

# POWER FLUENCY



## RECLAIMING YOUR AGENCY AND REDEFINING INFLUENCE

*ARTICLE 2 IN THE LEADERSHIP BLUEPRINT SERIES - EXPLORING HOW WOMEN CAN SHIFT FROM POWER SCARCITY TO POWER FLUENCY AND LEAD FROM INTEGRITY, RECIPROCITY, AND PRESENCE.*

BY JILL HINSON

This article continues our Leadership Blueprint journey, a six-part exploration of the inner architecture of coherent leadership. In Article 1, we examined why a new blueprint for women's leadership is needed and outlined its four domains. In this second article, we explore what it means to become fluent in your own power.

Power has a public image problem. It's been typecast one-dimensional (and badly).

From the boardroom battles of *Succession* to the backroom deals of *House of Cards*, to every female antagonist who wields her power, we've been taught that power means dominance. It's control. It's a competition with scarce seats and one winner. A zero-sum game where strength means someone else's loss. All of it offers one narrow lens: power as domination, loud, positional, and often ruthless. We've been taught that power looks like clenched fists, corner offices, and closed doors. Scarcity. Competition. A game rigged for a few. It's loud. Positional. Often ruthless.

And we've all seen how women are treated when they step into their power: labeled 'too ambitious,' 'too emotional,' 'too direct.' The message is clear, women who stand fully in their power are often punished or maligned. No wonder so many women feel ambivalent about it.

Personally, I believe it is time to re-write this script.

Since I was a little girl, I used to always say, "It doesn't have to be that way." For a long time, I didn't know what I meant. Or rather, I thought it was just naïve musings of a little girl. After too many lessons learned the harder way, I now think I do.

Power Fluency challenges the myth that power must be a weapon or a competition. It asks us to reimagine power as something relational, grounded, and deeply human, a source of clarity rather than control. When women lead from that place, we change not only our own trajectories, but the systems around us.

### **When Do You Actually Feel Powerful?**

We have all felt or seen a glimpse of the type of power I am talking about. Let's test this out. Scan through your experiences for a moment. When have you, personally, felt most powerful, most alive, most innately authentic?

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I bet it was not when you were commanding compliance. Nor pushing to be heard or “command the room.” Instead, maybe it was when you spoke a truth no one else was brave enough to say. When you set a boundary that honored yourself. When you used your influence to open a door for someone else. When you stayed anchored in your values even when the easy choice was to compromise. When your presence and voice helped others see something new. Or when you allowed yourself to be fully steeped in well – youness.

Chances are, in those moments, you put down personal agendas and battle swords. You stopped pushing against. Instead, you met the moment in total internal coherence and with calmness and clarity.

That’s the kind of power we need more of, and it’s the kind that grows stronger the more we share it (and practice it).

### **A Different Kind of Power: Marty’s Lesson**

Early in my career, I worked with a leader who redefined what power looked like for me. Her name was Marty Wikstrom. I was in my fourth or fifth year with Nordstrom when she began leading the East Coast Region. She has since gone on to found a company; she sits on prestigious Boards. She was also the only female director of Harrods in its 182 years of existence. She has always known how to yield truly authentic power.

Marty didn’t need to shout to be heard. When she entered a room, the energy shifted, not from intimidation, but from presence. She had that rare blend of clarity and care; she held people accountable – and was always clear about her vision – but she did it with empathy and grace.

She’d stop by your office to ask a personal question or offer a moment of coaching and circle back weeks later to check in. She saw potential before you did and invited you to step into it. She was tough when she needed to be, direct, decisive, and strategic, but she never confused power with control. She had claimed her power, quietly, internally, and with confidence. In a 2015 interview she shared, ‘Don’t ever confuse kindness with weakness’ and ‘I’m stronger than I look!’.

People didn’t just listen to her because of her title. They leaned in because of her integrity. She was smart, certainly. She was visionary, absolutely. She always moved toward collectively positive outcomes. She didn’t contort herself to fit a mold or shape-shift to belong. She was simply comfortable in her own skin.

That’s when I began to understand: the most powerful leaders don’t take energy from others. They generate it. They steady the room simply by standing in themselves.

