

Foreword by CATHY BESSANT
Chief Operations and Technology Officer, Bank of America

THE

A NEW PATH TO POWER

INFLUENCE

FOR WOMEN LEADERS

EFFECT

**KATHRYN HEATH,
JILL FLYNN, MARY DAVIS HOLT,
and DIANA FAISON**

*Authors of the New York Times Bestseller,
BREAK YOUR OWN RULES*

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—**The Honorable Cari M. Dominguez, former Chair, US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

The Influence Effect

Other books by Kathryn Heath, Jill Flynn, and Mary Davis Holt

Break Your Own Rules: How to Change the Patterns of Thinking

That Block Women's Paths to Power

The Influence Effect

*A New Path to Power
for Women Leaders*

Kathryn Heath
Jill Flynn
Mary Davis Holt
Diana Faison



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The Influence Effect

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*To the generations of
amazing women leaders
who have and will change
our world for the better*

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Foreword

This is a book that needed to be written, and it's a book that needs to be read. Influence is not a nice-to-have in business; it is a nonnegotiable. Influence depends on having a seat at the table and entails having your voice shape decisions and outcomes. Not enough women are influencing today. It's true that too few of us "sit at the table," especially in the C-suite. In order to get there, stay there, and make real contributions at every step, we women need to do some things differently.

We need to ensure that what we say gets heard. This sounds obvious, but it is not easy. Getting heard requires preparation and practice on our part. Men and women communicate differently. Women tend to use more words, speak more formally, and focus on process versus outcomes. There is nothing wrong with that, but because it's not how men communicate, men often tune such speech out, which means that your input may not be appropriately considered.

At one point, I met with a male colleague to discuss how to have his team sell a technology product that my group developed. His first words, before I'd said a thing? He asked, "Why should we sell your product?" I wanted to explain the client relationships it would help them build, the best-in-class product attributes that took years to develop, and the product's superiority to anything our competitors have. Instead, I said, "Because it will add \$40 million to your revenue goal for this year." He heard that! I knew he was thinking primarily about how he and his team could be successful, so I spoke his language.

Disagreements cannot be taken personally. Sometimes we confuse influence with getting everyone to agree. In reality, influence is getting the right decision made even when people do not agree. We need to quit trying to please everyone. We must be able to make a decision and say, "Here is why X person and Y person disagree with me, but this is what we need to do anyway." We need to quit relying solely on agreement and consensus and instead show we have a point of view

and can stand by our decisions. One of my female colleagues is confident enough to say occasionally to her boss, “Just because you disagree with me doesn’t mean that I am wrong.” We must become comfortable with disagreement.

Confidence must come from within. I learned this lesson a while ago, and I’ve never forgotten it. I was at a public event being introduced as the incoming board chair of a large nonprofit. The person introducing me spoke enthusiastically about my warmth, approachability, and sense of humor. He talked about the heart I bring to my decisions and how fully engaged I am in my community activities. I sensed that description of me would surprise colleagues in the audience who only knew my office persona. When I took the microphone I said, “Yes, that was me he was talking about, in case you couldn’t tell!” A few days later, my boss at that time gave me some feedback: “Cathy, people who work with you in the community love you, but not everyone at the bank loves you like that. Figure out what is different when you are in the community and see if you can bring that person to work.” That was hard for me to hear, and it was one of the most important pieces of feedback I’ve ever received.

I realized I was giving myself permission to be my authentic self in the community, but at work, I was behaving in ways that I thought I *should* behave. I was imitating the behavior of others, and I did not feel confident unless I had the approval of others. Since then, I have made it my mission to show up with confidence and to be my true self. I have found that influence and authenticity are inextricably linked. Only by being truly self-confident can we influence others to follow us. And remember, influence is a nonnegotiable for leaders.

What works for men at work does not necessarily work for women. This book was written so that you, too, can connect your influencing skills with your authenticity. My hope is that with practice, greater self-awareness, and the knowledge gained from the insight and experiences highlighted throughout this book, you will become a person of greater influence and you will make a difference.

