Women and the Paradox of Power

7 Keys to Step Up and Transform Business Culture

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Braithwaite-Germane

Research Findings, Recommendations and Call to Action
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Dear Reader:

Thank you for your interest in our report on women and power. In this paper we, Jane Perdue and Anne Perschel, advocate for more women to step up and into power. With the help of over 225 women in senior level corporate roles, we have discovered that many women misunderstand what power is and how it works in corporate settings. We offer you, the reader, a better understanding of power and provide a handful of approaches women can use to increase their power and thereby earn seats at the most senior levels of their organizations.

We believe both men and women, The Masculine and The Feminine, are required to lead and to create a better future. For now, we emphasize more women in leadership, not because women are better leaders. We think that is an argument not worth having. We advocate for women because they have been, for the most part, missing or under-represented far too long from the leadership equation at the highest and most powerful levels. The time for change is now, because complex global problems call for all the talent and all the perspectives to be at the table. Women have prepared for decades and are ready now to be a central part of solving these problems.

We give you our report with a smile and a boost up the ladder.

Women and the Paradox of Power

7 Keys to Step Up and Transform Business Culture

Women in business face a potent cocktail of cultural, systemic, organizational, and personal impediments that hinder them from attaining senior level executive positions.

The statistics are less than impressive.

- 3% of Fortune 500 CEOs are women
- Women occupy 5.1% of corporate clout positions (executive vice president and above)
- 1 in 18 women earns a six-figure salary versus 1 in 7 for men
- 15.7% of Fortune 500 corporate board officers are women
- 12% of high potential women vs. 10% of high potential men lost their jobs in the 2008 economic downturn

At the same time a different set of numbers speaks to positive financial benefits for organizations with more women in clout positions.

- 35.1% higher return on equity and 34% higher total return to shareholders
- “Fortune 500 companies with the highest representation of women board directors attained significantly higher financial performance, on average, than those with the lowest representation of women board directors”
- Stock values of the twelve Fortune 500 companies with women CEOs rose an average of 50% in 2009, compared to 25% for the S&P 500

The Paradox of Power

We were intrigued by this contrast between the better financial performance of those companies with higher representation of women in board and senior leadership roles on the one hand, and the more general absence of women at these levels on the other. Not prone to wait on the sidelines, Braithwaite-Germane went to work to discover the causes of this gap and the solutions to closing it. We had a strong notion that power would be a critical factor.

Much has been written about changes that need to take place for corporations to become more gender diverse at the very top of the house: family friendly policies; on ramps for returning to work after family-related leaves; measures to ensure better work-life
balance; the availability of mentors and sponsors. The list goes on. Yet little changes. Why?

Systems tend to, and in fact are designed to, maintain their status quo. Women did not create and are not, for the most part, invested in the status quo in business. They are both the changers of legacy cultures and the ones who are seen as benefitting from such change. Thus, women are the ones who have to take charge of the changes by attaining the power that will allow them to share the role of taking charge and taking care of business. Women must gain power in a system that is at odds with the way they are, in order to change that very system. We call this the paradox of power, and it can create an endless loop.

Rather than continue to travel the loop, we believe some women need to jump the current hurdles, attain positions of power, and then remove said hurdles for the rest. But how can women attain more power when they did not define the terms and when these terms are often unfriendly or even hostile to them?

This question called to us. We sought and found answers. We learned how some women jump the hurdles and obtain positions of power. We learned why others don't. We want to let you in on these power secrets. We trust that when you land yourself a power chair you will go about the business of removing the hurdles for the rest. Just in case you are not so inclined, you might heed this oft-quoted warning from Madeleine Albright. "There is a place in Hell for women who don't support other women."

We began with a review of the literature on women and power. Much of it declares that women are reluctant to embrace power. We had our doubts about the truth of this assertion and decided to conduct our own research. We sought to answer five questions:

1. How do women in business define power?
2. How do they think and feel about power?
3. Do they want and need more power to achieve their career goals?
4. How do they attain power?
5. How do they identify the internal and external barriers to achieving power, and which of these obstacles do they see as within their control vs. outside their control?

Braithwaite-Germane Research

Participants

Two hundred and twenty-seven professional businesswomen shared their candid views about power. They did so by way of an electronic survey using both quantitative and qualitative questions. Appendix A provides additional details about survey respondents. A smaller sample of women who broke through the highest glass ceilings participated in one-on-one interviews. Appendix C lists the interview questions.

- All participants hold exempt management positions
- 48% percent are directors and above; of this group one third report to executive team members, and 15% are on the company’s most senior leadership team
- 95% work in the telecommunications, media, or technology sectors
- 96 individuals, a full 44%, are identified as high potential candidates for senior leadership roles

These are serious women with serious views in serious jobs in national and global businesses.

Focus on Business

For now, we have limited our research to the business domain because it is what we know best, and because it is a powerful lever to transform economies and societies. The business scoreboard, financial results, creates a sense of urgency. Furthermore, the for-profit sector has the tools and resources to respond to that urgency and to future opportunities as well. For an example of business as a catalyst for broader societal change, consider the impact of Ford Motor Company’s assembly line.
We are eschewing the traditional format of a formal research paper. We hope you enjoy the read and recognize that being powerful sometimes involves breaking traditions and a few rules as well—without apologies.

