# Women, It’s Time to Take Control



You are a smart, talented leader. Unleash your power.

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Women, it’s time for us to suit up. We need to harness our unique feminine advantages as women to dominate in business. After years of trying to show we are equal to men, we have not made any progress. Why? Women have been playing by the wrong playbook — the male playbook. The rules of that playbook are rigged against us.

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We need to start using our own playbook to change things. No more “learning in” or “outmanning the men” or “beating the men

at their own game.” It’s time for women to capitalize on our unique advantages as women to succeed and lead in business.

Those unique feminine advantages have nothing to do with our sexuality. Rather, we have a weapon that is far more potent. Research has shown that emotional intelligence is key for being a successful business leader. Of the 12 competencies researchers have developed as key markers of the emotional intelligence required for leadership, women score higher than men in 11 out of the 12. And on the 12th we’re tied with men. We don’t just excel in the warm and fuzzy skills. We come out ahead of men in hard business skills traditionally associated with men like “driving for results” and “taking initiative.” It’s time for us to transform the gender rules by using these superior leadership skills to advance our careers.

Here’s how to move forward:

# 1. Suit up using your emotional intelligence.

Combining intelligence, empathy and emotions magnifies our capacity for analysis and our comprehension of interpersonal dynamics. We can use these superior leadership skills to read the emotions and motivations of the people we are dealing with, gauge the situation strategically, choose a nuanced course of action and take control.

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# 2. Stand up with confidence.

Confidence trumps competence every time. How many times in a meeting has a man, who clearly doesn’t have a clue what he’s talking about, speak with the utmost certainty and end up drawing praise and respect from his audience? Why? Study after study shows that success in the business world requires more

than competence. Our efforts to demonstrate that we deserve promotion, compensation and success based on merit are misguided because business is not a meritocracy. Confidence beats competence.

The good news is that confidence is a skill, and like any other skill, it can be acquired. Step one is to just do it. Act as if you exude self-confidence. Fake it until you become it. Walk the walk and talk the talk.

## 3. Shut up that internal critical voice.

Stop self-sabotage. Society has been drilling male supremacy into us since we were little girls, and we've internalized it and convinced ourselves to buy into the patriarchy by giving away our power. All too often, we are our own worst enemy. This internal voice sews seeds of self-doubt, fear of failure and the fear of being revealed as a fraud. Ruthlessly target those thoughts, consciously shut them down and replace them with self-affirmative, encouraging talk.

## 4. Speak up.

If you have an idea or disagree with what's being said, speak up. Shut down mansplaining and manterrupting and stop allowing men to appropriate *your* ideas as their own. When you are speaking, do not yield, and call out any man who interrupts you. If necessary, bluntly say "Stop interrupting me and let me finish."

When you talk, make sure to use empowering language that exudes confidence. Never apologize before you speak. The word "sorry" should be banished from your vocabulary. Similarly, never caveat what you are about to say with prefaces such as "I'm not sure but" or "I might be wrong but." Use direct, forceful language.

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Male speech patterns are more assertive, direct and succinct. Women’s speech patterns are perceived as weak, unassertive, and tentative. Use short sentences. This makes it harder for people to interrupt you.

Remember that body language matters. Make your physical presence known: Lean forward at the table, point to the person you’ve chosen to acknowledge for a comment, put the flats of your hands on the table to make a point and look that person squarely in the eye or stand up and walk to the front of the room – whatever it takes.

## 5. Step up.

Opportunities are rarely handed to you on a plate. Remember that if you don’t ask for it, you won’t get it. How will you ever achieve your goals if you only perform those assignments you are handed? Ask for what you want – plum assignments, leadership roles, salary increases and promotions. Take risks and advocate for yourself. Take the hard job even if it’s a stretch for you. If you don’t, some man will. When you are assigned a major project, dive into it and take charge.

## 6. Show up.

Reaching a goal is usually a marathon, not a sprint. Demonstrate the tenacity to continuously prove yourself. Seize the next challenge and keep achieving. Push back against those who deny you what you need.

## 7. Smarten up.

Focus on earning respect, not popularity. As women, we tend to be people-pleasers and hyper-sensitive to nuance. The same

emotional sensitivity that gives us our high emotional intelligence also make us wary about displeasing others, risk-averse and bad at dealing with negative feedback. Understand that success is not a popularity contest. Women have to learn to withstand disapproval and criticism and, when necessary, to take hard, contrary positions. The most likable people are not regarded as leaders. Instead, to achieve success be respected, decisive and inspiring.

Let’s get started. Women do not have to put up with male domination any longer. It’s time to stop surrendering control to the men around you, letting them order you around or allowing them to treat you with disrespect as if you are of a lower social status than they are. You are a smart, talented leader. Unleash your power.

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