Cathy Bessant
Chief Operations and Technology Officer
Bank of America

The Influence Effect

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INTRODUCTION

The Politics Problem

WE'RE GLAD TO BE BACK! We've been busy since the 2011 publication of our first book, *Break Your Own Rules: How to Change the Patterns of Thinking That Block Women's Paths to Power*. Since then, we've spoken to hundreds of women and men at conferences, we've led workshops and seminars, and we've coached many women who are breaking rules and are on the path to becoming senior-level leaders.

Break Your Own Rules described the six patterns of thinking that create career barriers and proposed new rules that enable us to break free from limiting beliefs and achieve the career momentum we need to succeed. The book became a *New York Times* best seller. It resonated with scores of women, and it has remained a relevant part of the current dialogue as women continue to strive to reach the top of organizations.

In *Break Your Own Rules* we introduced our "Red Suit Vision," which we remain fully committed to in all of our work:

We have a dream. It is a big vision... it is a leap... and it is audacious: we want to see women make up at least 30 percent of all top leadership positions in corporate America by the year 2025. We believe that 30 percent is a tipping point. When 30 percent of corporate leaders are women, the goals and direction of corporate America will change. The old rules will be shattered. America's corporations will be better led, and everyone will benefit.

That dream is the reason we wrote this book: *to further advance our vision and offer a new path to power for women*. Although many things have changed since we published our first book, some others have remained the same. As women, we still need advice and coaching that is geared specifically for our career needs and experiences. That one thing can make all the difference in our success. There are so many of us, perhaps like you, who work hard, make sacrifices, and bring considerable talent to the table. To most of our colleagues in business, we are star performers. We work long hours and are accustomed to success. And yet, sometimes our careers get stalled or derailed. We lack support, make innocent missteps, and are blindsided by the fallout. That's exactly what happened recently to one of our clients, Sara.¹

Earlier in her career, Sara finished graduate school and joined a promising start-up, where she helped negotiate its sale to a much larger competitor. She made a quick pivot to a medium-size telecommunications company and gradually rose through the ranks. She managed a P&L and helped the company ride out the 2008–9 recession by being one of the people involved in several innovative new product offerings and acquisitions. Not only was she great with clients, but she was also a rainmaker. More recently, she was asked by the CEO to sit on the executive leadership team.

That's when her career momentum slid to a halt.

Almost right away, she felt as if her colleagues on the leadership team weren't hearing her. She left leadership team meetings feeling blocked and frustrated. She felt increasingly powerless and ineffective. The final blow came a year or so later when she was passed over for a promotion she wanted immensely and felt she legitimately deserved based on her track record.

Sara had been appreciated by her peers and respected in her role, and she'd generated considerable upward momentum in her career. Where did she go wrong? According to her boss, Sara needed to learn to better maneuver through the politics of the upper echelon. We were asked to coach her, and her 360-degree feedback offered us some insight into how we could help. It indicated that Sara lacked political savvy and was unable to influence

others. More specifically, “she has established numerous relationships, but has not gained the support of key peers. She expresses her ideas, but is unable to do what it takes to persuade other leaders. She ‘manages up’ well, but she so far has been unable to bring her colleagues on board with her agenda.” She did not know how to cultivate support for her ideas or deal with resistance from peers. Her response to us was, “I’m smart. My ideas have merit. Why do I have to do all of this politicking?”

Sara’s story is familiar to us because we hear stories like hers again and again. The reality is that barriers become tougher for us to overcome as we approach the highest levels of leadership. That’s when organizational politics becomes most intense. There are reasons for this, but the single common denominator we have found across all our work is this: *what works for men at work doesn’t work for women.*

Parsing the Politics Problem

When we ask groups of women who have read *Break Your Own Rules*, “Which positive pattern of behavior is hardest for you master?” one has always been the clear winner: being politically savvy. It turns out that most of us are not actually motivated by unbridled competition. We do not gravitate toward backroom deals or trading favors. Instead, most of us value collaboration, inclusion, and win-win outcomes.