The Big Picture

Based on our findings, power is certainly a factor standing between women and positions at the highest levels of leadership. A combination of internal and external factors negatively impact women’s progress into these roles.

Women’s relationship with power is a complex interplay of psychological, cognitive, and cultural factors. Any one or a combination of factors holds many women back, including:

- Lack of confidence
- Inner critics
- Misunderstanding what power is and the positive possibilities it enables
- Not knowing how power works in organizations designed by men
- Cultural archetypes the likes of Cinderella and the “woman behind the man”

Even women who understand power are confronted by external factors including negative stereotypes, legacy organizational practices and paradigms that don’t fit. These factors slow progress up the ladder or prompt women to abandon the climb altogether.10

While there are low notes in our findings, there are encouraging themes as well—insights that fill us with hope because some women are succeeding. This means there is both a will and a way to attain clout positions. We believe now is the time for women to take charge of their internal challenges: respecting themselves, having self-confidence and being secure about the value of their contributions—so they can step up and into their personal power, using their heads and their hearts to lead.

When this happens, women will attain the professional power to eliminate existing organizational barriers and misperceptions. By doing so, they will cause the dire statistics that opened this paper to change for the better.

Women must be the change they seek to create. Personal power must come first. It serves as a foundation for acquiring professional power, which in turn is a platform for transforming legacy organizational stereotypes, paradigms, and cultures. Our study participants want all three.

Findings: Fundamentals of Power

Defining Power

Power is the capacity to bring about change. Power is access to resources combined with the authority to decide to what end those resources are used. At the meta-level those in power, consciously or unconsciously, decide what game we will play, who is in and who is out, the rules of play and in which conversations about said game we will and will not engage.

We asked participants to define power in their own words. Eighty-nine percent obliged, offering a wide range of definitions. Some definitions are useful. Others are vague, incomplete, self-centered or completely off the mark. Examples of the former include:

- Power is the means to do something: to take an action, to provide resources and to influence
- Power is about being seen as a visionary or influencer and someone who can make things happen

Definitions indicating failure to understand power include:

- Having power is the ability to influence others in obtaining my objectives
- Power is bestowed upon you. It is external to you
- Power is all about a ‘decide and announce’ culture
Foundations of Power

Social psychologists John R. P. French and Bertram Raven contend there are five major foundations of individual power within organizations:  

- Legitimate  
- Coercive  
- Expert  
- Referent  
- Reward

Paul Hershey and Kenneth Blanchard add two more factors:  

- Connection  
- Information

We posit that when enough women gain enough power to influence the business culture and leadership paradigms, the list will include the power of relationships - caring about as well as supporting and developing others. The new list may also include the power of intuitive and paradoxical thinking in addition to the legitimate power of being a subject matter expert.

To shift power paradigms and reshape organizational cultures, women must understand the current factors and dynamics of power. This will allow them to find and use the best available levers for change.

"Power is not earned or rewarded. It is taken. I have taken a leadership role in key and long-term projects. In this way, I have placed myself at the forefront and not waited to be asked."

- Women and Power Study Participant

Power: Cognitive and Emotional Reactions

Good news – the majority of women in our study, a full 55%, have unequivocally positive thoughts and feelings about power. If we factor in those who feel "somewhat positive" this number soars to 78%. Only 5.9% had totally negative feelings about power. The prevailing literature suggests that our findings would have been reversed. We are delighted to report otherwise as a signal that many women in business are willing and wanting to step up and into power.

We asked participants to make forced choices between being powerful, being well-liked or being with a powerful partner. Interestingly, 19% skipped this question. Of those who responded, 8% opted to be with a powerful partner, 38% selected being well-liked, and 54% chose to be powerful. The number of well-liked responses is a disappointing yet not surprising statistic since women are socialized from early childhood to be likeable good girls.

We asked respondents what they would do with more power. The most common answer? Create a better work environment was selected by 43% of respondents. This speaks to women's desire to shift the prevailing failing paradigm of power that too often serves self-interest, to a paradigm of power that serves collective good and community interests.

Power in Relation to Male Peers

Nearly two-thirds of study participants, most of them senior leaders, report they are at least equally or even more powerful than their male peers.

This potent assertion flies in the face of claims that women don't want power and find it distasteful. It also suggests that women have the capacity to be as powerful as the role requires.

Either/Or Versus Both/And

The deep dive to explore women's thoughts and feelings about power revealed a pattern of "either/or" thinking.

- Power is aggressive rather than cooperative  
- Having as much power as possible is not appealing because to me it implies that others are not sharing in the accountability for driving the company forward

It is incorrect to assume one must choose between two mutually exclusive options, e.g. I choose to be well-liked OR to be powerful; I can be aggressive but NOT co-operative; If I talk about my accomplishments, I am being egotistical.

We posit a more inclusive option that allows women to weave their “power with” abilities (collaborating, supporting, engaging) with “take charge” capabilities (making decisions, being a commanding presence, and an authority, etc.) More on this later in the report.

