

Women's Ways of Leading: Archetypes of Positive Change

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In today's ever-changing business environment, traditional ways of leading have become obsolete. The old rules of command, control and conquer are management philosophies rapidly being banished to the scrap heap of history.

These strategies have been toxic, soul damaging and ultimately detrimental to long-term business success. The rules of the future are being recreated and re-crafted, in large part by women, whose values, intuition, and creative approaches to leading and living are forging empowering models of leadership in our world.

As women leaders, when we take the risk to remove our masks and move away from the false roles we've adopted to survive in this "quick fix," competitive culture, we reclaim our authenticity and power and rediscover the vast and abundant landscape of leadership qualities we possess. As we reclaim our power, the story of "business as usual" is being rewritten. Emerging en masse and standing tall in our authenticity as leaders, mentors and guides, women are transforming the ways we live and work.

What are the natural leadership qualities that thousands of working people, entrepreneurs and executives aspire to reclaim? What are those skills and talents, that once awakened, will help us thrive and prosper in our work and lives? As we recapture these jewels of women's wisdom, how can we use them to build the kinds of companies, families and communities that empower and inspire people to access untapped potential and achieve personal and professional success?

As women leaders, we will rewrite the story of history only when we commit to holding a different vision of our possibilities, our power and ourselves. One way to do this is through re-imagining ourselves as leaders. We may discover more effective models of leadership as we began to imagine ourselves as the archetypes of Weavers, Wonderers, Wizards, Warriors, and Willows.

As Weavers, our leadership role is inextricably linked to everyone whose path we cross in the daily enterprise of work — our investors, employers, employees, customers, partners and suppliers. As Weavers, our role is that of pattern keeper. It is our task to take the dreams that inspired the visions we strive to create, to continue refining those patterns, and at the same time, develop and nurture the resources that lead to individual and collective success.

As Weavers, we accept the patterns we weave through our work can always be improved. We understand our dreams cannot take shape without the help of others. As Weavers of this new tapestry of leadership, we release old ideas, beliefs, and attitudes that no longer serve the integrity of the patterns we're creating. We take risks that add new colors, new textures, and new ideas to enhance the vibrancy, strength and longevity of our work. As pattern keepers, it is our task to use our senses to listen acutely, see keenly, and carefully craft the vision we are bringing into form.

As Weavers, we use the power of our intuition to propel our lives to the place we desire, while at the same time, honoring the resources that will deliver us to our destination as we craft the desired results. Weavers understand that individual and collective goals can be achieved only by understanding the needs of every person, partner and network with whom she co-creates.

A weaver does not seek "quick fixes." She knows that all great tapestries are woven through foresight, discipline, patience and surrender, by learning how to accept and re-weave the threads of mistakes into the fabric of future visions.

As weavers, when we use our resources wisely, think holistically, honor the process and understand the connections and relationships between the patterns we're creating, we develop a tapestry that's a joy to behold, not only in its outcome, but also in the day-to-day task of its creation. As Weavers, we understand in order to bring our pattern into form we must constantly shift between the roles of learner and teacher, artist and apprentice. For it is through our willingness to acknowledge we don't have all the answers that grants us the wisdom to perfect our craft and grow.

The second archetype we may choose to access is that of the Wonderer. Women who lead as Wonderers are committed to life-long learning and are impassioned and intrigued by the mysterious nature of life. Chaos and change don't threaten a Wondering leader. She perceives times of flux and change as opportunities for expansion and growth, because she understands the void of ambiguity is the well from which all new creation springs.

As Wondering leaders, we must deftly lead the people in our care through the choppy waters of confusion. Through our example, we help them learn to tread the seas of change by reframing ambiguity as an opportunity to give birth to creativity, so problems can be solved collaboratively and new ideas may be born. Change becomes an ally to help us grow and transform, rather than a force that must be reckoned with, or an enemy we must strive to conquer and control. A Wondering leader flows with change and gracefully models this attribute to others.

A Wondering leader is a visionary who relies on her spirit as her principle guiding force. She follows her dreams and intuition and inspires others to access their inner muse. She consistently questions her assumptions and calls on others to do the same. She questions the way things have always been and is undaunted in the quest of her life's mission. She sees an unlimited range of possibilities in those around her and in herself and remains fixed on her purpose.

She is focused and deeply committed to achieving her vision and goals. A Wondering leader is committed to removing obstacles that stand in the way of reaching her objectives. Because she is unyielding in her dedication to her purpose, her actions, intentions and values are aligned, so the people she serves trust the course she sets and support her in reaching her objectives.

A Wondering leader champions others in their personal quest for learning. She understands that people learn in different ways, so she strives to provide the tools that will fulfill the needs of those she serves. For some, she provides "hands on" experiences for kinesthetic learning. For others, analytical stimulation is the key to their creative growth. For others, the use of stories, symbols, music and art are methods of learning that will lead them to tap the well of their deepest creative potential.

The Wondering leader knows her greatest resources are the minds and hearts of the people she serves, and she is resolutely committed to helping them discover the wealth of

creativity they possess. She supports them to play with their dreams and weave their ideas, for she knows that the more they enjoy the challenge, their most brilliant ideas will be born.

The Wondering leader deftly honors process. She has discovered when creativity and meaning provide the foundation of an enterprise, successful outcomes follow. A Wondering leader trusts the creative process. She spends her time and energies helping those she serves discover and hone their skills and talents, and assists them in finding their place in the pattern where their skills and talents can best be put to use. The Wondering leader has discovered when people are given opportunities that liberate their potential they thrive, so she consistently seeks them out.

The Wondering leader knows that everything she sees around her started first with an idea. Because she understands the quantum nature of life, she trusts and acts upon her creative inspirations.