We have written about women and office politics for the *Harvard Business Review* and numerous other publications. The last major article we wrote for *HBR* was based on a research study we undertook in 2013.² As part of that study, we conducted surveys with over 270 female managers in Fortune 500 organizations to determine what they liked and disliked about business meetings. One of the things that repeatedly fell into the dislike column? Navigating politics.

In our sixteen-year process of coaching and training female leaders, we’ve maintained a running list of common threads. The disdain of office politics

comes up repeatedly. Political obstacles are the top barrier women mention to us in our everyday work. In addition, in reviewing several thousand 360-degree feedback reports, we found that a notable number of female executives and their managers cited becoming politically savvy as an ongoing development need for women.

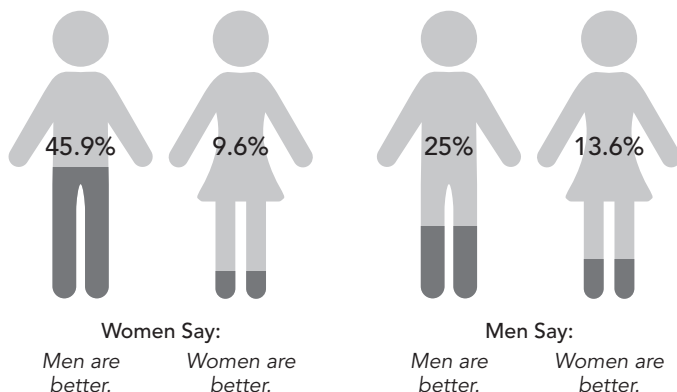
Although *office politics* has both positive and negative connotations, we define it as the strategies and tactics that people use to gain advantage, sell their agendas, and earn support from colleagues. Even when we view it in these straightforward terms, we see that women struggle to determine where they should aspire to be on the continuum shown in Figure 1.

On one hand, they have gotten to where they are because of hard work, and they do not want to be perceived as “overly political.” On the other hand, they see instances in which outright “political maneuvering” and ruthless behavior have paid off for some of their colleagues. We urge women to consider the middle ground.

In 2015–16, we conducted another round of research. This time we wanted to understand why women were so turned off by office politics. We surveyed 134 senior executive men and women in leading organizations (see Appendix B), and the results shed a surprising light on the high barriers women face along the journey to career success. First, when we asked men and women who was better at office politics, women were more than four times as likely to say that men were better than women than they were to say



FIGURE 2 A Perception That Men Are Better at Office Politics



that women were better, and men were nearly twice as likely to agree that men were better (see Figure 2).

It was an eye-opener for us to learn that both men and women thought men were more innately skilled at office politics.

Additional survey results, combined with follow-up interviews, revealed that the overall degree of difficulty for women maneuvering political situations at work is much higher for the following reasons:

- Women and men *define* politics differently.
- Women are *judged more harshly* than men when engaging in office politics.
- *Lack of access* to sponsors puts women at a disadvantage.
- Women and men have *differing approaches* to power and influence: collaboration versus competition.

This book, *The Influence Effect*, moves women past the politics problem and offers a new path to power. It's more than a path—it's a runway because it frees women to take off in their careers on their own terms. *The Influence Effect* will work for women, not because gender barriers will no longer exist but because they will no longer hold us back.

Before moving on to our core ideas about women and influence, let's look at what else the numbers revealed about office politics. Our research findings, we believe, are not just surprising and enlightening, they are also instructive. We have used them to develop actionable strategies that help women bridge the influence gap, leverage their strengths, and use influence as a tool to succeed at the highest levels of leadership.

