

P R E F A C E

WHEN MY PUBLISHER at John Wiley & Sons, Inc. emailed me asking if I was interested in writing a new book, I immediately responded “No, I am deep in projects and way too busy.”

You see, I don’t write how-to books or give motivational speeches for a living. The last book I wrote was my 2006 *Wall Street Journal* bestseller *Inside Every Woman*. I’m a business owner, a working CEO actively involved in managing a multimillion-dollar company with 23 employees. I live and thrive in the business trenches every day and love most of those moments.

The day after I said no to Wiley, I woke up knowing I had to say yes to this book. I couldn’t stop thinking, “What a difference five years makes and what a difference five years doesn’t make.” When I wrote my book in 2006, the first questions I asked you, my readers, were: “What would your life look like if every moment of it was absolutely enriched, fulfilled and swelling with joy? Think about it—your health, relationships, career, spirituality and finances are the best they can be and you greet each day with energy and enthusiasm for whatever comes your way. What would accomplish that?”

These questions were suddenly feeling too “Pollyanna-ish” and I was forced to ask myself whether these aspirations were even relevant to women today, much less possible. In the five short years since *Inside Every Woman* debuted, women are facing more challenges than ever and increasingly scrambling to keep up and survive in a world that is getting smaller, faster and flatter every second of every day.

Most women are still climbing out of a hole created by the worst economic recession since the Great Depression. Middle-aged women are supporting not just themselves, but their parents and their “returned-to-the-nest” children. Young women, financially challenged to break out from under mom and dad, are struggling in jobs (if they can find one) that don’t cover life’s necessities.

With the world in such flux and so insecure, it’s no wonder that “hooking up” and “sexting” are becoming the new relationship models. Yet another challenge for women who yearn for meaningful relationships that fulfill more than a momentary urge.

As if that’s not enough angst, there’s also an onslaught of time-sucking distractions, game apps, the Internet everywhere, Facebook, Twitter, texting, virtual relationships and reality TV shows (that are anything but). All this buzz constantly competes with our ability to accomplish Big Things in our lives. Add to that our smartphones, which none of us would live without, but which keep us tethered to the noise. No wonder undertaking new goals and getting to the heart of your womanly desires seems like just another impossible dream.

No question these are unprecedented times, but these are also exciting times that offer unlimited opportunities. Women have more of a voice today. We are outpacing men not just in bachelor’s degrees but also advanced college degrees, increasingly becoming leaders and the primary family breadwinners.

At the same time, what a difference five years *doesn’t* make. Here’s a zinger of a reality check: Women earn a mere 75 percent of what men earn. Women with the same level of education as men, executing the same job description as men, get paid less than men.

Doesn’t that fact piss you off? Most women can describe ad infinitum how they work a lot harder (some women breadwinners hold two to three jobs at one time) for a lot less. And they’re not happy about it. Here’s what some of my friends say:

Women have to work twice as hard as men to be thought half as competent. Of course, thankfully, that’s not hard.

—RACHEL

Wow! It has taken several generations to get this far? We have run rings around the men in the workforce and still do not get the same pay!

—JUDY

We do 175 percent between job and home. Welcome to womanhood.

—DIANA

Don't even get me started . . .

—ELAINE

Unless you're Demi Moore, you will outlive the man you love. And unlike your male counterparts, you are more likely to spend your last years in poverty. Statistics show that, like it or not, you will probably have to work well beyond age 65.

Choices for women are abundant, but at what cost? Women tell me they're more exhausted than excited by all the opportunities. Just one more "to do," as if we don't have enough of those already. Who needs more work, more stress, more responsibilities? Why should we accept having less time for fun and the simple satisfactions of life?

Success should include *living* the life we make for ourselves, not merely existing in it. If you haven't been reduced to your breaking point one or more times in your life, you're either very young indeed or probably not a woman.

I wrote this book so that you can be one of those women who are free to glide gracefully through the demanding chaos and exciting uncertainties and ask such provocative questions as:

"How do I begin to create a life and career more on my own terms when I'm too busy simply existing?"

