

HOLZMAN LEADERSHIP

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP: A WHITE PAPER

The Uncomfortable Truth

WHAT WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP
ACTUALLY NEED TO HEAR

*A Research-Backed White Paper
on Personal Branding, the Inner
Critic, Career Management, and
the Path to Genuine Leadership
Authority*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Three of the most consequential developmental challenges facing senior women leaders across industries today are personal branding, managing the inner critic, and career management and networking. This white paper addresses all three — with research, candor, and a point of view that most leadership development programs are too cautious to address directly.

The women's leadership industry has generated enormous investment and genuine structural progress. And yet the needle on women's representation in senior leadership roles moves slowly, inconsistently, and in some organizations, barely at all. This paper argues that a significant part of the problem is the conversation itself.

The dominant narrative centers on systemic barriers: unconscious bias, the double bind, and the glass ceiling. These are real, grounded in extensive research, and any serious program must engage with them honestly. But the conversation too often stops there, leaving women with a sophisticated vocabulary for explaining their obstacles and inadequate tools for actually moving past them.

“The most powerful lever available to a senior woman leader is not changing the system. It is understanding herself — with radical honesty and without the comfort of victimhood.”

This paper is organized around three core pillars. For each, it does two things: names what is genuinely difficult, including the systemic realities, and names what is within the leader's own sphere of influence. The former cannot be moved quickly but the latter can be moved now.

Informed by personality science, evolutionary psychology, organizational behavior research, and communication studies, this paper advances five core arguments:

- Personal branding is not self-promotion. For women wanting to advance their careers at any level, it is a leadership obligation — and the resistance to it has a specific psychological signature that must be understood to be overcome.
- The inner critic is not a character flaw to be silenced. It has deep roots, real costs, and, when properly calibrated, underutilized strengths.
- Agreeableness has two dimensions, compassion and politeness, and women are routinely advised to suppress the wrong one.
- Women often disempower themselves through their influence tactics, and they will not become more effective until they own that honestly.
- Intra-gender competition is real, documented, and almost entirely absent from discussion in mainstream women's leadership development.

The synthesis of all five is a thesis that runs through every section of this paper: **assertiveness combined with compassion is not a compromise. It is a competitive superpower.** It is one that women's personality architecture is particularly positioned to develop if they choose to leverage what they already have rather than apologize for it.

PART I

PERSONAL BRANDING: OWNING THE NARRATIVE

Personal branding is one of those phrases that makes a certain kind of serious professional wince. It sounds like something between a marketing exercise and a performance. It conjures images of cultivating a curated persona, posting on LinkedIn, becoming a walking elevator pitch. For women who have built their reputations on rigor, excellence, and delivery, the idea of “building a brand” can feel beside the point at best and entirely undignified at worst.

This resistance is understandable. However, that resistance is also, at any level of leadership, a significant professional liability.

WHAT PERSONAL BRANDING ACTUALLY IS

At its core, personal branding is not about self-promotion. It is about **narrative ownership**. Every senior leader has a reputation, a set of impressions, associations, and assumptions held by colleagues, sponsors, and decision-makers about who they are, what they stand for, and what they are capable of. The question is not whether that narrative exists. It does. The question is whether the leader is actively shaping it or leaving it to form by default.

In large, complex organizations, where careers are built across functions, geographies, and leadership transitions, a leader who does not manage her own narrative will find that others manage it for her. And the default narrative for women leaders, shaped by organizational biases that are well-documented, is rarely as expansive as the reality.

Research by Herminia Ibarra and others on executive identity transitions shows that the leaders who advance most effectively into broader roles are not always the most technically excellent. They are the ones who develop what Ibarra calls an “**outsider’s eye**” — the ability to see themselves as others see them and actively work to shape that perception in service of their strategic goals.¹

WHY WOMEN RESIST IT — AND WHAT THAT COSTS

The psychological roots of women’s resistance to personal branding run deeper than professional culture. Two personality dimensions — both of which women score higher on than men across virtually all cultures studied — are directly implicated.

