



Why Women Prefer Influence Over Power

By [Joanne Cleaver](#) | September 29, 2010



Why don't women want to embrace the P word?

That's P as in 'power.' Men don't have that problem. They love it, which explains the entire **Gordon Gekko** franchise.

When [consultant Maddy Dychtwald](#) started looking at the rising economic power of women, she wasn't surprised to detect their aversion to the 'P' word and corresponding affection for the 'I' word: influence. That's why she named her book "Influence: How Womens Soaring Economic Power Will Transform Our World for the Better" (Hyperion, May 2010).

But she thinks that women are in the process of redefining influence and power, precisely because they are becoming more comfortable with their power. Power is about "owning, individually, and taking control. Influence is about taking that power and running it out all over the place," she told me in a recent interview. "The three stages of economic power are survival, self-sufficiency, and influence with corporations and politicians. That's the next step women will take."

This year, with women becoming fully half the workforce, we've reached a tipping point; despite spotty traction in getting to [parity in management](#), Dychtwald thinks that the long-quantified "three women" dynamic on boards will catalyze womens' widespread rise to senior positions. The "three women" dynamic is that one woman on a board (typically a group of 12 to 15) is a token. Two women often spark conflict, but when there are three or more women, collaboration breaks out and women substantively affect group dynamics and decisions.

Simply by being aware of that dynamic women can leverage it, she adds: "Use your influence not just for your own career, but for those around you and for your company and its direction."

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