

COMPASS ROSE LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

Movement 1 — The Naming | Business Growth Project | Donna Lynn Price

SEGMENT A — THE TEMPLATE + THE NAMING

Opening

Welcome to Movement 1.

Before we dive in — a word about why I call these movements rather than lessons. (SLIDE)

A lesson is something you absorb. A movement is something you're part of. What we're doing here isn't just learning content. We're covering ground. Each movement builds on the last, carries momentum forward, and brings you closer to leading fully — in your own way. So that's what we'll call them. Movements. Because that's exactly what they are.

This first movement is called The Naming. And by the end of it, you're going to have language for something you've probably been doing your whole life without knowing what to call it.

Let's start there.

Part 1 — The Leadership Template Wasn't Built for You

I want you to think about the leadership model most of us inherited.

It looks like this. (SLIDE)

Authority flows downward. The person at the top decides — everyone below executes. Power is positional. Hierarchy is the structure. Competition is the engine. And the leader herself — or himself — is decisive, unemotional, self-sufficient. She doesn't show uncertainty. She doesn't ask for help. She commands.

Add to that the productivity prescriptions that followed this model into the business world. You've heard them. "Focus on one thing at a time. Pick a lane. Stop spreading yourself so thin. Multitasking is inefficient — do one thing, do it well, move on."

That advice has been handed to women entrepreneurs for decades. And most of us have tried — at some point — to follow it.

Here's what that advice never acknowledged: it was built for a linear way of working. A predominantly male way of working. Women's capacity to hold multiple threads

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simultaneously — to run a business while raising a family while building community while creating something new — isn't a deficit. It isn't a lack of focus. It is a fundamentally different way of operating. And when you honor it instead of fight it, it becomes one of your most powerful competitive advantages.

But back to the leadership model. This model — hierarchical, competitive, dominance-driven — has a name. It's a patriarchal, dominator model of leadership. It was built inside military structures. It scaled through industrial organizations. And it was handed to the business world as the universal definition of what leadership looks like.

It was never universal. It was just loud.

And here's something important I want you to hear — because this is not about blame, and it's not about sides. This model hasn't served men well either. It asks them to lead without vulnerability. To succeed without connection. To define their worth by dominance and suppress the relational instincts that actually make leadership sustainable. The dominator model is a bad deal for everyone. It just shows up differently depending on who's trying to fit inside it.

For women, it shows up like this.

You lead through relationship — and wonder if you're too soft. You build through collaboration — and question whether you're decisive enough. You hold multiple things at once — and feel guilty for not focusing. You care how people feel — and tell yourself to toughen up.

Those questions? That self-doubt? That constant recalibration of whether your instincts are right?

That is the cost of being handed the wrong template.

MOVEMENT 1 — THE NAMING

I want to tell you how I got here. Because it wasn't a single moment and it wasn't a theory I found in a book. It's a story that's been building for decades — and I think you'll recognize parts of it as your own.

Early in my career I led like the model I had been handed. The hierarchy. The structure. The command and control. I bought into it — not because it felt right, but because it was the only model anyone had ever shown me. It was what leadership looked like. So I performed it.

And I got a name for it.

I was called “the bitch up front.”

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Not because I was cruel. Because there is no winning for women inside the dominator model. Lead too softly and you're not taken seriously. Lead too firmly and you're a problem. I chose firm. I performed authority. And I paid for it anyway.

So that's where it started. With a model that didn't fit — and a label that proved it.

The shift came from an unexpected place.

I began directing an outdoor education center for underserved urban youth. And in adventure education, you work in a circle. That's just how it works. Every activity — whether it was a ropes course, a navigation challenge, a trust exercise — ended the same way. Circle. Three questions.

What happened? What went well? What wasn't quite right?

Not an evaluation. A reflection. Asking the participant to make meaning from their own experience rather than being told what to think about it. Those are coaching questions. I didn't know that's what they were called at the time. I just knew they worked.

I also brought in an Open Space Technology facilitator to do some work with us at the camp — my first real exposure to that philosophy. Harrison Owen built OST on a premise that felt immediately familiar: the wisdom needed to solve any complex problem already exists in the people in the room. Your job is not to direct it. Your job is to create the conditions for it to emerge. Work in a circle. Trust the group to move toward what matters.

After camp, when I moved into business, OST became a real influence. When I encountered the framework fully, I recognized it. I'd been practicing those principles on a mountainside before I knew they had a name. OST gave me language I brought directly into how I work.

But here's what I need to name — because it's one of the things that will challenge you most as you practice this model.

When I sat in the circle at camp — as the director, as the person responsible for everything — I was equal in the circle. Same position as every staff member. No head of the table. No elevated seat.

And that got read as weakness. As not leading.

I lead cycling rides. When I'm leading a group ride, I ride at the back — behind the last rider. From the back I can see everyone. I know who's struggling before they know they're struggling. I can adjust the pace, close a gap, keep the group together. I have more awareness from the back than I ever would from the front.

And people don't read it as leading.