The first is **agreeableness**, specifically its politeness sub-dimension: the tendency to avoid drawing attention to oneself, to soften one’s own accomplishments in social contexts, and to prioritize others’ comfort over one’s own visibility.² The second is **neuroticism**, and specifically its self-consciousness facet: the heightened sensitivity to how one is being perceived,

the anticipation of negative judgment, and the inner critic that fires most loudly precisely when a woman is considering putting herself forward.

The result is a pattern well-documented in the organizational literature: women consistently **under-claim credit** for their contributions, attribute successes to the team while attributing failures to themselves and wait to be recognized rather than advocating for their own visibility.³ In a meritocracy where all else is equal, this costs them. In an organization where all else is not equal, it costs them more.

“Competence is necessary but it is not sufficient. The leaders who advance are the ones who are known for something specific — by the right people.”

Research on the “advancement gap” consistently shows that men are promoted on potential and women on demonstrated performance.⁴ One structural implication of this is that visibility, being known, being associated with strategic priorities, being in the room where decisions are made, matters disproportionately for women. A woman who does excellent work in relative obscurity is, statistically, at a disadvantage relative to a man who does similar work with greater visibility.

Understanding this is not a reason to become something you are not. It is a reason to be strategic about how you show up which is simply what effective leadership requires.

BUILDING A BRAND THAT IS AUTHENTIC, NOT PERFORMED

Authentic personal branding for women leaders starts with three honest questions:

- **What do I want to be known for**, not just what I have done, but what I want to be associated with as a leader?
- **Who needs to know it**, the specific stakeholders whose perception of me shapes my ability to lead, influence, and advance?
- **What is the gap** between how I am currently perceived and how I want to be perceived, and what creates that gap?

The third question is where the inner critic becomes relevant and where the real work is. Because for most women leaders, the gap between actual reputation and desired reputation is not primarily a marketing problem. It is a visibility problem rooted in behavioral patterns: not speaking first in senior meetings, not advocating for one’s own ideas with the same force used to advocate for others’, and not building the cross-functional relationships that create organizational reputation beyond one’s immediate team.

The antidote is not self-aggrandizement or obnoxious, tone-deaf self promotion. It is **deliberate presence**: the discipline of showing up fully in the rooms that matter, contributing a clear and recognizable perspective, and over time creating a consistent association between oneself and the things one actually stands for.

PART II

MANAGING THE INNER CRITIC: RESILIENCE, SELF-AWARENESS & THE SCIENCE OF SELF-DOUBT

The inner critic is the persistent internal voice that catalogues errors, anticipates failure, and rehearses catastrophe before it has happened. In leadership development contexts, it is almost universally treated as an obstacle: something to be quieted, challenged, or overcome through positive reframing. This paper argues for something more nuanced.

The inner critic cannot be silenced by an act of will. Its roots are too deep, its functions too real. What it can be is understood and in being understood, transformed from a source of paralysis into a source of genuine leadership intelligence.

WHERE IT COMES FROM: THE PERSONALITY SCIENCE

In the **Big Five personality model**, the most rigorously validated framework in personality psychology, women consistently score higher than men on **neuroticism** across virtually every culture studied.⁵ Neuroticism is a disposition toward negative emotional states: anxiety, self-consciousness, vulnerability, and the tendency to hear an internal critical voice clearly and often.

This is not purely a product of socialization. The evolutionary argument is direct: for most of human history, women have been more physically vulnerable than men, more dependent on social belonging for survival, and more subject to the consequences of social errors or miscalculations. A heightened capacity for threat detection and self-monitoring was adaptive for women, literally survival-relevant.⁶ Unfortunately, that requirement still persists in the modern organization. It is real, it is embodied, and it will not be resolved by positive self-talk or power poses.

