

'That's not the real story'

By Marilyn Carson Nelson

Leadership 46 directors & boards 'That's not the real story' From *How We Lead Matters: Reflections on a Life of Leadership* by Marilyn Carson Nelson with Deborah Cundy. Copyright 2008 by Marilyn Carson Nelson. Published by McGraw-Hill (www.mhprofessional.com). Women MBA students are hungry to see models of female leadership — there are still so few. To address this need, I agreed to host a leadership series at the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota called "Inside the Boardroom" in which I interview a female leader one-on-one. I was fortunate to have as a guest Anne Mulcahy, one of the most lauded CEOs in American business, and for good reason. She did what several others before her had failed to do — turn around the beleaguered and iconic Xerox. A new and disarmingly candid during the interview, sharing thoughts and concerns that most CEOs keep to themselves. She was a refreshingly rare example of business leadership. In her new role, there was a lot to clean up. Anne recounted the story about the day she settled the SEC lawsuit against Xerox. As a result, the company hovered on bankruptcy. She knew the settlement would make the news the next day and had braced herself for the fallout, but she never imagined the extreme effort it would take to respond to the media onslaught, bolster demoralized employees, and reassure customers and shareholders that Xerox would survive. "At the end of this very long day," she said, "I picked up a voicemail from a former colleague who said, 'Mulcahy, you know that what you're reading in the press doesn't accurately reflect Xerox or you. That's not the real story. But here's the other piece: You'll get through this, and when you do, you'll read a story about how you turned Xerox around. Just remember, that's not the real story either.'" Marilyn Carson Nelson is chairman and CEO of Carlson, a global group of companies providing travel, hotel, cruise, restaurant, and marketing services (www.carlson.com). Deborah Cundy, an assistant dean at the Carlson School of Management, has worked with Marilyn Carson Nelson for nearly 20 years as a former vice president at Carlson and speechwriter. He was the CEO, so everyone laughed. From *Making Your Point: Communicating Effectively with Audiences of One to One Million* by David Bartlett. Copyright 2008 by the author. Published by St. Martin's Press (www.stmartins.com). The ability to tell funny jokes is a gift. Most people just don't have it. Just because your friends and colleagues tell you your jokes are hilarious doesn't guarantee that an audience of outsiders will agree. When he was CEO of the Walt Disney Co., Michael Eisner once appeared on NBC's "Today" show to talk about Disney's Edited by James Kristie. Excerpts printed with permission of the

publishers. All rights reserved. Book it: Best bets for board reading From a roundup of new books, leadership insights on executive humility, CEO tone deafness, managerial development, the problem with pocket vetoers, and interweaving the work/life fabric.