Power and Career

Current Position and Power

The majority of women in our study (59%) report having sufficient power to perform their current job. They recount being:

- Able to “influence people, projects, budgets and outcomes”  
- Sought “for consultation and mentoring”
Known for “getting things done”

These women also know:

- Power is achieved through effectiveness, influence, judgment and the ability to recognize opportunity.
- Barriers to power will always exist. One has the ability to work within and around barriers with strong focus and intention.

The women quoted above understand the complexity of power. They appear to have high levels of emotional intelligence, and they use it to grasp and apply the dynamics of power. They are aware that power emanates from an internal state and is externally available for the taking. At the same time they use it differently depending upon the situation.

Using terminology from the Catalyst Report, *Women Take Care, Men Take Charge: Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed*, we believe they demonstrate “take charge” as well as “take care” skills. This is yet another positive indicator that some women do understand and successfully use a style of power typically associated with male business leaders.

While the majority of respondents believe they have adequate power for success in their current job, we cannot overlook the 41% who report that lack of power impedes their performance. This is a problem that should be addressed to benefit women and the companies for whom they work.

**Future Career and Power**

Several of our research findings (associations with power, level of power compared to male peers, etc.) have been favorable. This is not the case for participants’ sense that they will attain the power they need to achieve their career goals.

Sixty-seven percent, nearly seven out of every ten women, say they need more power for longer-term career success. Disturbingly, 60% say they have only a 50/50 chance of gaining that power.

"It is a boy’s world. Competition reigns over collaboration."
- Women & Power Study Participant

**ATTAINING POWER**

**Proactive Versus Passive Approaches**

To find out how women attain power, participants were presented with sixteen choices and asked to choose those that work best for them.

The passive options (observing powerful people or being given access to the right networks, etc.) were the big winners, preferred 61% of the time. We interpret this as critical misunderstanding about how power works and/or a reluctance to be assertive about power: waiting for it to arrive rather than proactively seeking and creating opportunities to build it.

The comments revealed a predominance of a passive waiting approaches coupled with observing not acting.

- Having an opportunity to demonstrate what I know would be helpful.
- I could learn about power by watching, observing and noting others’ behavior.
- Having a mentor would be beneficial.

"I will have power when my boss gives it to me."
- Women and Power Study Participant

Only 39% selected proactive approaches (actively seeking association with powerful people, demonstrating my abilities, being assertive). A meager two percent specified “taking power” as a viable approach. By contrast the first man we asked, “How would you increase your power at work?” responded without hesitation, “Take it.” (See Appendix B for the list of ways to attain power presented to study participants.)

**Networking for Power**

In their *Harvard Business Review* article “How Leaders Create and Use Networks,” Herminia Ibarra and Mark Hunter write that effective networking separates successful leaders from the rest of the pack. Based on their practices, our research participants are solidly in the “rest of the pack.”

Just one-third of respondents recognizes the value of, and spends time, networking. It is disturbing that two thirds, are not doing so, as a solid network is critical to earning power and finding one's way to the upper reaches of the corporation. For women to gain more top-level seats, this ratio must change.
Determining the internal and/or external barriers to power comprised the last area of investigation about the dearth of women in clout positions. We also sought to understand which barriers women perceived to be within versus outside their control.

Research participants identified the barriers and categorized them as either internal or external. Fifty-two percent were labeled internal; forty-eight percent were externally driven and viewed as being outside respondents' individual control.

### Internal Obstacles (52%)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Obstacles</th>
<th>External Obstacles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence in self and abilities</td>
<td>Good old boys network, practices and culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reluctance to use power</td>
<td>Stereotypes about women</td>
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<tr>
<td>Failing to speak up</td>
<td>Males preferring to connect with males</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not being assertive enough</td>
<td>Little to no access to internal networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not comfortable promoting myself</td>
<td>Lack of sponsors and mentors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need to improve my leadership skills</td>
<td>Few female role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing work/life balance</td>
<td>Unsupportive male boss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of desire for power</td>
<td>Lack of training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability or unwillingness to relocate</td>
<td>Downsizing resulting in fewer openings</td>
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Lack of self-confidence topped the internal barriers list.
- I need self-confidence to learn to better sell myself and take credit for my ideas
- I have learned a great deal about power, so it is about having confidence in the skills and abilities I already possess

Many women report a hesitancy to speak up or act assertively. It appears they have an inner critic who serves as a reminder of their unworthiness, lack of value or abilities. The critic causes some women to remain silent, edit their communication, and/or critique it so harshly after the fact that it is not worth the price of speaking up.
- My main obstacle is feeling comfortable to speak up
- What gets in the way? Me! I need to ask for what I need

Legacy organizational practices and misperceptions related to gender roles and stereotypes accounted for 30% of the external barriers reported. This is true even for those women who are self-confident and understand power. Several commented, “It is still a man’s world.” The remaining 18% of external barriers include lack of sponsors, mentors and training. These may be related to legacy cultures, but since we could not be certain, they are counted as a separate factor.

Three categories of legacy barriers emerged from the responses.