The connection to personal branding is immediate: the same threat-detection system that fires when a predator approaches also fires when a woman considers speaking first in a senior meeting, advocating publicly for a promotion, or putting a distinctive point of view into a room full of skeptics. The amygdala does not distinguish between physical danger and social risk. It simply fires.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT GOES WRONG: RUMINATION

When the inner critic operates unchecked, it produces **rumination**, a repetitive, passive focus on distress rather than solution. Research consistently shows women ruminate more than men, a difference significant enough to partially explain higher rates of anxiety and depression in women across cultures.⁷ In leadership contexts, rumination produces over-preparation that becomes paralysis; feedback-seeking that becomes dependence; self-monitoring that tips into

performance anxiety; and the withdrawal from visibility that compounds the branding gap described in Part I.

The standard response in leadership programs, “silence your inner critic,” “challenge the negative thought”, treats rumination as a purely pathological process to be interrupted. It is a shallow solution to a deep phenomenon.

THE STRATEGIC REFRAME: SIGNAL VS. NOISE

The inner critic is a threat-detection system. The question is not whether it fires, that is unavoidable, but whether it is calibrated well and directed productively. When properly calibrated, what looks like the inner critic is actually:

- **Discernment** — the ability to sense when something is off before others do
- **Risk assessment** — the capacity to map failure modes before committing resources
- **Social intelligence** — attunement to how stakeholders are reading a situation in real time
- **Quality control** — the refusal to accept “good enough” when better is achievable

In most organizations, elements like safety, quality, precision, calculated risk-taking, and stakeholder trust are existential matters not liabilities.

“The goal is not silence. It is calibration: learning to distinguish the inner critic’s signal from its noise. The signal says: this matters, pay attention. The noise says: you are not good enough, do not try.”

Developing the metacognitive capacity to tell the difference, to sit with the discomfort of visibility, of advocacy, of directness, without interpreting that discomfort as evidence of imminent failure, is one of the most valuable and underappreciated skills a woman leader can build.

AGREEABLENESS: THE DOUBLE-EDGED DIMENSION

Women also score higher than men on **agreeableness**, a disposition toward cooperation, warmth, and care for others, with even greater cross-cultural consistency than the neuroticism finding.⁸ Agreeableness has two distinct sub-dimensions.

The first sub-dimension is **compassion**: genuine concern for others’ wellbeing, the impulse to understand, support, and include. The second is **politeness**: the tendency to avoid conflict, accommodate others’ preferences, and suppress one’s own needs to maintain social harmony.⁹ These two sub-dimensions tend to go together statistically but produce very different leadership outcomes.

Compassion is a competitive advantage that women’s leadership development has systematically undervalued. Amy Edmondson’s foundational work at Harvard shows that **psychological safety**, the belief that one will not be punished for speaking up, is the single strongest predictor of team learning and performance.¹⁰ Compassionate leadership creates psychological safety. In

pharma, where cross-functional teams must navigate complexity and high stakes under pressure, a leader who can sustain trust through difficult conversations is not simply nice to have. She is a competitive asset.

Politeness, when it operates as conflict-avoidance, is the opposite: it produces the failure to say the difficult thing when the room needs to hear it, the softening of feedback until the message disappears, and the accommodation of mediocrity to avoid discomfort.

“Don’t ditch compassion. Ditch the people-pleasing. They are not the same thing.”

Women who are told to “be more assertive” often hear “be less warm” or “be less like yourself.” That is the wrong instruction. The right instruction is: **be more willing to disappoint without being less willing to care.**

THE SELF-DISEMPOWERMENT PROBLEM: OWNING YOUR PART

There is a version of women’s leadership development that has actually and unintentionally become a sophisticated form of victim-maintenance. It names real biases. It documents real double standards. And then it stops, having communicated implicitly: the problem is out there, and your job is to navigate it.

This framing costs women. While systemic barriers are real, the belief that one’s effectiveness is primarily determined by forces outside one’s control is, itself, a mechanism of disempowerment that no systemic reform can fix from the inside.