The third archetype that as women leader's we may choose to emulate is that of the Wizard. The wizard leader knows when she honors the dreams and ideas that flow from her heart and spirit, she can harness the power of her intentions to move her life and work in the direction her spirit calls her to take. As she remains grounded in this knowledge, she gains respect for her integrity and alignment of her heart and mind and spirit. The Wizard leader leads with her heart, and then uses the power of intention to bring her dreams and ideas into form.

The Wizard leader gives birth to concepts, products, and strategies that are in alignment with her integrity. She honors her inner wisdom, and like the alchemist, combines her vision with the elements around her and crafts them into gold. The Wizard leader is a catalyst for individual and organizational transformation. She understands that nothing occurs in a vacuum, and all great creations require the alignment of the dreams and inspirations of a team. She creates environments where people are stimulated to awaken latent talents, so they may harvest individual and collective gifts that serve the larger good.

The fourth archetype we can learn from is the Warrior. Standing fully in her integrity, humility, authenticity and power, the Warrior leader remains steadfast to her commitment to honor the souls in her care. She understands her role as leader is a sacred task, requiring great courage and power.

The Warrior leader uses her power in ways that support and empower others. Through her example, she acts as a model for the right use of power with everyone she serves. She creates opportunities so others may utilize their potential and is not threatened when they do.

The Warrior leader is uncompromising in her values. Her strength of vision inspires the development and nurturing of deeper collective meaning. Though at times, they may disagree with her, the people that co-create with the Warrior leader remain loyal, because they trust the strength of the commitment she has to her vision.

The Warrior leader is not afraid of being unconventional because she is not dependent on other people's validation to enhance her self-esteem. She wears no masks and is committed to removing any obstacles in the way of the people she serves in achieving their highest potential. She is rigorous in demanding honesty, integrity and authenticity from herself, as well as others.

The Warrior leader offers her life in service to others and expects others to do the same. She manages through valuing the people she serves and gently nudges them down the road of self-development and growth. She teaches them to collaborate, to grow, take risks and remain steadfast to their individual and collective visions.

The Warrior is a spiritual leader. She mentors the people she serves and is a model of strength, clarity, courage and integrity they seek to emulate. She is clear in her communications

and takes time each day for critical self-reflection. The Warrior leader knows as she grows and evolves, those around her will follow her lead as they are a reflection of the way she sees and treats herself.

The Warrior leader has a deep sense of compassion and is profoundly aware of others' needs. She maintains a positive outlook. She is trusting, though none would call her foolish or naive. She is astute in her judgments of character and people trust her wisdom. She integrates her spirit with her work in the world, and the two are in alignment. Courageously, she walks through her fears, without denying or repressing her feelings.

The Warrior leader honors the "whole person" and understands the need to lead a balanced life. She does not infringe on others' time outside of work and creates that time for herself. The Warrior leader knows when life and work are not in conflict, people can be their most creative selves.

Last but not least, is the archetype of the Willow. She, like the Warrior, understands and respects the natural flow of life. She flexes and bends with the elements, knowing what her limits are and how her actions will affect the patterns she's creating. The Willow leader remains calmly detached, despite the storms that erupt around her. She rarely reacts defensively, for she has learned to hold polarities and to support different points of view. She values diversity, for she understands that by exploring differing ideas and outlooks, she gains clarity about herself and where she needs to grow.

The Willow leader honors and respects the cycles and seasons in life and work. She knows that everything she co-creates must be planted, tended, and sowed before the harvest can be reaped. She honors the seasons of growth that are required for people, ideas and projects to be born. She understands it is a futile and destructive act to pull a plant from its roots to discover how much it's grown.

Like the Willow, she understands the seasons and cycles of work and life are always in flux. Rather than expecting things to ripen before they're ready, she accepts where she is and looks for ways to allow the seasons in life to work to her advantage. The Willow leader doesn't force her will to try and make things happen, nor does she passively sit and wait for things to come. She knows when to move forward and when to let go because she trusts her feelings. She pursues those people, ideas, and projects that spark her creativity and enliven her. People and projects that deplete her energy, she willingly releases.

The Willow leader uses the model nature provides to discern and develop patterns. She understands that life is interconnected and requires freedom and air to breathe. She encourages those around her to shed old skins they've outgrown and trusts as they depart, a space is created to nurture new life. The Willow leader never tries to hold people back or restrict them in any way. She supports them to continue on their journeys and revels in the role she played in helping to deliver them to that place.

The Willow leader has a deep sense of trust in the wisdom of nature and understands that any setbacks she faces are opportunities for growth. She has permeable boundaries, which allow new options in and provide her with access to a constant flow of fresh ideas. This attitude keeps her open to opportunities as they arise and allows her to grow and expand.

The Willow leader has a keen understanding of how the patterns of life and work fit together, of how intricately and wondrously they connect and overlap. She manages organically, by using her feelings, her insight and intuition in ways that are appropriate in the

situation she is facing. She plants and tends a fertile ground where people and projects are nurtured and grow to reach their full potential.

Like the Willow, these times of great change are asking women to call forth and access our natural wisdom as leaders. The creative potential of the people we serve is our greatest natural resource. Without it, we are doomed to continue to live in a fragmented world that dishonors life and denigrates our power.

As women leaders, the time has come for us to acknowledge, accept and nurture this vital creative force. It must be set free if we are to thrive and prosper. Holding the image of ourselves as Weavers, Wonderers, Wizards, Warriors and Willows can help us begin to tap that spring of unlimited creative power. This is the power that gives birth to new forms and creates a way of being in the world that individually and collectively, empowers us and those we serve to grow, transform, and thrive.

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