

Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, Aurora Conference, London, June 2017

Professor Catherine Harper – notes (five mins)

Rosabeth M. Kanter's mantra – **Show up. Speak up. Look up. Team up. Never give up. Lift others up** – has been a very powerful guide for me¹, and I wanted to briefly share with you how that has been...

To **Show Up** is to be there, to accept that invite, attend that event, take that opportunity. To deliberately going beyond the comfort zone, feeling that fear, and going through it. Early in my academic career, I was appointed with a modernizing and change management remit. Trouble was nobody told me: I wasn't briefed, I wasn't prepared, I still have the scars! I learned the hard way what works well in change management (communicate, pace the change, gain early adopter allies, keep the faith) and what doesn't (not being clear, going too fast, being a 'solo hero', wobbling visibly). The changes happened, I survived, and my leadership approach was initiated...

Speak Up in your 'authentic voice', and remember that authenticity in professional terms needs practise (sounds contradictory, I know!). I've set myself tasks to speak up – ask an intelligent question at that conference, start a meaningful conversation at that event, make a new contact via Twitter. I won't die if I make a mistake, or if somebody snorts at my suggestion...but there are some non-negotiables. Particularly as a female leader, I expect to be called Professor, I insist on being paid for work, or on exercising *my* choice not to be, and I don't allow my sentences to be finished for me. And I am comfortable with being unpopular when necessary...

I **Look Up** by articulating my personal vision, the drivers and conditions needed to realize that. I'm passionate about equipping the next generation of UK and international creative citizens with the skills, knowledge, confidence and enthusiasm to make a contribution to society and to their fields of enquiry, and to find fulfillment in their lives. I believe genuinely in the transformative power of education, and I am motivated by enablement, enthusing colleagues, making good business-based choices, and leading - or indeed championing – 'from the front'. The conditions for my vision grow from my Northern Irish background: my commitment to equality and diversity is embedded in my personal politics, and I work proactively to ensure *all* students and staff within my sphere of influence are open to the power of their own agency, and empowered to make positive and courageous choices to realize their potential...

I **Team Up** by trying to be being humble enough to ask for assistance, advice, guidance, and being prepared to reciprocate, with collegiality and with loyalty. A 'positive multiplier effect' is then achieved through sustenance of networks, affiliations, influences and alliances. As a natural introvert, masquerading quite well, I continue to hone my collaborative skills, and make sure to take regular time to recharge offline and off grid...

And I **Never give up**: tenacity and resilience, energizing through the exhaustion, performing positivity.... Authenticity (speaking with strength and self-belief, in your own accent) is a technique; respecting difference while exercising will to change is a method; 'imagining larger than the status quo' is a tool...

I try to **Lift others up**, celebrating my colleagues, and doing the same for myself. Life's tough as a female leader, so I apply unashamed joyousness at every opportunity !

¹ Kanter, R.M. *The First Secret to Success is Showing Up*, 2013 <https://hbr.org/2013/02/the-first-secret-of-success-is.html>