Research on professional communication shows consistent patterns. Women are more likely to use hedging language (“I might be wrong, but...”), upward inflection (making statements sound like questions), excessive qualifiers (“just a thought”), and deferential framing (“I was wondering if maybe we could consider...”).¹¹ These are often strategies to manage the real social risk of being perceived as aggressive, a risk that is documented and real.¹² They also undermine effectiveness. Both things are simultaneously true.

When women are not heard, when their ideas are credited to others, when they are interrupted or overlooked, the attribution often defaults immediately to gender dynamics. Sometimes that is exactly right. However, the discipline of effective leadership requires asking a harder question: *to what degree is this also about how I am showing up?*

That question opens agency. The most productive frame is: **which parts of this obstacle are inside my sphere of influence right now?** That question has a practical answer. It focuses energy. And it treats women as the capable professionals they are, not as people who need to be protected from hard truths about their own behavior.

PART III

CAREER MANAGEMENT & NETWORKING: PLAYING THE LONG GAME

Career management and networking are, for many high-performing women, the least developed of their leadership capabilities. They rose to their current level by being excellent at the work. Now they find themselves in an environment where being excellence at the work is necessary but no longer sufficient. It is the price of admission. Advancement, on the other hand, increasingly depends on visibility, strategic relationships, and the ability to navigate organizational dynamics that are rarely explicit and almost never taught.

This section addresses three interconnected realities: how women manage (or fail to manage) their own careers strategically; how they network differently from men and what that costs them; and the intra-gender dynamic that most leadership programs will not touch but that operates constantly in the background.

CAREER MANAGEMENT: FROM DELIVERY EXCELLENCE TO STRATEGIC VISIBILITY

High-performing women typically have a deep, well-justified belief that quality work will be recognized and rewarded. This belief is rational at early career stages. However, as a leader, it becomes a liability.

Research consistently shows that men are promoted on **potential**, assessed through informal relationships, sponsorship, and organizational narrative, while women are promoted on **demonstrated performance**, assessed through formal outputs and track records.¹³ The practical implication is significant: a woman who manages her career by delivering excellent results and waiting to be recognized is operating by different rules than the ones that actually govern advancement at more senior levels.

Mentorship versus sponsorship

One of the most consequential distinctions in career management research is the difference between **mentorship** and **sponsorship**. Mentors advise. Sponsors advocate. Mentors tell you what to do. Sponsors put their own reputational capital on the line to get you in the room, on the shortlist, in front of the decision-maker.

Research by Catalyst and others shows that women are over-mentored and under-sponsored as their careers progress.¹⁴ They have people who give them good advice. They do not have enough people actively advocating for them when they are not in the room. And the sponsor relationship, unlike the mentor relationship, is not built through formal programs. It is built through visibility, strategic relationship investment, and demonstrated readiness for the next level.

This brings the personal branding question full circle: a sponsor can only advocate for what they know. A senior woman who has not managed her own narrative and who is not known for something specific by the people whose advocacy matters cannot be effectively sponsored regardless of her ability.

Advocating for yourself

Effective career management at the leadership level requires the capacity to **advocate for oneself directly** in career conversations with managers, discussions about project assignments, conversations about compensation, and in expressions of interest in stretch opportunities. This is, for many high-performing women, one of the most uncomfortable asks in their professional lives.

The discomfort is not irrational. Research shows women face real social penalties for overt self-advocacy in ways men often do not.¹⁵ But the absence of self-advocacy carries its own cost that compounds over time and that no amount of excellent delivery will offset. The women who advance are typically those who have found a way to advocate for themselves that feels authentic, grounded in their contribution to the organization rather than in personal desire for advancement, and who do so with the directness and emotional intelligence that characterizes effective leadership.

NETWORKING: STRATEGY VS. PLEASANTRY

Women network. Research shows they do so extensively, actively, and with genuine skill at building warm, trusting relationships. The problem is not quantity or quality of connection. The problem is **strategic composition**.

