

# WOMAN OF INFLUENCE BOOK DISCUSSION GUIDE

Thank you for reading *Woman of Influence: 9 Steps to Build Your Brand, Establish Your Legacy, and Thrive* (McGraw-Hill 2019). I'm thrilled to have you now join me on the mission of calling more women to step into the leadership pipeline and thrive.

Acknowledging your leadership strengths can be a tough assignment to objectively tackle alone. It's so much easier to spot strengths in others. The same goes for pinpointing your leadership niche and refining your leadership brand. That's why I'm so proud you've decided to form this group, have these discussions, "make shift happen," and lift each other up as you climb.

Schedule and fiercely defend time with your group, and not only to have "accountabilibuddies" to remind you to keep working through the exercises. Dream bigger together, flex your courage muscles, and turn insights into action. Share your answers and stories, even if your experiences seem mundane to you. There's no way to predict when your words will be exactly what someone else needs to hear. Individually we might be strong, but collectively we can be *mighty*.—Jo Miller

## Part I

Key question: "Who am I as a leader?"

1. What's your definition of leadership? Do you agree or disagree with mine: "making a bigger difference than you can make alone"?
2. Give examples of your own "tiny acts of leadership" that fit this definition, or ones that you've observed in others and would like to emulate.
3. I describe five types of leaders: change, people, results, service, and thought. What kind of leader are you? Did you immediately feel comfortable picking a style, or did you feel torn between different styles? Are you a mashup?
4. Do you feel like you've been swimming upstream, trying to fix your weaknesses at the expense of developing your natural talents? Instead, I encourage you to build on your strengths, and reframe your weaknesses as "bottom strengths." What do you think about this approach? Does it differ from other advice you've heard?
5. What are your top three *leadership strengths*? Did any surprise you and make you think of yourself in a different way?
6. What are your top three *character strengths* that are *less typical* among your peers? Were you surprised that I challenged you to think in terms of how being different can make you stand out?
7. "I would encourage you not to define your boldest dreams by your history. Dream bigger," says Pamela Stewart (Chapter 2). Is it time to recalibrate your career aspirations? If so, what's your lofty goal—one that's truly bold?
8. What are your *passions*: the work feeds your soul, or areas of expertise that you can't help but feel fired up about? How can you incorporate these into your workday?
9. Your leadership niche is where your *strengths* and *passions* intersect with the *value* you offer. What does your organization value? Did you find a new niche for yourself? Is this different from what you thought it was before reading this book?
10. Part I of the book involves a lot of soul searching. What exercises did you find most helpful and why? What was the most important thing you learned about yourself? What surprised you the most?

## Part II

Key question: “How can I change how others perceive me as a leader?”

1. Intentional or not, everyone has a brand. Does your existing brand do justice to what you do *and* what you’re capable of doing? Why or why not?
2. Share your new leadership brand statements and give each other feedback. Use the questions in the “Build a Brand that Lands like BAM” section of Chapter 4 as a guide.
3. Your brand is the experience others have when they interact with you. Changing your mindset and behavior will change how others perceive you. Which shift did you choose to focus on—tactician to strategist, doing to delegating, optimizer to transformer, order taker to rule breaker, or “me” to “we”? What actions do you plan to take to accomplish this?
4. Were you surprised when I told you to work less? Many women initially feel like this is an impossible request. Share strategies for clearing busywork off your to-do lists and deflecting future requests.
5. Describe your ideal stretch assignment or ideal stretch role. How will it showcase your brand or add value?
6. Brainstorm with the group about concrete next steps you can take to snag that dream assignment or role. Are there ways you can support each other?
7. Stretches can be scary. Talk about any fears you have and ways to diffuse them.
8. One of the biggest obstacles women encounter is the myth that the quality of your work will get you noticed and promoted. What are you going to do differently to amplify your accomplishments? (Consider pairing up and holding each other accountable for one to three action items each week.)
9. Share successful stealth-promotion strategies.
10. Talk about ways you can call attention to each other’s accomplishments, for example, nominating each other for industry awards.

## Part III

Key question: “Whose help can I enlist?”

1. How do you feel about office politics? Have you tried to stay out of office politics, thinking your work will speak for itself? Share any misgivings with the group.
2. The truth is you can’t realistically avoid office politics. But you can come up with a plan to deal with them. What are you going to do differently in the future?
3. Networking is about building trusting relationships. Share and troubleshoot your strategic networking plans. Talk about challenges you might face expanding your network.
4. I recommend that you have at least one of the following allies in your network: the connector, the informational powerhouse, the influencer, and the mentor. Talk about how to identify and connect with people in each category.
5. Who’s the most important person in your network and why?
6. Who’s the most important person you need to add to your network? Talk about how you’ll identify and approach that person.
7. Talk about the differences between mentors and sponsors.
8. If you have a mentor or sponsor, describe how you developed the relationship and how it helps you. What advice do you have for other women when working with a mentor or sponsor?

9. Were you surprised that sponsorship isn't something that you can ask for, but that you need to earn? What are you going to do to attract a sponsor?
10. When we lift each other up, we all rise together. Brainstorm ideas about how you can use your social capital to help others, for example, by mentoring or sponsoring another woman.

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