



How to Pivot with Power

Maybe the current crisis has given you time to reflect, to reconnect to your deepest desires about what you want in your life and who you want to be—are meant to be. But the path forward might not be so clear. Let Gloria guide you through the initial process of pivoting with power to the next iteration of yourself. She also reveals a new Power Tool she's been developing in her series for intentional leadership and living.

Gloria Feldt: Like I always say, quoting Dilbert, “Change is good. You go first.”

Hello, and welcome to Power to You. I'm Gloria Feldt. I've spent my entire career advancing women's rights and equality from the boardroom to the bedroom. I cofounded Take the Lead because I figured out how to crack the code that has been holding women back from equal leadership and pay, and now I want to give you all those secrets and tools to prepare and propel you with training and coaching to harness your incredible power to in your professional lives.

Have you ever heard someone say she's reinventing herself? Did you ever want to do that? What prompted it? What made you want to make that change? You know, I kind of think it's not really reinvention, because we are who we are, and we have to be who we are, and we always bring our past with us. But still, change is possible. It's always possible. So, I like to think of it more as pivoting, and we have to react nimbly and pivot not only to be innovative, but sometimes just to survive when the tectonic plates are shifting and making the Earth feel unsteady under our feet.

Every one of us has had to do that kind of pivoting at various points in our lives, and right now this is happening involuntarily, since [the COVID-19 pandemic changed how we live](#), how we love, how we work, in what seems like a flash. We're all doing our work remotely, virtually. We're all seeking new forms of revenue and shifting ways we interact with clients and family. Maybe you're figuring out how to manage homeschooling with your children, while shifting to working at home with or without a proper audience. I just saw a picture of a CEO of a very large company who was recording, actually he was speaking on a Zoom from his laundry room. You know, that's just kind of how it is right now.

My family was supposed to be doing a big birthday party last Saturday night, and you know what? We did it virtually. So, we're always creating new cultures. We're always amplifying or shifting within an existing culture, and some subtle changes are always going on one way or the other. Sometimes this is deliberate, because

we simply feel like it's time to make a change. Sometimes external forces compel us to change. Yet the late leadership icon [Peter Drucker was fond of advising](#), "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." And by that, he was saying that it's really hard to make change within a culture, because culture runs deep, and often prevents us from being open to making changes. And the paradox is that our cultures are the ties that form you and that bind us to each other.

That's why cultures are very hard to change. They serve a great function, and that's exactly why people are so resistant to the strategies that public health officials tell us to use to slow down the transmission of a disease, for example. I mean, think for a minute about how long it took to reduce smoking, even after the data was clear that smoking causes lung and other cancers and contributes to heart disease. It took at least a generation to make the shift to where we are today, and some people still pay no attention to that advice.

Cultures literally make us who and what we are, and while the culture we grow up in can lead us to be complicit and look the other way on biases and bad behaviors, it's also what gives us the positive values and the social capability to be complicit for good, to have good behaviors, to have positive values.

You know, I was speaking about this with friends the other day, on a Zoom conference call, of course, and the discussion quickly turned to the question of what's next now and how do we pivot from this reinvented world of virtual work and different ways of having social connection? So, I wanted to ask you to think about this. I mean, what makes a cultural pivot point? What makes a pivot point so great that you change something fundamental in your life? What comes to your mind about those kinds of situations that created a big pivot point for all of us?

Maybe 9/11? Wars? What about smartphones? Certainly a pandemic disease will do it for us. Certainly also technology can create cultural pivot points by changing how we live, how we work, and even how we think. Just take social media, for example. Social media was made possible by computer technology and the internet, and it has connected us globally in profound ways. Not just with high school classmates and far-flung family members, but with communities of interest. It has allowed misinformation to spread like wildfire, and at the same time, it has enabled people to mobilize to fight actual wildfires, or to help people who lost their homes because of them.

I can, with nothing more than my computer and Wi-Fi, decide five minutes from now to host a Facebook Live session that allows me to talk simultaneously with 500 people across the United States, and even in other countries around the world. I don't need a fancy camera, or a cameraperson to help me with that. I can be the media, not just consume the media.

Similarly, the gender power balance was changed 50 years ago by a technology we take for granted today. Want to guess what it was? When I ask students that question, the first answer is usually the microwave. Well, I'll admit that the microwave has changed a lot in most of our kitchens, but guess again if that's

what you were thinking. Yeah, the [birth control pill gave women a reliable way to plan and space their childbearing](#). More importantly, it gave them a sense of control over their lives.