Here's what stays with me: even women I have facilitated — women I was actively leading through a process — have said afterward that they weren't sure who was in charge. They didn't see it as leadership because it didn't look like what they'd been trained to expect.

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So somewhere in this module we need to talk about that. About how to show up as the leader inside this model — clearly, confidently, without abandoning the circle. About how to hold the decision point while sitting in the ring. About how equal visibility is not the same as equal authority.

Being in the circle doesn't mean you've given up leadership. It means you've changed where you're leading from.

We'll come back to this. Hold it.

Then I spent twenty years working with women in business.

And I watched the same pattern play out again and again. Capable, experienced, intelligent women automatically deferring to the hierarchy. Apologizing for their instincts. Suppressing the collaborative, relational, empowering way they naturally led — because the business world kept telling them it wasn't professional enough. Wasn't decisive enough. Wasn't hard enough.

The leadership development world didn't help. The same models kept getting recycled. Hierarchy dressed in new language. The same fundamental assumption underneath: that effective leadership looks one specific way — and that way was built by and for someone who wasn't a woman.

What shifted recently was a conversation picking up speed in politics. Not in business — in governance. More women in office. Different outcomes. People starting to ask: is this connected? Is there something about how women tend to lead that produces different results?

I looked at that conversation. And then I looked at what I had been building — in twenty years of working with women entrepreneurs — and I said: *this is what I've been trying to name all along. This is what women have been practicing for decades without claiming it as legitimate.*

Compass Rose Leadership is not a new idea.

It is the oldest model of effective human organization there is. Women have been leading this way in cultures around the world for thousands of years. It produces results. It produces community. It produces sustainability. And somewhere along the way — in the business world at least — we stopped claiming it as ours.

This module is the claiming.

Not a theory you're adopting. A model you've probably been practicing your whole career — without the language, without the permission, and without anyone telling you it was not only valid but in many ways more effective than the model that replaced it.

Your instinct was never wrong. The template was.

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Before we go further, I need to say something honest.

The template was never built for you. That's true. But most of us have been operating inside it for years — maybe decades. And some of us got good at it. We learned to suppress the instincts that didn't fit. We learned to lead through authority because that's what was rewarded. We learned to compete because that's what got results.

That conditioning doesn't disappear because you've named it. Understanding Compass Rose Leadership is not the same as practicing it. The shift is not a switch you flip. It is a practice — and like every practice, it requires noticing, compassion, and repetition.

The old model wasn't just a style you tried on. For many of us it was a survival strategy. You got the promotion, kept the job, built the business by operating inside it. That's not weakness. That's intelligence under constraint. You were conditioned — decades of being told this is what professional leadership looks like. And for some of you, the hard exterior, the control, the armor — it kept you safe.

Letting it go can feel like risk, even when you know it's right.

Honoring the old model is not the same as staying in it.

You will default to the old model. On the hard days. Under pressure. When someone pushes back. When the money gets tight. You will reach for the template because it's familiar, because it's been called professional, because it has sometimes kept you safe.

When that happens — it's not failure. It's the practice. You notice. You return to True North. You keep going.

Movement 6 of this module is entirely dedicated to that practice — the ongoing work of the shift. For now, just know it's coming. And know that the fact that this is hard is not a sign that Compass Rose Leadership isn't yours. It's a sign that you've been carrying the wrong map for a long time. That's not your fault. And it's fixable.

Part 2 — The Word We Need to Name

I want to introduce you to a word. It might make you a little uncomfortable at first.

Good. Stay with me.

The word is matriarchy.

Here's what it does not mean. Women taking over. Women dominating men. Women running the world the same way it's been run — just with different people at the top. That's

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not matriarchy. That's just a different face on the same dominator model — and it's not what we're after.

Here's what it actually means — in its oldest, truest form.

Researchers who study the world's most enduring matrilineal cultures — the Minangkabau of Indonesia, the Mosuo of China, the Khasi of India, and closer to home, the Haudenosaunee — the Iroquois Nation, right here in North America — don't find oppression reversed. They find something structurally different. Decisions made by consensus. Resources that circulate rather than concentrate. Leadership that is relational rather than positional. Community wellbeing as the organizing principle rather than individual accumulation. Longevity. Sustainability.

The Haudenosaunee are worth naming specifically. Clan mothers in the Iroquois Confederacy select and can remove chiefs. Women's authority is constitutional — written into the structure of governance. And historians have documented that the framers of the U.S. Constitution drew from that model. This isn't ancient history. This is living, breathing matriarchal governance on this continent.

And this isn't just history. This is happening right now, in the United States.

In 2024, New Mexico became the first state in U.S. history where women hold a majority of the state legislature — 53%. A woman governor. A female president pro tempore of the Senate. A majority of women on the state supreme court.

What are researchers and legislators observing? The same things we see in every matrilineal culture studied. More collaboration across party lines. Policy that centers families, communities, and vulnerable people. A governance style that measures success by ripple impact — childcare tax credits, expanded family support, equity-driven legislation.

Senator Mimi Stewart put it plainly: women tend to collaborate more easily and prioritize family-centered outcomes. That's not a stereotype. That's the partnership model, operating in a state capitol in 2024 and now.