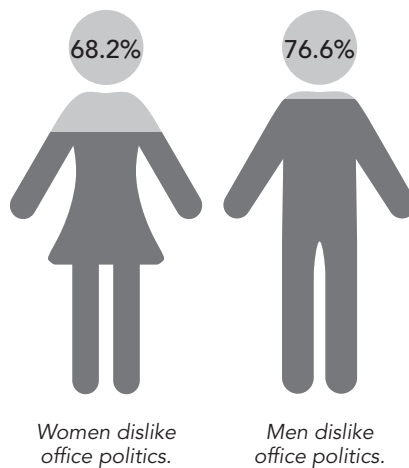
What We Have Learned

Our survey and executive interviews form the basis of this book and inform our prescriptions. Here's what we found.

Women and men define politics differently: Women manage relationships, whereas men are more transactional

Our survey results reveal that 76.6 percent of men and 68.2 percent of women are united in their overall dislike of office politics (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3 The Majority of Us Dislike Office Politics



However, although men and women generally agree on their disdain for office politics, our follow-up interviews indicated that they *disagree* on the overall *definition* of politics. For example, women were far more likely to mention “developing relationships and ideas,” and men were more than twice as likely to describe “immediate influence” and “carving a one-time advantage.”

For example, David Holt, managing partner at HBW Resources, told us, “Politics is a set of tools people use to further their own agenda.” Similarly, Frank Forrest, chief risk officer at Fifth Third Bank, said, “Politics helps us gain a strategic advantage.” Many other men used similar words to describe how politics helps them. The women we spoke with looked at politics in a different light: Margaret Spellings, president of the University of North Carolina, former president of the George W. Bush Presidential Center, and former U.S. secretary of education, told us, “Politics is about maneuvering human interactions.” And Betty Thompson, executive vice president and chief personnel officer at Booz Allen Hamilton, said, “Politics is a natural part of building any relationship.” Consistently, men told us that politics is about *winning* and women said politics is about *building*.

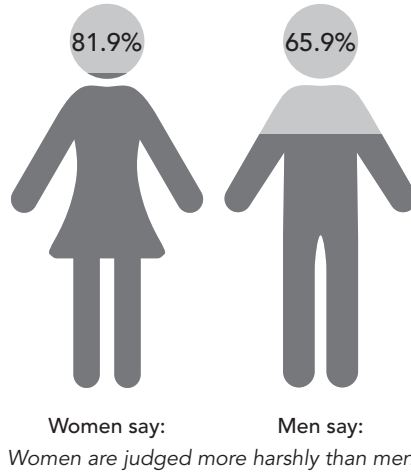
According to our research, men are direct and systematic in how they think about political situations. They go for the quick victory and move on. Women think about the impact over the long term and anticipate cumulative results. This difference in targeted execution may mean that women spend more time and effort on politics and the payoff is less immediate.

Women are judged more harshly than men

The clear majority of men and women in our survey said that women are judged more harshly than men when they use the tools of politics (see Figure 4).

Respondents resoundingly acknowledged that biases and stereotypes are still ingrained in both men and women, and they drive unconscious behaviors, which in turn perpetuate work environments that undermine women. Because stereotypes and implicit bias work against our success, women expend energy trying to be perfect at politics, yet the overall degree of difficulty in achieving success is much higher for us.

FIGURE 4 Women are Judged More Harshly Than Men

**From Our Study: Women Are Judged More Harshly Than Men**

"People still think women are 'manipulative' and men are 'focused' and 'results-oriented.'"

—KATHY RIDGE, CEO, LEVRIDGE RESOURCES

"If a woman is aggressive, then she is labeled with the 'B' word. Both aggressiveness and manipulation are more easily tolerated in men."

—CHRIS HECK, VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER,
DUKE ENERGY

"There is a double standard. There is a narrow line for women."

—FEMALE SENIOR EXECUTIVE

"When men are aggressive they are viewed as 'powerful.' When women are aggressive they are labeled as 'pushy.'"

—MIKE RIZER, HEAD OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS, WELLS FARGO

Melissa Koskovich, senior vice president and director of corporate communications and marketing at the American defense company Leidos, told us, "If a

woman asks for a favor in the workplace, she can be perceived as needy or calculating. For men, it's just another quid pro quo swap, 'I owe you one.' " Bob Sprague, president and CEO of PCI, a marketing firm in the Washington, DC, area, agreed, telling us, "If women are competitive, they can be tagged unfavorably. It's a much greater challenge for women in political situations at work." If these comments sound extreme, they aren't—the top executives we surveyed and interviewed were in full agreement and speaking on the record.