1. **Gender stereotypes**
   - Very old school thinking that women are not as committed or available to be leaders
   - A woman who is direct with feedback, conflict, and escalation is quickly sidelined on her job
   - The executive in charge has problems with women. Most women in his organization have been fired, quit, or fallen silent

2. **Male bonding which excludes women**
   - There seems to be a common ‘unspoken language’ my male peers speak with male members of our management team that feels like it provides an advantage
   - My male peers gain and sustain access to the male decision-making hierarchy much more easily
   - Male relationships at the top set the standard for the rest of the senior leadership

**Q: What would help you attain more power?**

**A: A constant drip-feed of self-confidence.**

- Women and Power Study Participant
3. Covertly and/or overtly closed ranks

- Men seem to align more readily with men when it comes to risk-taking
- What is needed? Less power being derived from being part of the 'club'
- It’s still a man’s relationship world unless they take you under their wing

These legacy issues and cultural norms contribute to participants’ sense of doubt that they will achieve the level of power needed for future career success. These same factors also account for why many participants say they lack sufficient power to fulfill current job functions.

The Time is Now

When we compare our research findings to the “new normal”17 in business today, we see a confluence of hope and opportunity.

The New Normal

“Would the Lehman Brothers’ fiasco have happened if the firm had been called the Lehman Sisters?” While this and similar questions regarding gender imbalance linger in the business air as a result of 2008-2011 financial crisis, we believe now is the perfect time for businesswomen to step up and into power, and as they do so, to use their individual and collective leadership for change.

Greater numbers of women with deep expertise in management roles and/or with advanced degrees creates a unique opportunity for change. Smart savvy women at all levels of the corporation can work together, and alongside men, to dismantle barriers that prevent talented women from making it to executive positions. Consider the following facts, figures and the conclusions we draw from them:

- Women comprise 46.8% of the entire workforce
- Women hold 40% of all management jobs
- Three women attend college and graduate school for every two men
- Women earn 42% of all MBAs, 59% of bachelor degrees, 61% of master degrees, and about half of all law and medical degrees
- As women secure more advanced educational degrees, they are feeding, filling, and fueling the future talent pipeline. This is fortunate for business given the serious state of employee satisfaction in general.

- 71% of all employees are disengaged, up four percent year over year

With their skills in collaboration, persuasion, empathy and flexibility24, women can counterbalance the hard skills that have been over-valued and over-used, resulting in the lowest job satisfaction ratings in decades.25

As previously noted, women show a propensity for a take care style of leadership. This style is needed to balance the overuse of the prevailing take charge style. Paradoxically, by choosing to take charge of themselves and get in-charge positions, women can positively affect key measures, such as employee engagement. By holding more in-charge positions, women will also speed the process of positively altering organizational perceptions and removing cultural barricades to their leadership. This is clearly noted by some of our participants as evidenced by the following responses.

- No one is going to willingly give up his power seat so woman can have more
- Only I can adjust/adapt to the dynamics of my peers, bosses, and industry to demonstrate I am capable of more. I cannot expect them to change to help me advance my career
- I’ll get there or I’ll die trying

Step Up to Transform

This report opened with reference to the cocktail of cultural, systemic, organizational and personal impediments contributing to the improving-yet-still-unacceptable number of women in power seats. We see a rich, exciting and challenging opportunity for women, both individually and collectively, to remix the cocktail.

This entails finding a way over, through and around both internal and external obstacles. Women must support one another in doing so and in reshaping the business world such that “power with” is no longer the runner up to “power over.” By banding together woman can earn and claim corporate clout positions. By doing so, they will transform organizational stereotypes, cultures and paradigms.

The Transformational Journey

As women who rose to senior management in corporate America, we related to a great deal of what participants shared about factors holding them back. We have tripped over inner critics and been called
names meant to hurt and/or belittle. We have had our share of criticism from those who wanted us to be good girls who accepted the status quo. We have had female colleagues try to pull us down to advance their own careers and we have experienced overtly and covertly male-dominated organizational cultures and hierarchies. We have been mistaken for sex objects and had our ideas co-opted.

We remain undaunted.

On this journey, we've also found amazing support from both women and men. No one, however, thought to teach us about power.

Power has too long remained a hidden key to the leadership suite. We learned on our own, at times by making mistakes and paying the price. It took too long. We want women to know exactly where and how to find the power key to unlock their dream suite ... faster, and help deserving others do the same.

So, staying true to our research while applying lessons from our own experiences, we identify a combination of emotional and cognitive elements for women to overcome. We provide solutions to change misaligned ideas and actions such that women can change the gender ratios all the way up to the highest levels of leadership.

What follows are the vital seven elements in this endeavor.

7 Keys to Transformational Power

1. TAMING THE INNER CRITIC: INCREASING SELF-ESTEEM

Self-limiting beliefs, societal norms, customs, conditioning, and ideologies act as deterrents to women's power. These factors need to be traded for a realistically strong sense of the worth of one's abilities.

Psychologists believe that both men and women have inner critics. Our study participants certainly affirmed the existence of these nagging internal voices whispering or shouting, “Not smart, polished, articulate, or good enough.”

To claim their power, women must tame these inner critics. They don't go away without first being understood and respected for the role they have played in protecting one or more vulnerable parts of ourselves. We suggest inviting the critic to tell you why he or she is present and what part of you is being protected. The critic needs to be thanked for the role played and reassured that while the services have been useful in the past, they are no longer needed. Ask if he or she is willing to leave and allow you to recoup the part of yourself that plays with confidence, takes risks, speaks up, or whatever part is being kept under the critic's protective watch.