As a young wife and mother, it freed me to start college, and that enabled me to have a career, and that enabled me to earn money, and that enabled me to have a more power-balanced relationship. You know, once women have education and the ability to support themselves, they no longer have to stay in an abusive marriage, for example, in order to feed themselves and their children. Talk about changing everything. This little tiny pill, immortalized by Loretta Lynn in [the country and western song](#) called The Pill, made the [cover of Time Magazine](#) on April 7th, 1967, with the story inside saying, “In a mere six years, it has changed and liberated the sex and family life of a large and still growing segment of the U.S. population. Eventually, it promises to do the same for much of the world.”

Well, I thought Loretta Lynn’s lyrics made it more personal, so I just have to share them with you:

*There's a gonna be some changes made
Right here on nursery hill
You've set this chicken your last time
'Cause now I've got the pill.*

So, that was a pivot of significant proportions. It changed the culture and it also changed the individual lives of the women within the culture.

Now, ultimately the most important precursor to a cultural pivot point is what [Clarissa Pinkola Estes](#) calls, “an accumulation of acts.” You know, it’s rarely just one thing. There were a lot of things that led up to the creation of the pill, for example, actually over many years.

[The #MeToo movement, another pivot point](#), would never have happened without women having the freedom to pursue education and careers, which ultimately means financial power—the power to speak one’s truth, to have a voice, and what’s more, a voice that must be listened to because we are no longer totally reliant on a partner for the basic needs of life. It wouldn’t have happened without Anita Hill stepping forward to give sexual harassment a name so that a generation of women arose knowing they didn’t have to put up with it. I love that young women today know that, and know to call it out.

And that’s how a culture changes.

What’s your pivot point and how can you move forward with your personal accumulation of acts? First, of course, you must move from feeling like it’s time for a pivot to identifying deep in your heart what you want to pivot to, and then having the courage to make a clean break to a change. Half measures won’t do.

I met a woman at Take the Lead’s recent Power Up Conference. Her name was Sweta Chawla, and she told me her story. She said that she had been quite

successful as a pharmacist and was teaching pharmacy at a prestigious university. Then, the premature birth of her son and an unexpected disappointment with her job led her to make career and life pivots. She wrote a book about it called [I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For...Now What?](#) And she became a success coach for highly-driven professionals who want more meaning and expression in their work and life.

And I want to tell you that she looked like a very happy woman. So, sometimes the career path we start on turns out not to be the one that we end up feeling happiest with, and that we have to at some point make that kind of pivot to get to. That takes a lot of courage.

Second, I'm gonna share a sneak preview with you of a new leadership power tool that I'm currently developing, because I've come to think it's so important. This power tool is called Modulate Confidence, because I actually believe that self doubt, a little bit of it, can have a positive value. Stopping to look within is good, as long as you don't let it immobilize you. If you're overconfident, you might never be introspective. And you surely wouldn't have a reason to get better, to make a pivot, or to make a positive change in yourself. You might never think you even need to learn anything new.

If you take all the actions, successes, and failures you have earned, and learned, and lived through in the past, and you take them and you learn from them rather than let them weigh you down because you made a few mistakes, you will be able to move forward with clarity. You can decide where and how you will pivot.

And third, I want you to think intentionally about what new culture you want to create to take the place of the one you're changing or leaving behind. I think that this is a piece that is too often neglected. We too often make a pivot without taking into account the blowback that we might get from others who aren't ready to make that change with us. A good example is the implicit bias that remains in [the workplace, like viewing a powerful woman as a negative thing](#) (Yes, you might get called the B-word, for example) rather than an opportunity to bring more talent and intelligence to the organization's work. Just be prepared, and don't let it weigh you down or set you back. Prepare in advance for addressing it without rancor, and by your example, you will create a culture shift that will make life much easier for the next woman who walks that path. She might not even need to pivot.

So, let me know how it goes for you, whether these tips were helpful to you. I'd really like to know. You can always email me at powertoyou@taketheleadwomen.com, and you can also connect with me or Take the Lead on social media. You can find me @gloriafeldt, G-L-O-R-I-A-F-E-L-D-T, on every social media platform, and you can find Take the Lead @takeleadwomen on Instagram and Twitter, or @taketheleadwomen on Facebook and LinkedIn. We really want to hear from you.

Till next week, Power to You.

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