Lack of access puts women at a disadvantage

Our overall findings suggest that women believe that being politically savvy is crucial to advancement in their careers. According to our interviews, this may be due to the fact that women are still fighting for a place at the table. The women we interviewed talked freely about being blocked from opportunities and access. Men agreed. Because there are so few women in leadership positions, it is much more difficult for women to gain access to the support relationships, sponsors, and opportunities they need to get promoted. The research on the power of sponsorship for women is copious and deep. Sponsors are essential to career growth, no question.

According to Cathy Bessant, chief operations and technology officer at Bank of America, "If there are fewer women at executive levels, then there are fewer people for us to connect with." Bessant acknowledged that this puts women at a major disadvantage when they are trying to sell their ideas, build a consensus, or get promoted. Mike Rizer, head of community relations at Wells Fargo, put it this way: "Maneuvering political situations is just one more barrier to advancement for a woman. Why? There are fewer senior female leaders for them to connect with."

Women and men have differing approaches to power and influence: Collaboration versus competition

The majority of men and women in interviews said that men and women have differing approaches when it comes to applying office politics. More women

mentioned using empathy and collaboration, whereas more men mentioned being competitive and taking risks. Neither approach is right or wrong, as each of us is unique, but the female paradigm may work against us in some cases. For instance, one important study suggests that the underrepresentation of women in academia reflects a systemic bias against them *when they collaborate with men*.³ The study found that when women coauthored research with male counterparts, men received most of the credit. Given the emphasis women in our survey placed on collaboration, this may further decrease their chances for success.

In general, the men and women we interviewed believed men had a greater propensity to compete in the office setting. Chris Heck, vice president and CIO of Duke Energy, told us, “Men are more overtly competitive and aggressive than women,” and Frank Forrest, chief risk officer at Fifth Third Bank, agreed, saying, “Men have more of a competitive spirit and are willing to use it in political situations. It’s in their biology.” Meanwhile, Alicia Rose, Deloitte & Touche global lead client service partner for American Express, said, “I can’t tell you how many leaders have said to me: ‘When I was looking to promote someone into a key position, I had four male colleagues at the door proactively pushing their experience, yet I had to spend three hours and six phone calls convincing female candidates they were ready for the job.’”

Finally, women told us they had no desire to model their leadership style on one that was more aggressive and less collaborative. It was very important to them to avoid “violating their values” by changing to be more like men.

The Influence Effect

These differences and barriers illustrate how difficult it is for us, as women, to succeed in a business environment that is male dominated. In this book, we talk about the high “degree of difficulty” for women at work. It is like the diving competition at the Olympics: the degree of difficulty on some dives is much higher than on others. What is different here is that even when we, as women, use the same moves as men—being smarter and more prepared than anyone else at the table, for instance—it is still more difficult for us to be judged

objectively. When it comes to politics in the workplace, double binds and barriers make it harder for us to succeed.

Political savvy is a skill like any other, and we can learn to use it to break down barriers. Yet we propose a different avenue altogether for women to break those barriers. Our main premise, throughout this book, is that we gain more from our efforts when we focus on *achieving influence* as opposed to *playing political games*. We therefore propose a new system, a new approach, a new paradigm. *The Influence Effect* will move us past playing political games and on to using the strategies of influence to get our voices heard, create powerful connections, and drive our agendas.

Instead of playing on a field that is forever tilted against us, *The Influence Effect* helps us to even things out and enjoy the panoramic view we so richly deserve.

We are redefining the rules here, and we hope you will join us. This book is about creating a way for women to finally play *all out*. This is a game in which both men and women can participate at their chosen pace. We have different sensibilities; we see situations differently, and for the most part we go after them in our own way. We don't need to engage in tactics that have a mostly male slant. Instead, we can use the tools of influence to create a better way for women.

