

# Reclaiming *Power* Through *Purpose* and *Perseverance*

By Jacquelyn Berney

My story is one shaped by both adversity and opportunity. Growing up with financial hardship, I quickly learned that success isn't something that's handed to you. It's earned through resilience, dedication and a willingness to persevere. Life's challenges have the power to either break you or build you, and I chose early on that they would fuel my drive rather than deter it.

When I first joined my current company, VI Marketing & Branding (VI), as a receptionist, it wasn't because I had the perfect resume or an impressive background. It was actually a bit more serendipitous. VI called my roommate to potentially offer her the position, but she was too hungover to take the call, so they called me next. At that time, I had no idea I would eventually end up as President of the company. Still in college, eager to prove myself, I took the job with gratitude.

Initially, I kept my head down, focusing on doing my work and trying to please my boss, the founder and CEO. I feared making mistakes or upsetting him, as so many women in the workplace are conditioned to do. But eventually, I realized that operating from a place of fear was not the path to growth.

I knew my worth. I knew I was capable of more than just answering phones and filing paperwork. So, instead of waiting for someone else to hand me a leadership role, I took control of my own journey. I created my own position: Head of New Business Development. This role, which was vital to the growth of the company, allowed me to demonstrate my skills and create meaningful impact.

For me, this journey has been fueled by purpose. I wanted to create meaningful change within my company and positively impact the lives of those I lead. But it hasn't always been easy. There were plenty of times when things didn't go according to plan. And frankly there were times when my passion and drive was met with a request to take it down a notch. There were failures, a divorce that deeply hurt me, and the pitch losses where I doubted if I was on the right path. The stress and the self-doubt felt overwhelming at times, and there were days where I even considered walking away.

But instead of letting those moments break me, I leaned into them. I realized that setbacks weren't signs of weakness.



They were opportunities to pivot and reminders that the greatest rewards often come from the most challenging moments. I stopped waiting for permission and asking for validation. Instead, I began defining success on my own terms. I took ownership of my own journey, set my intentions and pushed through setbacks.

The power to persevere is where true leadership is born. It's in these moments that you discover who you truly are and build the resilience necessary for long-term growth. Yet perseverance is not just about pushing through on your own. It's also about lifting others as you go and empowering others to reach their potential, too.

One of the most fulfilling parts of my journey has been helping women realize they have every right to reclaim their power. For too long, we've been told to shrink ourselves, to tone down ambition, second-guess our instincts and apologize for simply showing up as leaders. We're conditioned to ask for permission and not take up space.

That's why I led a culture shift, in my role as President, at VI. Our old culture was marked by fear: Fear of making mistakes, stepping on toes and speaking up. Everyone was polite, but not honest. And they definitely weren't empowered. It kept things safe, but small. It didn't support growth or leadership, and this impacted our female employees the most.

So I started studying how we could do better, and then I called out what wasn't working and why. I told the truth about where we were and where we needed to go, and this honesty helped open the door. Because power isn't perfection; it comes from showing up fully, flaws and all.

I strive daily to create a culture at VI where people, especially women and those who are marginalized, feel valued, heard and supported in bringing their full selves to the table.

Reclaiming power isn't just for those already in leadership roles. It's for every woman (and person) who is ready to take charge of her own life. Whether you're just starting your career, leading a team or navigating a personal crossroads, your purpose is the foundation of your power, and perseverance is the tool that will keep you moving forward.

If you've ever faced adversity, or struggled to find your footing, know this: The power to overcome is within you. Trust in your purpose, in your resilience and keep moving forward. That's how you create unstoppable momentum.

Not just for yourself, but for those around you, too. It's how you drive the kind of change that can lead you, and others, to greatness. And remember: If it feels a little uncomfortable, you're probably doing it right.

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## *Connect With Jacquelyn*

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