"[We all have a] Chief Doubting Officer - Don't let them win. Use them to inspire."

- Nora Denzel, SVP Intuit, Study Participant

Increasing self-esteem

Women can choose to have greater levels of self-esteem – overall evaluation of worth. Doing so fuels confidence and resilience. High self-esteem includes both thoughts, I am competent, and beliefs, I have an obligation to gain power so I can lead needed changes. Self-statements, such as I know I can successfully complete this new project on time and on budget, build confidence and power.

"If you perceive yourself as having power, it affects the way you interact with the world. You approach things as if you have the ability to control, alter, or affect the outcome."

- Women and Power Study Participant

Taking risks

Accepting one's abilities and being confident involves risks. The possibilities include publicly taking responsibility and being held accountable; being successful and setting a higher bar for the future; making a public mistake or two; being noticed; ruffling some feathers and receiving some cheers.

Too many women pepper their conversations with risk-averse caveats and apologies that decrease power. "I'm sorry to trouble you. "I apologize for taking your time." "I appreciate your confidence in me, but I'm not sure I can..." A woman's ability to make her presence known, to accept her skills and acknowledge her contributions – without apology – are required building blocks for growing her power.

Barbara, a senior woman we interviewed, reported that her coach instructed, "Call and have me interrupted." The first time Barbara did so, she began with the words, "I'm sorry to bother you, but..." Before she could complete the sentence, her coach interrupted, "Why on earth are you apologizing when I told you to call me anytime? If you are going to have a place on the global stage, which you should have
because you have wisdom to share, you have to learn how to command attention. You can begin by dropping the apologies."

Women must learn to be **bold, audacious and powerful** – with no apologies.

### 2. **Growing Thicker Skin**

With power comes the need to take things less personally (unless of course you should), to be less concerned with being well-liked and more focused on being respected as well as self-respecting. Fretting too much over what others think about you slows or interferes with quick and sound decision-making, a required skill for successful leadership. Developing thicker skin is essential to leading.

Additional downsides exist for those who prefer being well-liked good girls (38% of those surveyed) who don't upset others. Compared to women, men ask for what they want in the workplace. Both rely on having skin thick enough to tolerate the "No" answer, and both are vital requirements for ascending the ladder.

Given the pressure to be well-liked it is not surprising that women lack negotiating skills and the moxie to ask for what they want in the workplace. Both rely on having skin thick enough to tolerate the "No" answer, and both are vital requirements for ascending the ladder.

One participant told us she wanted “to step up to the plate and ask for what I need without making anyone uncomfortable in the least.” Growing one’s power does not happen without leaving one’s own comfort zone or pushing others beyond theirs. It is time for women to get comfortable with these feelings. Each time they do so, the discomfort zone will shrink and their skin will grow thick. To build thicker skin requires using that skin, perhaps getting a few bumps and bruises, earning a few scars, and toughening one’s skin in the process. There simply is no other way.

#### Advocating

Women are often quick to advocate for others yet fail to do so on their own behalf. The associated double bind trips them up. Fail to advocate for one’s self and be viewed as ineffective but well-liked. Promote one’s self and be labeled aggressive. To end a double bind, you have to step out and do the thing that binds you.

According to New York University Professor Clay Shirky, “Self-promotion is a skill that produces disproportionate rewards, and if skill at self-promotion remain disproportionately male, those rewards will as well.”

We think it is disingenuous and whiny for women to rue their lack of representation in the suites of power if they fail to advocate for and represent their capacity to be there. This means letting others know what you’ve accomplished by virtue of your leadership, your choices and decisions. Many women are reluctant to do so, considering it “boastful and egotistical.” Nora Denzel, Senior Vice President and General Manager Intuit, one of our study participants, sees it differently.

"Part of doing a great job is communicating to others what you did and how you did it. Find the venue, the platform, package it. Don’t be so modest. The focus is not on you but on the result. Your job is also to let others know about it. It’s the stone rippling through the water. You have to make ripples. If you don’t you will be an unsung hero forever."

Self-advocacy, negotiation skills, and the ability to highlight one’s contributions are must-have professional tools for career advancement. Double bind or not, comfortable or not, for women to succeed in breaking through glass or any other kind of ceilings, they will have to thicken their skin. Advocating, negotiating and campaigning for oneself are normal business practices. When someone responds with a tough stance it is not an attack on relationships, integrity or individual self-worth. Women must acknowledge, accept and apply this fact of business life if they are to participate with full and equal power.

Skin thickening agents and exercises to toughen skin will help.

#### 3. Overcoming the Cinderella Syndrome

"I have every intention of determining my future and do not give over that power to anyone. This may be challenging, and I will accomplish it."

- Women and Power Study Participant

Too many of the women we surveyed are submissively waiting for their corporate prince to deliver the power shoe. Women cannot passively wait on the sidelines, complaining and hoping that organizational cultures will change and magically
deliver senior level positions. Instead they must engage proactively in the tough work of transforming the legacy culture from “good old boys club” to an environment where both feminine and masculine ways are valued. This means that both “power with” routines and “take charge” skills are practiced and valued. When this happens, women will rise to and participate at the highest levels. As a result they will influence corporate strategies to value people, principles and profits. We believe this shift in emphasis is why Fortune 500 companies with more women in senior roles achieve significantly better financial results than comparable companies with few women leaders.