"How do I even find the time to imagine a goal that stimulates my purpose and fulfills my dreams when I can't get five minutes to myself?"

"How do I embrace fear as a growth opportunity to accomplish those goals?"

That's why I titled this book *Wicked Success Is Inside Every Woman*. These exaggerated times call for a wicked mind-set. To get out of survival

mode and into success mode you have to embrace a new, wickedly resourceful mind.

I mean wicked in an exaggerated, uncommon way, a way that has nothing to do with green witches or evil thoughts but instead has everything to do with an outrageous viewpoint and perspective.

I'm a "buck-up" style woman who has little interest in people who expect something for nothing, or who think success will come through mental osmosis via their iPads stuffed full of self-help MP3s, podcasts or "easy-ways-to" eBooks.

I've spent 29 years giving real women concrete, no excuses, take-no-prisoners advice on how to make wicked career changes and start real businesses.

I've been privileged to work with, mentor and socialize with successful businesswomen all over the world. I interact with thousands of women on Facebook, through my blog and through other forms of social media. Some of these women I haven't personally met, but all of them feel free to "tell it like it is" and express in no uncertain terms the challenges and concerns facing women in every part of today's world.

I have huge respect for women. That's why this book is not a self-help book. It isn't a magic formula, a quick fix for success. I won't promise you a 4-hour workweek, a corner office, 10 pounds off in 10 days or that Mars will ever begin to understand (much less listen to) Venus. I won't disrespect you with pat answers. This is a buck-up book with a buck-up plan for women who are ready to buck up. I want you to use me and my life plan to help you find your way to the wicked success that is inside every woman.

When I announced to my executive team at Vickie Milazzo Institute the decision to write *Wicked Success Is Inside Every Woman*, I could see some disappointment on their faces, especially that of my financial director. After all, I generate significant income for the company and am very active in its day-to-day activities. Frankly, it wasn't a good economic decision. They knew it and I knew it. But like most women, I'm not completely motivated by economics, I'm motivated by passions.

I'm passionate about how the world is changing and what that means to women (not just American women, but also the women in China, Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Poland and others, who are reading translations of my first book in their own languages). What women need to do is step out in front of the coming change.

I don't need your money (my financial well-being doesn't depend on whether or not you buy, steal, borrow or share this book). I only want your success—the success you fully deserve as a woman. If you're ready to liberate yourself from day-to-day drudgery, if you're no longer willing to scrape out an existence, I'll show you how to use 5 Promises that will unleash 10 extraordinary strengths inherent to all women. You can summon them as often as you choose, to achieve anything you want.

How do I know there aren't just a handful of women graced with such awesome forces? For 29 years I've trained thousands of real women to combine their 10 Feminine Forces (strengths) with their professional expertise to start their own businesses, real women who are achieving unreal success. Ordinary women creating consulting businesses generating six- and seven-figure incomes, kissing 10-plus hour workdays goodbye, taking control of their careers, lives and finances and beating back the exhaustion that was crushing their fire.

I guarantee that none of these women has anything you don't have. My company employs more women than men, so I've been on both the mentoring side and the receiving side of the extraordinary Feminine Forces you'll explore throughout this book. Women's strengths continue to help grow my company and have been a big reason for its success.

This book is not about what's wrong with women. It's about what's right with us. After all there are more than enough messages, from fashion magazines to your boss, telling you everything that is wrong with you.

I love women. I love men too—especially my husband Tom, my dad Sal and my twin brother Vince—but I find so many more unexplored possibilities in working with the feminine energy.

You don't have to give up your life, your time or your relationships to be successful. Make the 5 Promises and harness the 10 Strengths I've used for 29 years to have more life, more time and more satisfying relationships.

As you read this book, I hope you'll feel like you're sitting down for a cup of healthy green tea or a glass of healthy red wine with a good woman friend . . . a friend who inspires, encourages and pushes you to think in a more exaggerated, uncommon and wicked way.

Wicked Success Is Inside!