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### Power Fluency

At ChangeFusion, we call this Power Fluency. It's the ability to understand, embody, and express your power with intention and integrity to use it as a regenerative force rather than a controlling one. And it begins with internal congruence, alignment between what you believe, what you value, and how you choose to lead.

Power isn't a fixed commodity; it's a relational, renewable energy. Fluent leaders know that power expands through reciprocity. It's not about "power over," it's about "power with self and others."

**Real power, when shared, doesn't diminish.  
It multiplies.**

You can feel the difference immediately. Power used over others contracts the space around it; it breeds fear and compliance. Power used with others expands the space; it creates trust, accountability, and possibility.

Think of it as reciprocity in action: grounded, benevolent, and mutually elevating. The more you use it to lift others, the more powerful you become.

### The Narratives We've Inherited About Power

For many of us, the greatest barrier to owning our power isn't external. It's internal. I understand that this statement may not sit well. But stick with me.

We have grown up seeing, hearing, reading, and likely experiencing society's definition of power. We've absorbed silent (and sometimes not so silent) lessons about what it means to be in our power and the cost of owning it.

Be confident, but not too confident.

Be strong, but stay likable.

Speak up, but not so much that you make others uncomfortable.

Lead, but don't be seen as leading.

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These mixed messages have shaped our inner wiring around power. We learned to associate it with risk (the risk of judgment, rejection, or isolation). Over time, we internalized the idea that it was safer and often more rewarded to fit into society's and culture's expectations. Or we adopt the old costume of masculine aggression.

Every woman I've ever coached knows this paradox. She has known that she is dimming her light to fit in. She knows she has left real power at the door. But she wasn't sure how to get out of this knot of deception.

Instead, we cope with the situation. Each of us carries stories, scars, and strategies shaped by the worlds we've worked in and the cultures that raised us. Over the years, I've noticed six distinct patterns that women tend to adopt in how we use or avoid our power. They're not flaws. They're survival strategies. Each one made sense in a context where the rules were written by others.

I call them the **Power Archetypes**. Seeing them clearly isn't about judgment; it's about awareness. Because once you can name the pattern, you can choose a new one.

### The Six Power Archetypes

#### 1. The Power-Driven – "The Bull"

She learned early that the only way to win was to play by the old rules. She tries to outwork, outfight, and outperform everyone else. She channels drive and determination with precision, but the cost is exhaustion and disconnection. She adopts stereotypical male behaviors and traits and rebuffs feminine characteristics.

Her belief: Power means control; aggression and competition are necessary.

Her evolution: reclaiming ambition without armor. Knowing that real authority doesn't require dominance; it radiates from confidence rooted in self and purpose.

*"When power shifts from control to coherence, strength becomes grace in motion."*

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### 2. The Activist – “The Warrior”

She fights for fairness, equity, or another torch she fiercely believes in. She carries the torch for causes and people who've been overlooked. Her conviction is fierce and noble; but living in constant opposition can become its own prison.

Her belief: Power is something to fight against; she fights power-over with more power-over.

Her evolution: learning that impact doesn't always come from resistance, sometimes it comes from influence, collaboration, and creating the new instead of only dismantling the old.

*“Power that heals is still power; it just carries less armor and more light.”*

### 3. The Striver – “The Hamster on the Wheel”

She's the perfectionist achiever, always proving her worth. She blends competence with care, but measures her value by how much she does, not who she is.

Her belief: Power is earned through effort.

Her evolution: realizing she doesn't have to perform to belong. When she leads from alignment instead of approval, her results and her wellbeing expand exponentially.

*“Power fluency begins when we stop chasing validation and start trusting our enoughness.”*

### 4. The Masker – “The Invisible One”

She's the quiet strategist, influencing behind the scenes, careful not to be “too much.” She hides her power and competence to make others comfortable.

Her belief: It's safer to stay small than to be seen; I blend in by not being over indexed on male or female traits.

Her evolution: stepping into visibility with intention, not to be loud, but to be clear. Power, after all, is not a threat when it's anchored in integrity.