Studies of professional networks consistently show that women's networks tend to be denser, more homogeneous, and more internally focused than men's.¹⁶ In other words: women maintain strong connections within their own function, level, and peer group, but invest less in the cross-functional, cross-hierarchical, and cross-organizational relationships that drive career advancement and organizational influence at senior levels.

Men, by contrast, tend to build networks that are broader, more diverse in seniority, and more deliberately oriented toward access and information. This is not because men are more socially skilled. It is because men have historically operated in environments such as sports, military and informal professional cultures where the strategic value of network building was made explicit and practiced early.

The structural problem with women's networks

There is a well-documented structural challenge specific to women's networks in male-dominated organizations. Women who rely primarily on networks of other women, however strong, are relying on networks that have, on average, less organizational power, less access to informal decision-making, and less proximity to the sponsorship relationships that drive advancement.¹⁷

This is not an argument against building strong relationships with other women. Rather, it is an argument for **network intentionality**: mapping the organizational landscape, identifying the relationships that most matter for strategic impact and career progression, and investing in those relationships with the same deliberateness applied to any other professional priority.

“Effective networking at a leadership level is not a social exercise. It is a leadership function. The people who can influence your ability to lead, to advance, and to deliver results need to know who you are.”

Cross-gender networking

For women in male-dominated environments, building effective working relationships with senior men, the population most likely to hold sponsorship influence at present, is a specific and often under-addressed skill. Research on cross-gender mentorship and sponsorship shows that senior men are often reluctant to invest informally in junior women due to perceptions about optics, misread signals, or simple unfamiliarity.¹⁸

Navigating this requires directness about one’s professional goals and value combined with the relational intelligence to build trust genuinely rather than transactionally. Women who bring both to cross-gender networking relationships are more effective at building the sponsorship capital that drives senior advancement.

INTRA-GENDER DYNAMICS: THE COMPETITION NOBODY NAMES

Perhaps no topic in women’s leadership is more carefully avoided than this one: **women’s competition with each other**. The popular narrative frames women’s leadership as a natural coalition of solidarity against shared structural disadvantage. The reality is more complex, more uncomfortable, and more useful to understand.

The research

The “**queen bee**” **phenomenon**, a tendency of successful women in male-dominated organizations to distance themselves from, or actively undermine, other women, is one of the most replicated findings in organizational psychology.¹⁹ The mechanism is not simple jealousy. It is largely a rational adaptation: senior women who have achieved their status partly by differentiating themselves from the group most likely to be stereotyped as “not leadership material” perceive association with junior women as a threat to an identity built on being the exception.

Additional research shows that women in competitive professional environments engage in **indirect aggression** including social exclusion, reputation management and withholding of sponsorship and information at rates comparable to or exceeding men’s direct aggression.²⁰ The expression differs but the competitive drive does not.

This dynamic is directly relevant to networking and career management. Women who rely on other women for sponsorship, or who assume that gender solidarity will generate advocacy, are

often operating on an assumption that the research does not support. Sponsorship from senior women cannot be assumed. It must be earned and, in some cases, it must be consciously chosen against competitive instinct.

Conscious solidarity as a leadership choice

Understanding why intra-gender competition exists, including its evolutionary logic, organizational triggers, and psychological mechanisms, is not about blame. It is about recognition: seeing a pattern clearly enough to choose differently.

The aspiration is not naïve sisterhood. It is **conscious solidarity**: the deliberate choice to sponsor, advocate for, and tell the truth to other women, even when the competitive incentive pulls the other direction. For women who hold senior leadership roles, this is also a leadership responsibility. The women who came after them are watching what they do with their position.

SYNTHESIS

THE INTEGRATED LEADER: ASSERTIVE WITH COMPASSION

Everything in this paper points toward a single synthesis. The women's leadership conversation has too often presented a false choice: you can be warm or you can be strong; you can be liked or you can be respected; you can lead as a woman or you can lead like the men who currently dominate the hierarchy.