“At a conference, no one was sitting next to the CEO so I grabbed the empty chair and talked to him when no one else dared. He is just a man.”

- Shayna Joson, Managing Director, Societe Generale, Study Participant

To replace Cinderella consider Dorothy of Oz as an archetype to emulate. She is a woman on a journey who helps Lion, Scarecrow and Tin Man discover hidden sources of power. She also overcomes her false belief that the wizard will send her home to her true self. With the help of Glinda, her mentor and guide, Dorothy discovers that she has all along possessed the shoes and the power to take herself home. Dorothy has already learned that the world is without wizards (and princes) who grant power to others.

Dorothy engages proactively. She leans into the Yellow Brick Road. She leads herself and others on a journey that expands comfort zones. We suggest women do likewise and

• Stop waiting for a mentor to find you. Seek and recruit one
• Don’t wait for introductions to senior executives; ask for one; introduce yourself at a company function or pick up the phone and make the call
• Observe those in power to understand how they do it; then do it yourself – your way
• Abandon the wish for someone to hand you opportunities; create your own. Raise your hand for the challenging and visible project, for the important committee lead by the SVP and more

4. FORGING STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS

According to Nora Denzel, SVP Intuit Corporation, one of our study participants, to be successful and powerful requires building both a track and a great network.

Strategic Networks

Assuming competence and performance, we believe connections – both whom you know and who knows you – are the currency of the workplace, particularly at higher levels.

To fill their share of Fortune 500 CEO positions,29 more women will have to become masters of strategic networking, building alliances and coalitions, and supporting one another.

“I am sure to get my five minutes with people in power so I can tell them, ‘This is who I am. This is what I have done, and this is what I can do for you.’”

- Shayna Joson, Managing Director, Societe Generale, Study Participant

Networks should cover a wide range of personal and professional needs. An effective strategic network contains seven diverse elements.

• Brokers
• Partners
• Sponsors
• Mentors
• Experts
• Fans – Champions
• Family and friends

Business and life regularly deliver complex problems and situations. Building and sustaining a multi-faceted network prepares women to competently face and solve these challenges while sustaining success and well-being.

Short-term Coalitions and Alliances

At the risk of sounding unfeeling, we ask that women not consider every contact a friendship or long-term personal relationship. In a fast-paced ever-changing world, business success requires short-term alliances and coalitions designed to drive specific results in addition to enduring friendships and collegial associations.
Create shorter-term alliances with people and groups who share a common interest and goal. Leverage collective knowledge, skills, abilities and connections to drive positive change and/or achieve win-wins.

Coalitions and alliances will most likely be transitory with the composition of the group changing as the timeline and nature of the work or project changes. It’s okay to form, change, and let go of relationships.

5. Following The Rule of 3

When we tell the following story at women’s conferences and workshops, heads nod in a chorus of recognition. “Have you ever been the sole woman in a meeting and spoken up to comment, introduce a topic, or an idea only to be negated or ignored? Then, within minutes, one of the men” (this is where heads begin to nod) “says almost the same thing and is lauded for his fabulous idea.”

Imagine how powerful it would be to have not one, but two, women colleagues in the meeting take up your topic and advance the discussion. This is the Rule of 3, a standard Dr. Anne Perschel uses with client companies to measure success of women’s leadership initiatives. Why? It takes at least 3 members of the “other” group to ensure they will be heard, to begin changing the prevailing conversations, and the culture.

Authors and leadership scholars Rosabeth Moss Kanter and Linda Tarr-Whelan support this view. 31 Tarr-Whelan explains the impact: “the presence of 30% women in decision-making bodies is the tipping point to have women’s ideas, values, and approaches resonate. This critical mass of women has the clout to permanently change power dynamics.” 32

Consciously work to bring other women into power with you. That is how you create sustainable and meaningful change.

- Jennet Robinson Alterman, Executive Director, Charleston, SC Center for Women, Study Participant

We suggest these three (or more) women band together and form a sisterhood of the travelling power shoes (to borrow and change a phrase). They should strike an agreement to review, critique, and support one another’s initiatives when the opportunity arises. Better yet, they create these opportunities. The trio can and should tap men who champion women and culture change as well.

One voice can be a token – a lone cry in the wilderness. Two voices are just the gals chatting. Three voices is a game-changing chorus, and you know how that goes. It’s hard to resist singing along, so the chorus becomes a rich harmony of deep, mid and high range voices.

Some will raise questions about women’s ability to band together in accordance with The Rule of 3. It is important that women understand why they might fail to support, or at times, even undermine each other, and instead they can choose to follow a different path. Dr. Elaine Yarbrough says the snarky comments and catfights for which women are infamous are rooted in low levels of power. Believing themselves to be without the authority to take on those who do have power, women attack one another as they establish a female pecking order, a common behavior among the chronically low-powered.

6. Employing Both/And Solutions

Western culture has over-valued either/or thinking and a preference for definitive answers. Many of our study participants employ these same either/or choices relative to power. It is time to broaden this mindset... no apology for the pun.

Avoid the tyranny of the OR and embrace the genius of the AND.

