



WITH **LISA COPELAND**

After relaunching the Fiat brand in the United States, setting sales records, serving four terms as the only woman on Fiat Chrysler Automobiles' National Dealer Council, winning two best workplace awards and the Walter P. Chrysler award, and being named one of the 100 Most Powerful Women in Automotive by Automotive News, Lisa Copeland recently turned in the keys to her dealership to pursue even bigger things. We caught up with her recently between trips to find out what's next:

DS: You sold your equity in Fiat/Alfa Romeo of Austin several months ago. What have you been doing since then?

LC: I've been writing a book, speaking all over the world, consulting for dealers, and co-developing programs to help businesswoman and men to FEAR.LESS™ by Crushing Mediocrity www.crushingitacademy.com. It's been a crazy four months. I had the honor of delivering opening keynote at the second annual Women in Automotive Conference in Orlando in July. This is really significant because last year I as I gave the closing keynote at this same conference, I decided it was time to take my platform of change to the national stage. So it was appropriate to be in front of women—for whom I have always been a champion—to close the dealership chapter and start one that encourages women and millennials, builds great corporate culture, boosts sales strategies, and develops business programs to attract and retain talent specifically in this great automotive industry. I'm humbled by the dealers who have signed up to work with me, many of whom I have admired for years.

DS: Tell us a little about the book. It's definitely a striking cover.

LC: This book has been a dream come true for me and my co-author René Banglesdorf, CEO of one of the top jet brokers

in the world Charlie Bravo Aviation. As we have grown in our industries—me in automotive, and René in aviation, we have become disenchanted with the mediocrity that seems to be taking over our world. It's like status quo is good enough. We see a lot of people doing really great things, but the majority are just stuck, and they're okay with that. So we wrote the book to encourage the people who are really crushing it, to keep going, and to challenge people who are settling to rise above the status quo. We interviewed some great people making a difference in automotive—like Chop Towbin, Susan Sarcola and Randall Reed. And we included stories about people who have overcome tremendous obstacles to crush mediocrity—things like living in 20 foster homes in 12 years, or rising from a life of poverty and abuse to a job in the White House, or finding a way to educate girls under the Taliban rule in Afghanistan.



Lisa Copeland and her "She-hero" Mary Barra as co-honorees at 100 leading ladies- Automotive News

DS: Tell us about why you choose your co-author.

LC: Well not only is René my best friend, she's an amazing woman and pioneer in her own male-dominated industry. She is truly crushing mediocrity in aviation by developing a program to bring transparency and innovation to private jet sales. In fact, her Clear Skies Club is so revolutionary, I am a charter member and sit on her advisory board www.clearskiesclub.com. But to learn more about René, you're going to have to buy the book!

DS: The automotive industry seems to be changing rapidly. What do you see happening?

LC: Change is key, and I believe the next 3 years will really tell the story. The sales climate is changing, the workforce is changing, and the competition is changing. Disruption is a buzz word today, but more than ever we will see it affect the automotive industry. The way people buy cars will change. When I was at the dealership, we launched the first subscription-based model with Flex Drive, a Cox Automotive company. When I was introduced to the concept in September of 2015, I knew immediately that it was a viable alternative to the traditional car buying model. I believe millennials live an on-demand lifestyle, and Flex Drive supports that. But this is just one of the many examples that dealers will have

to face in the next few years. The declining work force is another provides another challenge. Retail hours are long and grueling, and we will see culture shifts play an increasing role in attracting an engaged work force. These are real struggles for the “old school” car dealers. It has been really eye-opening to travel around the country to work with the dealers that are truly committed to keeping the industry moving. They are making changes to ensure that their dealerships—and their employees—are crushing it. That’s why several of them are featured in our book!

DS: You’ve always been passionate about helping women. Tell us about some of the non-automotive projects you have been working on.

LC: My favorite was traveling to Washington D.C as a Global Ambassador for the United Nations Foundation at The Girl Up Summit. We had young girls from over 300 countries, celebrity activists, business leaders and members of Congress working together to insure all girls are “counted.” One of the biggest concerns is if girls don’t have an official birth certificate, when they go missing, no one knows, no one can prove it. This is a leading contributor to the horrifying numbers—in the tens of millions—of girls being trafficked around the world. I also am working with Empowering a Billion Women 2020, speaking as a champion of business literacy for women globally. These are things I could never do if I was running a dealership!



Lisa Copeland and Rene Banglesdorf, authors of CRUSHING MEDIOCRITY: 10 Ways to Rise Above The Status Quo

DS: Tell us what you miss most about running a retail operation and what you miss least.

LC: What I miss? My team. I truly loved them and continue to root for them daily. I miss working with the leaders at the FIAT/FCA and my colleagues on the National Dealer Council. It was a privilege serving alongside these exceptional and committed dealers. I learned so much serving on NDC, and working with Detroit on brand execution, dealer relations, advertising, product planning and incentives. It was truly a career highlight that I thoroughly enjoyed. What I miss least, of course, is the long hours and lack of freedom.

DS: Your track record of “crushing it” is pretty indisputable. What are readers going to learn from *Crushing Mediocrity*?

LC: We give lots of practical advice to implement 10 ways to rise above mediocrity, we use real-life examples—from our own experiences and those of difference-makers all over the world. To win in life or in a very competitive car sales environment, you must plan for success, take risks, and make necessary changes. In our book we have interviewed men and women who have done just that. We highlight the keys to rising above the status quo, no matter where we start or what disrupts us. Life happens, we all make mistakes. It’s all in how we recover. The people we have highlighted in our book don’t claim to be perfect, in fact many are very transparent in their hope to help others. The common thread I see is the following;

- 1) They actually stand for something—and not just making money
- 2) They don’t let adversity hold them back
- 3) They root for their employees, friends, and even competitors

DS: So we thought we would ask her co-author, René Banglesdorf how she defines mediocrity. This was her response:

RB: Commercial flights. I tell Lisa all the time, that if you truly want to crush mediocrity, you fly private! She takes that to heart I might add, and makes sure we fly private every chance we get. I do however, draw the line a providing her with pink glitter exhaust (FAA issues) and zebra-print seats (resale issues).

DS: Any parting words?

LC: I know that whoever reads the book will walk away being encouraged that anything that they truly commit themselves to can happen. When we all crush mediocrity in our own sphere of influence, we can truly create something great together—whether it’s a dealership, a brand, or an industry that’s vital to the economic success of almost every country in the world.

Crushing Mediocrity starts with you! I wouldn’t be a real car salesperson if I did not encourage each and every one of you to not only purchase this book, follow us on social, and subscribe to our newsletter, BUT buy a copy for everyone you also want to rise above the status quo (like every employee and customer). You can find them at www.crushingitacademy.com. Then you and your teams take those principles and apply them to your business, your personal life and your relationships!

It’s time to claim everything you deserve. It’s time to truly FEAR.LESS™ and start taking the steps to success.

Copeland will deliver the opening keynote with David Villa and Matt Lasco at Digital Dealer in Las Vegas on August 8th. She is available for speaking engagements, consulting, PR and endorsement projects. Please contact her at www.LisaCopeland.com or www.crushingitacademy.com