5, 10, 15, 20 years and what skill sets need to be in that person who fills that new job. We're not just putting another square peg in another square hole. What we want is the future, we want growth, we want to change, we want to evolve and develop not just the organization but the position for that organization. So we asked them those questions and we got those answers and that's its own separate chapter. And then we went back to the young folks, and we said so what are you thinking?

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 36:27

And this was actually a little disheartening because so many of the and we say young. I say young people because I'm old, okay, but if you're under, if you're under 45, I'm talking to you, your young people and it was that they felt I use the acronym lost. They feel a sense of being lonely, they feel like there's opportunities they've missed. You know FOMO you only live once and some of them are thinking I've done it wrong. And then they're feeling stressed out because everybody is telling them a mixed message and their friends are saying you shouldn't work so hard; you should have more fun. Their parents are saying get out of my basement. You know they're getting all these mixed messages. And then they're feeling a lack of time because they don't know how to manage their time, they don't know how to structure days to be productive and it's frustrating to them because they simply don't know and they don't have, maybe, great role models. So they're struggling with this.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 37:26

And that chapter, to me, was very insightful because if I ever thought for a second, I'm not sure if I should publish this book, if maybe the work Meredith and I have done over the last five years doesn't matter. That chapter really brought it home that these folks are looking for guidance, they are looking for direction, they're looking for steps and action items and things they can do to take charge now, and so that to me was really good for me. But it also we printed what they wrote. So, when they wrote it it's in the book. So, the grammar is bad, you know. Whatever they swore that, we put that in the book.

Chris Comeaux: 38:07

I'm sitting here thinking what's next for both of you. Do you have other projects or is it all related to you? Next, I'm sitting here thinking what's next for both of you. Do you have other projects or is it all related to you? Next, I'm thinking you could take this and like this could be the rest of your careers right, working on this. So, is this? Like you know, you could spend many, many, many, many, many years in workshops, and I think of the impact of you guys. First off, having read this book Meridith, it wasn't lost on me your comment I'm thinking graduate gift I'm teaching at a college now where I'm lecturing on my book, like there's so much applications to this, and so either one of you take a shot of that. What's going on next?

Meridith Elliott Powell: 38:45

Well, it is definitely I mean definitely a lot of dedication to getting this book going and getting this book in the hands of the people that it will really help. But you know, Mary, you know me, we're never resting on our laurels. We each have another book in the works. I've got my third in my Thrive trilogy coming out and my dedication and passion to turning uncertainty to competitive advantage. But I don't think that this book strays away from that. You know one of the things that you know, Mary's area of expertise is leadership and my area of expertise is helping organizations strategically grow in the face of uncertainty. And that means everything for both of us, from sales to leadership, to strategy, to developing talent, to building a succession plan. And that means everything for both of us, from sales to strategy, to developing talent, to building a succession plan. So, we kind of have these big pieces, that the umbrella covers everything, and this book will always be a piece of it.

Chris Comeaux: 39:42

Mary, how about for you?

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 39:43

I think I'm so lucky to work with Meridith because we share this passion for honest to God, trying to help the world be a little bit better. We are just trying to make better leaders, people who are taking control of their lives, give people what they need so that they can step forward, live to their fullest, happiest potential. And I love that Meridith has this passion for the work she does, and it makes it so easy to work with her, because we bounce things back and forth and we're like, yep, let's do it, let's do it, let's do it. We make decisions really quickly and because she and I get to have the reach we do and by that we mean audience members tell us things you know and they'll say, hey, I'm struggling with this or can you help us with this or this. That, and when we talk to each other and we see

the commonalities, it helps us identify areas where we think we can help people and that's really exciting to me.

Chris Comeaux: 40:38

Perfect. Well, thanks to both of you. Again, it's just the weight of what you've done with this book and the potential is just really setting upon me now, as we've actually talked about it. If our listeners want to connect with both of you or just learn more about both of your work and programs, where can they find that? And, of course, whatever your answer is going to be, we're going to put the links to all of that.

Meridith Elliott Powell: 40:56

Yeah, I think the most important to find out about the book is the link that Mary shared, which is you Next. Now, I mean, that's really where you can find out about the book, but you can find each of us at our websites MindsValueSpeaker.com. If you find me on social media, you'll find me at LinkedIn, probably more than anywhere else.

Dr Commander Mary Kelly: 41:14

And I'm at productiveleaders.com, because who wants an unproductive leader? Productiveleaders.com? And you can send me an email directly to me. It's Mary at Productive Leaders. I will answer you. I'm also on LinkedIn. It's Dr Mary Kelly, and I love connecting with folks on LinkedIn as well. Good deal, do you guys ever get on stage together?

Chris Comeaux: 41:32

It's Dr, Mary Kelly and I love connecting with folks on LinkedIn as well. Did do. Do you guys ever get on stage together for an actual speech, like I know? You're both incredible speakers individually. Have you ever done it together?

Meridith Elliott Powell: 41:41

What we've done is one of us opens and the other closes. We've definitely been at conferences together, but we're kind of two shits that pass in the night. We're kind of two kids that pass in the night. So, we've never actually I don't know that we've ever presented together, but we've definitely been on the same stages for the same event, but rarely get to grab dinner or a cup of coffee.

Chris Comeaux: 42:05

I'm requesting a duet like somewhere out there, a duet Right.

Chris Comeaux: 42:09

Commander Mary and Meridith, that would be great. Well, ladies, thank you again for the work that you're doing to our listeners, thank you, and of each episode we always share a quote, a visual. We call it our brain bookmark. It's meant to be a thought prodder about our subject, so it just furthers your learning, and we want it to be sticky like a brain tattoo. So be sure to subscribe to Anatomy of Leadership, this channel. Pay it forward, especially this episode. This is one I hope you pay forward to your kids, your co-workers, people all over the country that you know, and, of course, we're going to include all of these links to both Meredith and Mary's resources in this book and the website that they mentioned. So, thanks for listening to Anatomy of Leadership, and here's our Brain Bookmark to close today's show.

Jeff Haffner / Dragonfly Health : 42:50

"Future leaders need to raise their hands. They need to be ready when the opportunity presents itself. By Meridith Elliott Powell.