- James C. Collins, Jerry I. Porras

Women are flexible.35 On a purely biological and physical level, the boundaries of their bodies expand to incorporate a growing human life. We think the same is true for women’s thinking and emotional capacities, such that they can move beyond either/or thinking in relation to power and other matters.
Agile and flexible thinking is required for success in today’s complex global environment. In a 2009 Harvard Business Review article, Moon Shots for Management, Gary Hamel author and management expert, underscores the importance of such a mindset.

Organizational success in the years ahead will hinge on the ability of employees at all levels to manage seemingly irreconcilable trade-offs – between short-term earnings and long-term growth, competition and collaboration, structure and emergence, discipline and freedom, and individual and team success.36

Women will not advance because they think or behave like men. That space is already taken. Women have to contribute something different, something genuine to their nature, something that is needed and something that will be valued. One such contribution may well be tied to their demonstrated capacity for flexible boundaries and inclusion of others. By applying these traits to adopt both/and thinking, women can resolve seemingly irreconcilable trade-offs that cannot be addressed with either/or thinking. Both/and thinking may be many a woman’s unique value added contribution.

A recent study at Stanford Graduate School of Business affirms this style is both feasible and successful for women.

Women in the Stanford study received:
- 1.5 times more promotions than men who did not practice “both/and” behaviors
- 3 times as many promotions as ‘masculine’ women affirming that masculine behavior alone does not garner success.”39

Since competition in the 21st century demands a capacity to manage both complexity and ambiguity, women need to supplement their natural grace with power. It is not about giving up grace. It is about having both!

- Margaret Seidler

In the business world, women who are aggressive, assertive, and confident but who can turn these traits on and off depending on the social circumstances get more promotions than either men or other women. The interesting thing here is that being able to regulate one’s masculine behavior does not simply put women on par with men; it gives them even more of an advantage.38

7. UNDERSTANDING POWER

To transform how power is used and to what end, women must know the current rules and dynamics. Without appropriate knowledge, it is by accident that one produces desired results. To this end, in addition to addressing the obstacles identified above, women must know what power is, how to think about it how to earn it, and how to use it. (We stand ready to make it so.)

Power is not inherently bad or self-serving. It is simply the authority and the ability to go from Point A to Point B – to achieve change. It is readily available from a multitude of sources and can be expressed in a range of styles. To create positive outcomes one simply, but sometimes not easily, has to muster the courage, vision, and foresight to take it and use it for the common good.

If women do want more clout, as our study shows, they must choose to take power and be powerful while being true to their nature as women. We do not advocate for women to adopt masculine behaviors. There is ample room for both men and women to be true to who they are and what works best for them.

Libby Sartain, former executive, Yahoo! Inc., provides sound advice on this matter.

“So much of what it takes to be a leader has been historically defined by men. And while I was determined to be a leader, the last thing in the world I was going to do was to try to be like a man so that I could be taken seriously. I had to continue to be myself and create a leadership style that worked for me.”

CHANGING POWER PARADIGMS

Had women been the captains of industry, without participation by men, problems would still exist. They would simply be different problems than the ones we have today. This is what happens when one perspective dominates. The events of the times, however, were such that men created and dominated business for generations, so the practices and mindsets that evolved were, and still are, male-centric.

It is time for many of these prevailing and all of the failing models, systems of thinking and practices to change by way of including other perspectives. We need look no further than the financial crises during the first decades of the 21st century for evidence that many long-standing paradigms are no longer working. Among these we include, bigger is always better; a
focus on profitability and stock values unbalanced by concerns for the public good; and what's good for corporations is what's good for people. Women can facilitate change and have an obligation to do so. It is an inside job that requires creating new definitions for business success and the way power is used to achieve it.

The fabric of leadership in business is woven from stereotypically masculine traits, such as being dominant, rational, achievement-oriented, assertive, and concerned with self. Current and sustaining trends such as high unemployment, low trust in senior executives, and decreasing employee engagement illustrate that this fabric is badly frayed. It needs to be strengthened by new threads, interwoven with the existing ones.

**Recommendations & Call to Action**

When women band together to support each other's achievements and rise to power, they will produce far-ranging positive impacts for women, men, corporations and society.

More women with business clout is not simply about numbers. It will result from and simultaneously create a transformation of the power paradigm such that:

- Women and men throw off the shackles of social and organizational conditioning to exercise all their leadership muscle, working side-by-side to solve complex business problems
- Organizational cultures evolve and expand to incorporate both take care and take charge behaviors and actions
- Business processes and results improve because more varied perspectives are used to solve problems

This transformation will not be easy, as is the case with most worthwhile endeavors. So, if you are a businesswoman who understands that power means access to resources and the ability to decide how and to what positive ends they are used, the following message is especially for you.

Now is the time to:

1. **Tame your inner critic**
   - Increase self-esteem
   - Take risks
2. **Thicken your skin**
   - Advocate for yourself by way of your achievements
3. **Overcome Cinderella and cheer on your inner Dorothy.**
   - Know you have the power to lead and transform.
4. **Forge strategic networks**
5. **Follow the Rule of 3**
   - Gain and lend support to other women
   - Aim for 3 women on every leadership team
6. **Employ both/and thinking**
7. **Understand what power is and how it works in your company**

All the while be true to your nature as a woman and define a self-respecting style that also earns respect from others.