*“Visibility in service of purpose is not ego, it's leadership.”*

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### 5. The Caretaker – “The Empathizer”

She leads through nurturing, enabling, and serving others. She gravitates toward roles that support others, because it feels safer to amplify someone else's power rather than claim her own. Her compassion is her superpower; but it can become a trap when she believes that these are the only ways to gain power or safely lead.

Her belief: My power lies in supporting others; being likeable is essential.

Her evolution: using empathy but knowing that she can lead from any position.

*“The most powerful form of care is modeling self-trust and using my power.”*

### 6. The Victim – “The Opt-Out”

She's stopped trying to play a rigged game. She's tired, cynical, or quietly resigned, believing her influence doesn't matter. She took her agency off the table.

Her belief: The system is too broken to change.

Her evolution: realizing that agency is never absent, only forgotten.

*“When we remember that choice is power, the story changes.”*

By using these power archetypes, we actually withhold our power, out of habit, fear, or trying to fit in. But, by doing this, we unintentionally reinforce the very systems we wish to change. The cost isn't just personal; it's collective. Every time a woman dims her light, an organization loses perspective, creativity, and courage.

Fluent leaders understand that power withheld is not humility; it's a form of scarcity thinking. And scarcity is the oldest lie we've been told about power.

What if we tried it differently?

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### A Mirror for Reflection

Pause for a moment and consider these questions, not as a checklist, but as a conversation with yourself.

#### Reflection prompts:

- When have you felt most powerful, and what was happening in that moment?
- Where did that sense of power come from? Was it external, from a title, expertise, or validation, or internal, rooted in conviction and self-trust?
- What do you fear might happen if you fully stepped into your power?
- How do you shrink, silence, or soften yourself to make others comfortable?
- What has it cost you, and your organization, your relationships, your future, when you've held back?

True power is rarely comfortable.

But it's always clarifying.

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### **Toward a Different Vision**

Imagine what would happen if we stopped treating power as something to survive and started treating it as something to steward.

What if we replaced the old scripts, dominance, hierarchy, scarcity, with a new one built on coherence, integrity, and connection?

Power Fluency isn't about becoming louder or harder. It's about becoming truer.

It's about being so internally grounded that you can use your influence for outcomes that are both strong and humane.

That's the kind of leadership the world needs now. The kind that can hold tension, listen deeply, and act decisively without losing empathy. That's the kind of leadership that builds systems capable of renewal, not just survival.

Each archetype holds both wisdom and limitation. They're not labels to wear, but mirrors to learn from. As you read them did you notice which one you see in yourself, or perhaps which one you've outgrown. Ask yourself?

- o When does this pattern serve me?
- o When does it protect me?
- o And when does it keep me smaller than I need to be?

Power Fluency isn't about abandoning who you are, it's about integrating all the parts of you that already hold strength, truth, and humanity.

Because the future of leadership isn't built on one model of power, it's built on women who can hold many kinds of it, with fluency and grace.

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### Building Your Power Fluency

Awareness is the beginning of fluency. When we can see our patterns with compassion, not criticism, we reclaim the ability to choose how we show up, and what kind of leader we want to be.

That's why we created the **Power Archetype Reflection Tool**, a guided exercise to help you explore your personal relationship with power.

It's not a test. It's a mirror. A space to notice your patterns, your beliefs, and the places where your power feels most alive and most withheld. It helps you see where you twist yourself to fit in, and at what cost. On a personal level, it exhausts us. On a collective level, it keeps intact the very systems we want to transform.

### Our Invitation

Power Fluency is just one of the four domains, but it's the foundation. When women embody power as connection rather than competition, something extraordinary happens. Our presence steadies the room. Our decisions elevate others.

Our leadership regenerates the entire system.

Take time this week to explore your own archetypes. Use the Power Archetype Reflection Tool to surface what's ready to evolve.

**The most fluent leaders aren't fluent in power because they speak louder, they are fluent because they listen deeper, lead truer, and use their influence for the good of the whole.**

Next in the series: **Article 3 – "Mapping Your Personal Genius."** We'll explore how leading from your core values and unique leadership strengths helps you embody a more authentic, compelling kind of influence, and you'll receive a *Personal Genius Worksheet* to help you map your own.