This is a false dichotomy. The research increasingly confirms it.

Alice Eagly's meta-analytic work shows that transformational leadership, characterized by inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, is practiced more consistently by women than men, and produces superior outcomes on most organizational performance metrics.²¹ What Eagly's work also shows is that women are penalized for enacting this style in organizations that have not updated their implicit models of what authority looks like. The double bind is real.²²

But research also shows that the combination of **high agency** (assertiveness, decisiveness, directness) with **high communality** (warmth, care, attunement) is where the most genuinely effective leadership lives for any leader, of any gender.²³ The leaders who inspire followership rather than mere compliance are not either assertive or compassionate. They are both.

“Assertiveness with compassion is not a compromise. It is where real authority lives. And it is what moves organizations.”

The integrated leader can do all of the following simultaneously: state a position clearly without excessive qualification, while remaining genuinely open to being wrong; deliver difficult feedback that the recipient experiences as care, not attack; disagree with senior colleagues directly and respectfully, without caving or burning the relationship; advocate visibly and specifically for others, including other women, without sacrificing competitive edge; and build the visibility, the network, and the narrative that her capability already deserves.

This is not a natural state. It is a learned capability. It requires the courage of assertiveness and the attunement of compassion to operate simultaneously on the same problem and in the same conversation. That is genuinely difficult.

But it is learnable. Women leaders, given their personality architecture, including the discernment of a calibrated inner critic, the genuine care of real compassion, the social intelligence of high agreeableness directed well, already have a genuine headstart on developing it. Women leaders can create their own advantage by choosing to use what they already have rather than apologize for it.

CONCLUSION

Women leaders do not need protection. They do not need a vocabulary of victimhood, however elegantly the systemic barriers are named. They do not need to be told that the obstacles are mostly outside them.

They need **truth**. They need honest feedback on how they are showing up in the room, in their networks, and in their own heads. They need research that takes their psychology seriously: not as a disadvantage to be accommodated, but as a distinct architecture with real strengths and real vulnerabilities. They need permission to own their narrative, to advocate for themselves, to compete openly and support each other consciously. Ultimately, they need to do all of this without abandoning the compassion and attunement that are, when properly deployed, genuine and durable leadership advantages.

A well designed leadership development program for women has the opportunity to deliver exactly that: not comfort, not validation, but the kind of development that actually changes how people lead. Women are capable of the truth. They deserve it.

“The ultimate form of disrespect is handing a capable leader a comfortable lie and calling it development.”

Let's Continue the Conversation

Holzman Leadership partners with organizations to build and strengthen their Women in Leadership development initiatives.

To explore how we can support your goals, [let's talk](#).

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Jennifer Buck is a Global Faculty Member and Head of the Americas Business Practice for Holzman Leadership. She brings 30 years of leadership and coaching experience along with 20 years of consulting to organizations across industries and geographies. Jennifer is particularly known for her work with start-ups, non-profits, pharmaceutical and biotech and science and technology companies.

Jennifer has found that people face certain universal human challenges at each phase of their career and level of leadership, regardless of organization. She has made it her focus to help individuals, teams, and organizations navigate these challenges and create powerful wins and results.

Jennifer's no-nonsense, down-to-earth style and uncompromising commitment to real results have made her a trusted advisor to executives and an effective mentor to leaders at all levels. She designs highly relevant, engaging programs that reflect the unique cultures of her clients' organizations, generating buy-in for change in high-stress, high-stakes environments—and building long-lasting client relationships rooted in mutual trust.