About the Book

This book is organized into three parts that explore and explain our framework (see Figure 5).

Part 1, Prepare to Influence, sets the stage for the balance of the book in several ways. First, it describes what we have learned about influence, including why it is an ideal tool for women and why it is a skill that can be practiced and ultimately mastered to help us rise farther and faster in our careers. It also prepares us to influence by presenting a process to help us factor personal strengths, values, and goals into our influence journey. It goes on to explore how to appraise external factors such as industry changes and big

FIGURE 5 Igniting the Influence Effect



picture context. Finally, part 1 guides us to assess the existing hierarchy and networks within our organization to accumulate the baseline of knowledge and intelligence we need to get started.

Part 2, Practice: The Big Five Strategies, lays out five powerful strategies that we use in our coaching work. Separately, each of the Big Five strategies represents a smart, effective way to sell your ideas and drive change; together, these strategies enhance each other and create a cumulative force for influence.

Chapter 4, “The Power of the Informal,” helps us work behind the scenes to gain support from colleagues and strengthen our relationships using informal networks and power. Chapter 5, “Relationship Maps,” show us how to look around and identify key stakeholders—decision makers, influencers, and adversaries—to secure strategic connections that make political maneuvering less complex. Chapter 6, “Scenario Thinking,” helps us identify the nuanced options in a situation, remain two moves ahead in the political process, and manage the dynamics of gaining formal support when it matters most. Chapter 7, “Influence Loops,” is a systematic approach for enrolling others in our ideas, bringing them on board, and getting their buy-in—and doing it over and over. Finally, chapter 8, “Momentum,” describes how to use early wins to create a tipping point of support as we begin to accumulate influence.

The Big Five strategies are designed to work together, making the whole greater than the parts. They can also be used à la carte to help us overcome resistance, remain agile, and achieve influence as everyday situations arise.

Part 3, Influence in Action, utilizes two common scenarios to demonstrate how these influence strategies play out. First, we look at how to overcome resistance to pave the way to gain support for our agenda. Second, we show how to succeed “on the corporate stage”—in meetings in which we need to use influence to sell our ideas and ourselves, every day.

Influence is a result of effort and practice. It is a skill all of us can acquire. Some of us believe that influencers are born with their talents fully formed, but we strongly disagree. We make it our mission in this book to pave the way and provide methods to help you develop influence. With that, you will be prepared to achieve your goals on your own terms.

Sara, the executive we described at the beginning of this book, turned her situation around to become one of our favorite success stories. We frequently mention her to other women we coach because she used the tools in this book to knock down barriers and become a highly influential leader. She did this by practicing and mastering the skills and strategies we introduce in the pages that follow.

To begin, let’s take a closer look at influence itself and why we believe it is the best path to power for women.

Chapter Elements

- ➡ Stories from women we have coached
- ➡ The unwritten rules you need to know
- ➡ The limiting beliefs that hold you back from achieving influence
- ➡ Questions for reflection to help you pause, reflect, and move ahead
- ➡ Strategies you can use to achieve influence

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PART ONE

PREPARE to Influence



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1

The Influence Effect

*Power is a tool, influence is a skill;
one is a fist and the other is a fingertip.*

—NANCY GIBB

IMAGINE YOU'RE ON THE BEACH watching a group of men and women surf. It's a sunny day and the wind is whipping while the beach warning flags snap in a rhythm. There are rip currents in effect and most people keep close to shore, worried about the dangerous conditions.

You watch the surfers chatting and laughing in the water as they wait for their wave. Two surfers approach a wave and decide it's not big enough. Another group paddles toward the largest wave in the set; they deftly jump on their boards and grab what looks like the best ride of the day. You marvel from the shore—how do they make it look so easy, graceful, and even fun? Surfers will tell you that it takes practice and a large dose of courage. They understand how to factor in overlapping elements seamlessly to achieve the ride they want. Expert surfers can see a wave approaching and calculate how many seconds they have before it will break. They can spot a wave that will

break gradually, so they can ride across the crest as it slowly closes. Experienced surfers look like artists, masters of their craft.

