

Empowered Women Share Their Stories

I recently had the pleasure of attending the spring 2021 #EmpoweredWomen conference, hosted by Susan Freeman with [Freeman Means Business](#). The conference brought together a diverse group of professional women from across the country to share their stories – stories of success, stories of failure, stories about overcoming challenges. All the stories showed the power of storytelling as a tool for creating change, both externally and within ourselves.

Hearing the challenges these women went through brought home how systematic and systemic sexism creates barriers that are very difficult to overcome. The stories were moving, infuriating, inspiring – but most of all, motivating. They also provided lessons about how to use a narrative to persuade an audience and spur action.

Storytelling is Important

Storytelling gives us a different perspective and an opportunity to learn from another person's experience, which can shape, strengthen or challenge our opinions and values. When a story catches our attention and engages us, we are more likely to absorb the message and meaning. That makes storytelling an important tool in law firm marketing. Churning out content is different from telling a story that can motivate people to take [action](#). Even a short story can have such an impact, such as this heartbreaking [six-word](#) flash fiction.

Be Authentic

The stories shared during the three-day #EmpoweredWomen virtual conference were deeply personal, bringing the audience to tears at times. From childhood trauma to racial inequity to messy divorce, the speakers wore their hearts on their sleeves, showing how authenticity is important for personal connection. Authenticity is an important trait for law firms and legal marketers because when clients are looking for someone to help solve a problem, personality matters.

Own Your Seat at the Table

The stories told at the conference illustrated that women must become comfortable with being at the table, and unafraid to be in power. To have meaningful influence in the legal profession or on societal issues that are important to you, you must take your seat. It is about being brave and not being perfect. Go for the job; go for the thing you don't think you can do. Sit at that table with all those men and know your voice is just as important as theirs. Be kind, competent, hardworking and open to possibilities. Be ready to take on opportunities when they are presented to you.

Check out organizations like [Board Seat Meet](#) that work to advance diversity on corporate



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boards by connecting them with diverse leaders. Many law firms [support](#) their women lawyers through women's initiative programs or groups, which offer opportunities for women at any stage of their careers to connect, mentor and educate each other.

We've all heard of the glass ceiling, but what about the glass cliff? This term refers to when a woman or member of a minority group ascends to a leadership position in challenging circumstances where the risk of failure is high. It is the phenomenon of women in leadership roles, such as business executives in the corporate world and female candidates for political office, being more likely than men to be promoted to leadership roles during periods of crisis or downturn, when the chance of failure is highest.

Connect with Yourself and Find Your Purpose

One of the biggest takeaways from the stories shared at the conference was transformation. Any good story involves a hero's journey, but big change doesn't have to come from external circumstances. Opportunities to grow and improve come from within, and from both personal and professional environments.

The process of empowering yourself includes digging into your personality preferences, knowing your strengths and asking yourself what brings you joy and what drains you. Make a list of your dominant personality traits, your passion and pain points, and opportunities for growth. Some questions to ask yourself include: What sets your soul on fire? What do you excel at? How can you make a difference in the world?

The one constant in life is change. Once you've decided it is time for change, follow these steps:

- A. *Acknowledge* the need for a change.
- B. *Build* a list of what you know, what is unknown and what you want to achieve.
- C. *Consult* with your trusted advisors and gain perspective from people with different backgrounds by [using your professional networking and referral groups](#).
- D. *Decide* on your next move.
- E. *Execute* your planned actions.

Keep in mind that change isn't always smooth, mistakes are a learning experience and course correction may be necessary.

Inspiration

When you need inspiration, blast this boss lady [playlist](#) featuring the favorite tunes of conference attendees, including powerful female musicians like Beyonce, Pink, Lady Gaga and Janet Jackson.

The 2021 #EmpoweredWomen program provided a platform to connect with people who are kind and compassionate, care about equity in the workplace, and lift others as they rise. These are people who will advise, refer and/or hire you. Mark your calendars to participate in next year's program in Chicago in June 2022.

Feel free to reach out to me, Lisa Altman, at laltman@jaffepr.com to discuss how to use storytelling in your organization.