Areas of Expertise

- Women in Leadership
- Performance & culture transformation in high stakes environments across industries
- Executive coaching and career development
- Neurodivergence in the Workplace

Key Certifications

- Graduate Coaching Certification in Evidence-Based Coaching, Fielding Graduate University
- Franklin Covey | The Gallup Organization | Vital Smarts
- Prosci Change Management Learning Center | Center for Creative Leadership
- Emergenetics | Myers-Briggs | DISC Assessments
- Decision Dynamics Decision Styles
- EQi 2.0 | Change Styles Indicator | TKI Conflict Style Assessments

Education

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Dagmar is a Global Faculty Member of Holzman Leadership. She is a sought-after executive coach, leadership facilitator, and keynote speaker with a 30-year global track record across six countries. With 15 years of international corporate leadership experience followed by 17 years as a transformational coach and facilitator, she has delivered high-impact learning experiences for over 10,000 leaders across four continents and in four languages (German, French, English, Spanish).

Former Owner and Founder of Vital Smarts France, Dagmar is experienced developing C-Suite Leaders, with deep expertise in coaching senior female leaders. She also delivers high-impact coaching experiences for senior leaders ready to elevate their influence, emotional intelligence, and leadership power—without burnout. With deep expertise in tough conversations, behavior under stress, influence, emotional intelligence, and managing across cultures, Dagmar has supported Founders, CMOs, Heads of People, and Culture Leaders navigating small and medium-sized growing organizations.

With a compelling mix of strategic insight and emotional depth, Dagmar equips senior leaders — especially women in executive roles — to navigate complexity with clarity, presence, and edge. She builds psychological safety that enables constructive challenge, accountability, and better decision-making under pressure.

Areas of Expertise

- Executive Influence & High-Stakes Conversations
- Conflict Management, EQ & Accountability
- Leading Culture Change in Complex Environments
- Wellbeing & Habit Change
- Virtual and Online Learning & Facilitation

Key Certifications

- Crucial Conversations for Mastering Dialogue, CrucialLearning USA
- Crucial Conversations for Accountability, CrucialLearning USA
- Crucial Influence, CrucialLearning USA
- Co-Active Training Institute (CTI)
- Agile People Coach
- The Power of Habit
- CoreStrengths Official Partner (SDI)

Education

- Executive MBA, HEC Paris
- Learning Psychology, Leicester University UK
- Post-Graduate Degree in Services Marketing, Queensland University
- MA in Learning Sciences & Linguistics, Leipzig University

Todd Holzman

Founder, Holzman Leadership

Todd Holzman is the founder of Holzman Leadership, whose Real Work Methodology is used by CEOs, Senior Leaders, and HR Executives at Fortune 500, FTSE 100, and Global 1000 companies including American Express, Bristol-Myers Squibb, British Telecom, Editas, Nestlé, and Red Bull to transform their leaders, teams, cultures, and business performance.

Former leadership coach to IBM's top executives, Head of Organization Development at Honeywell, and fellow with McKinsey's Change Center, Todd has taught world leaders at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, developed doctoral students at Columbia University, trained tens of thousands of leaders globally, and certified hundreds of consultants and trainers in his Real Work Methodology (RWM).

The RWM is an accessible, actionable, and scalable leadership development and problem-solving methodology that fuses Todd's research on 30,000 documented cases of leadership failure, analyses of corporate leadership programs, and nearly three decades of distilling and synthesizing the disparate approaches of the Harvard and Columbia University professors with whom he studied and taught.

A Forbes Magazine Coaches Council Member, LinkedIn Author, and SHRM keynote speaker and podcast guest, Todd holds a B.S. in Industrial Labor Relations (Cornell), an M.A. in Organizational Psychology (Columbia), and an Ed.M. in Leadership & Adult Development (Harvard). He is also an:

- Expert in Argyris's Organizational Learning Methodology
- Trained Assessor in Kegan's Vertical Developmental Levels
- Member of Heifetz's Adaptive Leadership Network
- Editor of Marsick's Sculpting the Learning Organization
- Member of the Harvard Club of New York
- A.K. Rice Trained Group Dynamics Facilitator
- Certified Life Coach Institute Professional Life Coach