This dynamic is what we want for women. We want you to become masters of influence. Like surfing, or any complex endeavor, achieving influence as a leader is seldom simple. It requires practice to master the skills, and experience to perfect the timing and execution. Also, like surfing, influence requires an awareness of what's happening below the surface to accurately size up the situation.

Unlike surfing, understanding influence is mandatory for anyone who wants to sell his or her ideas and aspirations to others. Influence—*the capacity to impact agendas and outcomes and bring other people on board*—is ultimately the tool people use to get things done. All of us know influencers: we see them in action every day and we take note. Some influencers are the change agents and transformational leaders of our organizations; others are the subject matter experts and technical specialists. Still others are the bold problem solvers who cut through complexity and ambiguity. The truly influential individuals among us demonstrate enviable talents that fuel and sustain their success. These are attributes such as executive presence, confidence, determination, passion, empathy, and the ability to build trust. Regardless of what influence looks like or how it is accomplished, it is without a doubt a key component in career success for all of us as individuals and leaders.

Our objective throughout this book is to describe the strategies of influence and tailor them for women. We believe influence is the best tool we can use to break past the gender barriers that many of us experience as female executives.

Our original research, combined with our experience training and coaching over thirteen thousand female leaders over the span of sixteen years, has shown us that *greater influence equals greater advancement*. We have found that influence, for women, is a proxy for the formal power only a few of us have achieved.

That's why we've written this book—to give women the skills they need to succeed at the highest level. Our research showed very clearly that women believe that influence suits their leadership style. The women we interviewed

did not recoil from influence as they did when they talked about office politics.

This draws on a thread that connects all our findings: what works for men at work *won't work for women*. When we try to apply advice created by men and for men, it doesn't feel right to us. In the same way that wearing a business suit designed for a man is uncomfortable for a woman, listening to ill-fitting, poorly tailored advice creates friction and slows us down. This book eliminates the friction by introducing five key strategies that women can use to achieve influence on our own terms and in our own time.

The Influence Effect: Why It Works for Women

Bridget, a regional director at a real estate development firm in Detroit, told us why she works hard to cultivate influence. In her own words, "It keeps me moving ahead in my career and I use it as a lever to drive change."

A few years ago, Bridget wanted to completely revamp the key processes for how her company interfaced with clients. It was an ambitious undertaking aimed at disrupting, and vastly improving, a sales infrastructure that had been left in place for decades. Part of the plan was to reshape the leadership team to hasten the information flow and streamline decisions so that deals could get done quicker. She spent weeks working the numbers, designing a business case, and practicing her pitch.

"Those initial actions were just the table stakes," Bridget told us. "The far more difficult and tedious test was clearing the political landmines that were buried across the organization."

Early on in her effort, Bridget was confronted by two powerful colleagues who had a vested interest in preserving the status quo. There were others, as well, who might choose to align against her to block the path to change, but Bridget acted with determination.

Throughout a two-month period, she met with every decision maker separately. She adapted her plan numerous times. She negotiated with each

faction to account for their objections. She courted and eventually won over the skeptics and found the right message to neutralize the two entrenched critics. Ultimately, she made the formal pitch to the board and the idea was implemented. When the new structure was finally rolled out across the business units, it must have looked as though Bridget simply jumped on her surfboard and took off. But that's not the way it worked.

As she told us, "What most people saw happening was the result of a well-orchestrated influence campaign that occurred below the radar." In short, influence must be cultivated. It may not be easy at first, but with practice you can become a master.

The *Influence Effect* is the phrase we use to describe the positive lift that we, as women, experience as we use influence to make our voices heard, create powerful connections, and drive our agendas. The Influence Effect creates a ripple that amplifies our words and actions, attracts followers, and creates a new path to power for us.

