

A woman who landed a £75k job at Maxwell's empire – only to discover it did not exist – releases a book about her corporate journey.

Submitted by: The Editor's Chair

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Stepping into My Shoes

Dr Catherine A. Baudino

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A WOMAN who broke the glass ceiling in 1987 after she landed a £75,000 a year position at Robert Maxwell's rising satellite TV and communications empire – only to discover that the job did not exist – has released a book about her corporate journey.

Dr Catherine A. Baudino was filmed accepting the position on BBC2's Money Programme, in The Apprentice-style reality television show, following a series of interviews with a headhunter and Maxwell himself. Footage from the programme shows Maxwell handing her the contract after she beat two male candidates to the coveted position.

But three months after her appointment as Head of the European Business Channel, which Maxwell was looking to launch, Dr Catherine arrived at The Daily Mirror building, the company's HQ, and learnt there was no European Business Channel.

She said: "I did not have an office, I did not have a desk, I did not have a phone. I had been hired at a fabulous salary (the equivalent of £225,000 today) for a job that did not exist!"

Growing up in Central London as the only child of strict disciplinarian French parents, Dr Catherine quickly learnt that an obstacle was something to be overcome – not something that would limit her.

Aged 17, she presented herself to eminent heads of departments and professors at her three preferred London universities and fearlessly explained that the French Baccalauréat was at least as good as English A Levels. She eventually obtained her PhD in Literature, aged 23.

Her book, STEPPING INTO MY SHOES, speaks to ambitious male and female executives who want to overcome obstacles to climbing the career ladder.

The book describes

- How wandering around the Mirror Group building searching for a desk, phone and chair eventually landed her a position as the new Chief Executive of Pergamon GED, a joint venture involving Maxwell Communications.
- How through a seized moment with Maxwell's son Kevin in the lift one day she delivered 'The Elevator Pitch' that successfully secured her title as Chief Executive of Maxwell Satellite Communications.
- Strategies she used to (re)gain control of Maxwell's "authoritarian attitude towards employees" – although she comments, "I was greatly helped, though, in that I was not an alpha male in his jungle so I was not perceived as a threat."

After leaving Maxwell, Dr Catherine went on to become the first-ever European Business Director of the NASDAQ Stock Market – securing face-to-face meetings with the likes of Olivetti, Benetton and Parmalat or political figures like Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of Italy, and British MPs such as Michael Heseltine and Cecil Parkinson.

Next, she founded a company in the early 1990s to set up solar parks on agricultural land in Italy... then everything fell apart: Dr Catherine said: "My elderly parents fell to Parkinson's (mother) and Dementia (father). As their only child, I felt I had to take on their care – and did so. This meant giving up my new venture, particularly as I was the only Italian speaker amongst my partners."

STEPPING INTO MY SHOES recounts the nine relentless years that followed, during which time Dr Catherine lost control of her freedom and identity. The 69-year-old tells how she gradually disentangled herself "from the abysses of despair" to recreate herself as an executive coach. This is an unusual corporate adventure starring a courageous woman who trailblazed her way from academia to the boardroom and now works to inspire others through her war scars.

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Editor's Notes

1. Footage of the BBC 2 Money Programme interview with Maxwell can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6k5i2AfPHA>
2. Journalists are invited to attend an online press launch on Monday 4th July at 6:30 pm BST. Please RSVP by email to denise@editorschair.com or via WhatsApp on 07552 168 649
3. Stepping Into My Shoes speaks to ambitious male and female executives who want to learn how to overcome obstacles and achieve their full potential in life. It covers subjects such as:
Imposter Syndrome
How to Say YES
How to Say NO

Setting Boundaries
Tacit Messaging
Connecting v Networking
The Role of Humour in Business

4. Each chapter includes at least one 'ASK YOURSELF' question, inviting readers to reflect on what they have learnt or would do differently, which mirrors Dr Catherine's 'call to action' coaching style.

5. For hard copies of Stepping into My Shoes or interviews with the author, please email Denise Kelly Roberts at the address above.

6. Stepping into My Shoes is published by Baudino & Co Ltd. on 14th July 2022.