> "We are all equally powerful. It is just a matter of choosing to use that power to do something.”
>  
> ~ Women and Power Study Participant

When more women step up and into the power of leadership, we, the women of Braithwaite-Germane expect that cocktails in the suites of power will be served to confident diverse leaders of both genders who lead from both sides of their brains and with their whole hearts.
Appendix A – Research Participants

- 95% work in the telecommunications, media, or technology business sectors
- 35.5% have profit and loss responsibility
- Ninety-six individuals are on a succession-planning list and/or have been identified as a high potential and/or are being developed for a senior leadership role
- 33% report directly to an executive team member
- 15% are on the most senior leadership team

**Education**

- Associate: 11%
- Bachelor: 8%
- Masters: 36%
- Doctorate: 46%

**Wages**

- <$100,000/yr: 2%
- $100-199,000/yr: 29%
- $200-499,000/yr: 23%
- $500,000+/yr: 46%

**Age**

- 20-30: 28%
- 31-40: 18%
- 41-50: 1%
- 51-60: 1%
- 61+: 52%

**Family Status**

- Single, no children: 52%
- Single with children: 18%
- Married, no children: 13%
- Married with children: 17%
## Appendix B – Ways to Attain Power

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROACTIVE/SELF-INITIATED</th>
<th>PERCENT SELECTING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proving myself through my accomplishments</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associating myself with more powerful people</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting more powerfully</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking up, asserting myself, using influence</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking more risks</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking power</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>39.4%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PASSIVE</th>
<th>PERCENT SELECTING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observing powerful people</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having greater access to people in power</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having access to the right people</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a mentor</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being given more opportunities</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having training</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a coach to help me</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having access to the right people</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having access to the right network</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being allowed in the old boys club</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving encouragement from others</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>60.6%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C - Interview Questions

1. How do you define power? What thoughts and feelings come to mind about the topic?
2. Please share if you aspired to power, or if it happened in an organic way. Explain either way.
3. What or who influenced you such that you aspired to and achieved powerful roles?
4. During the course of your career, what did you do, or conversely not do, that accounts for the degree of power you’ve attained?
5. Is there anything you wish you had done differently? Some key lessons you’ve learned?
6. What advice do you have for professional women about attaining positions of power? About being powerful?
Appendix D – Braithwaite-Germane

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MEET BRAITHWAITE-GERMANE

Dr. Anne Perschel is a leadership and organizational psychologist and President of Germane Consulting. Her previous research explores women as transformational leaders and uncovers what men learn about leading from their female colleagues. For over 20 years Anne has been an “unstopable force for the advancement of women leaders,” beginning with her role as chair of the Women In Manufacturing Conference at a Fortune 50 company and is an advisor, coach, and consultant to senior leaders and creates programs for the advancement of women. Anne also works with companies to address systemic and cultural obstacles standing in the way of the promotion and success of women managers and executives. She is a Member of The Boston Club, executive women on a mission to place more women on boards, and a Master Coach Supervisor in the Coach Certification Program of Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology. Anne has been a senior manager in two Fortune 100 companies, earned a Master of Science degree in Human and Organizational Development and a Doctorate in Psychology. Her articles have appeared in numerous publications including Business Week, The Glass Hammer, Pink Magazine, and Global Business and Organizational Excellence. She has presented at various conferences including Linkage annual Women’s Leadership Summit. More recently Anne co-founded, and is Chief Inspiration Officer, VP of Mentoring and Sponsorships, at 3Plus International, where professional women achieve career aspirations with guidance from a network of independent of mentors and sponsors.

Jane Perdue is a leadership and women’s issues consultant, speaker, and Principal, Braithwaite Innovation Group, a female-owned professional and organizational development organization. Prior to joining Braithwaite, she was a vice president for fifteen years at Fortune 100 telecommunications companies including Comcast and AT&T Broadband. Throughout her corporate executive and entrepreneurial careers, Jane put her MBA to good use managing both $25 million budgets and tens of thousands of employees, as well as creating numerous leadership development programs, many exclusively for women. Jane writes for the Charleston, South Carolina Post and Courier newspaper and is on the Board of Directors for the Charleston, SC Center for Women, the largest women’s development center in the state. Jane’s first book, Yes You Can!, a leadership anthology co-authored with Warren Bennis, et al., was released in 2010. A former Women in Cable Telecommunications Board Member, WICT Mentor of the Year, Betsy Magness Leadership Institute alumna and certified polarity consultant, she has been featured as a leadership and women in business expert in newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. Jane has presented at various conferences including SHRM, the Women in Business Conference and WICT.
Based on our research and corporate experience relative to advancing professional women in the workplace, Braithwaite-Germane offers:

- Keynote speeches
- Workshops
- Organization assessments and consultations
- Development and design of women’s initiatives
- Coaching
- Corporate retreats

If you and/or your organization are interested in working with us to further advance women within your organization, and/or if you would like to participate in our research and/or know someone you believe we should contact and/or interview relative to our women and power research, our contact information is provided above.

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4. 2011 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officer and Top Earners.
8. The National Association for Female Executives, 2010
33 Dr. Elaine Yarbrough, speaking at Charleston, SC Center for Women, November 15, 2010.

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