A first part of delivering the Influence Effect is reframing the office politics discussion to eliminate the emotional baggage of the phrase "office politics" and put it into a new conceptual frame that suits the style of women.

Many of the women we coach, and those we've interviewed, believe that practicing "office politics" may imply that they are being "Machiavellian or inauthentic." Christi Deakin, a Wells Fargo executive, agreed with the consensus, saying, "The word *maneuvering* sounds negative or dishonest." We need to increase our power and be more politically savvy, the women acknowledged, but office politics did not register with them as the right tool.

This reframing is necessary to help us move beyond the negative mind-set and practical limitations that are associated with office politics. As Kathy Ridge, CEO of Levridge Resources, told us, "Influence aims at shared goals that are in the organization's interest. Whereas, politics often seems to focus purely on individual rewards." Likewise, another client of ours told us, "I prefer to engage in influencing as opposed to practicing pure politics, because I view influence as positive and transparent."

This practical reframing helps us break past the politics that our research told us holds women back. This is an important prerequisite that sets us up for success; yet it is only part of understanding why cultivating influence works so well for women. We found that the Influence Effect elevates women for several important reasons.

1. Influence suits our leadership style

Women should never need to act like men in order to succeed as leaders. Cultivating influence allows us to win at work while remaining true to our chosen leadership style and code of conduct. In our research, for instance, we heard that many women want a relationship-based approach to success. We won't generalize that all women are alike, but many told us they don't feel the need to chase quick political wins. Instead, they work to achieve success in ways that are subtly different. Their adrenaline is primed by going after bigger-picture, qualitative objectives such as building trust, cultivating strategic relationships, and steering change and reform. In short, influence helps women focus on the following:

- Collaboration over coercion
- Cumulative advantage over quick wins
- Inclusion over zero-sum gains
- Change over status quo norms

2. Influence can be actively cultivated

Many of us feel sidelined in our careers because we are uncomfortable engaging in political maneuvering and power plays. Another roadblock is the enduring gender stereotypes that hold us back from advancement. Focusing on achieving influence puts the power to act back into our own hands. It keeps us actively engaged and advancing toward our goals. Even better, influence can be learned, practiced, and perfected using the Big Five strategies we present in the following chapters.

3. Influence is a tool for the times

Organizations are flatter, less hierarchical, and more matrixed than ever. In an age in which collaboration trumps individual interest, the use of influence suits our needs far better than political maneuvering and power plays. Influence creates deeper connections and better access points and enables us to advance in our careers in new and better ways. Similarly, influence is all about reaching out to others and cultivating strategic relationships. The women we coach are drawn to using influence because it helps them move ahead with their agenda despite complexity and ambiguity.

4. Influence creates a new way to work

Perhaps the most important reason we are making the case for influence as a tool for women is that it is a path to change and progress. Although women hold 52 percent of all professional-level jobs, American women lag miles behind men when it comes to their representation in leadership. As of 2017, we hold only 5.8 percent of CEO posts in Fortune 500 firms¹ and just 19.9 percent of board seats in the Fortune 500.² In high tech, women represent a mere 30 percent of the workforce,³ and that percentage plunges when you examine the makeup of the management ranks.⁴ In academia, far fewer women than men are awarded tenured positions each year.⁵ The list goes on and on. In every industry, from private equity investing to network television, women are underrepresented at the top and we are paid less throughout our careers for the same work. We can cry foul about the data, and yet it is far more difficult to find a solution to this enduring gender divide. That's why we have written this book.

Now, let's step into the water and begin riding the waves.

Executive Summary

- Influence is a key component in career success and advancement for women. It can be a proxy for the formal power we have yet to achieve.
- Influence helps us focus on cumulative advantage over quick wins, inclusion over zero-sum gains, and change over status quo norms.
- Influence is a skill that can be learned, practiced, and mastered using the five strategies we will explore in this book.
- The *Influence Effect* is the phrase we use to describe the positive lift that we, as women, experience as we use the tools of influence to make our voices heard, create powerful connections, and drive our agendas.

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