Values. Relationships. Ripples. Visible not in ancient history — but in last year's legislative session.

Scholar Riane Eisler, in her landmark work *The Chalice and the Blade*, reframes the entire conversation this way: the real divide in human civilization isn't male versus female. It's dominator models versus partnership models. Patriarchy is a dominator model. What we're calling matriarchal leadership — in its truest expression — is a partnership model.

Not power over. Power with.

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That's the distinction. And it changes everything.

SEGMENT B — THE DEFINITION + FIVE PRINCIPLES

Part 3 — Compass Rose Leadership: The Definition

So here's how we use this in our work together.

I'm not going to ask you to walk into a room and announce that you practice matriarchal leadership — although honestly, you could. What I am going to give you is a framework that translates this philosophy into how you actually build and run your business.

I call it Compass Rose Leadership.

Compass Rose Leadership is a values-centered, relationship-powered model of leading and building a business — one that draws on the oldest and most enduring principles of how women organize, create, and grow. It rejects domination in favor of partnership. It replaces hierarchy with community. And it has been proven — across cultures, across centuries, and now across business data — to be not just more aligned, but more profitable.

Three words anchor it: Values. Relationships. Ripples.

Values — because everything in Compass Rose Leadership starts from the inside out. Your True North. Who you are and what you stand for. Not the market, not the trend, not what everyone else is doing.

Relationships — because Compass Rose Leadership builds through connection, not transaction. Every client, every collaborator, every team member is a relationship first.

Ripples — because the measure of success in this model isn't just the height of your revenue. It's the depth of your impact. How far do the ripples reach? Your clients. Their clients. Your community. The world your business touches.

And the compass metaphor? That's not accidental. A compass doesn't tell you the one right path. It orients you — it shows you True North — and then trusts you to navigate your own terrain. That's exactly what this model does.

There is no one-size-fits-all path here. There is YOUR WAY. Oriented by your values, powered by your relationships, measured by your ripples.

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Part 4 — The Five Principles of Compass Rose Leadership

Compass Rose Leadership rests on five principles. I'm going to introduce them here and you'll see them woven through everything we build in this module.

Principle 1: Lead from the Center, Not the Top.

In a hierarchy, power flows down from the top. In Compass Rose Leadership, power radiates outward from the center — from your values and your purpose. You're not above your team, your clients, your community. You're the compass rose at the center. Everything orients to you — not because of your title but because of your alignment.

Principle 2: Build in Circles, Not Pyramids.

Hierarchies extract — resources, energy, ideas flow upward and concentrate at the top. Circles circulate. What you build, what you create, what you earn — it moves outward and comes back. The web of relationships you develop IS your organizational structure.

Principle 3: Power Grows Through Relationships.

The dominator model says power is finite — someone wins, someone loses. Compass Rose Leadership says power multiplies when shared. Every person you invest in, every woman you lift, every collaborator you champion — becomes a source of strength back to you.

Principle 4: Measure Success by Your Ripples.

Revenue is an outcome, not a vision. Compass Leaders measure by impact radius. How far do the ripples reach from what you build? That question lives alongside your profit goals — not instead of them.

Principle 5: Lead YOUR WAY — Always.

There is no Compass Rose Leadership template. That's the point. The dominator model demands conformity — one right way, proven path, follow the formula. The partnership model honors individuality. Your leadership is shaped by your values, your story, your community, your season of life. YOUR WAY is not a tagline. It's the most matriarchal principle in the entire framework.

SEGMENT C — THE GAP + YOUR STORY + WORKBOOK

Part 5 — Why Nobody Is Teaching This

Here's something worth naming directly.

This framework exists. The philosophy is real. The research is solid. The cultural evidence is centuries deep.

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And almost nobody in the business coaching world is teaching it.

Why?

Most coaches won't say the word matriarchy. They'll soft-pedal the philosophy, avoid the language, keep it vague enough to not make anyone uncomfortable. The scholarship exists in academia — Eisler, Göttner-Abendroth, cultural researchers around the world. The business systems exist in coaching. But nobody has built the bridge between them. Nobody has taken this philosophy and translated it into a practical leadership framework that women can actually use on Monday morning.

Until now.

This is yours. Not because you claimed it first — but because everything I'm describing maps directly onto how you already naturally lead. The web structure. The relationship-first approach. The values as True North. The ripple vision. This isn't new information for you.

It's a name for something you already know.

Part 6 — This Has Always Been You

Here's what I know about you — even before you've told me your story. You've been leading this way already

You've been leading this way already. Maybe not perfectly. Maybe with a lot of doubt layered on top. Maybe while simultaneously trying to follow someone else's template and wondering why it felt like wearing someone else's shoes.

But somewhere in your history — maybe in how you run your team, or how you built your client relationships, or how you made a decision that didn't follow the conventional logic but was deeply right — you've been a Compass Leader.

You just didn't have the language for it. And without the language, it's hard to trust it fully. Hard to teach it. Hard to build on it intentionally.

That's what this movement gives you. The language. The framework. The permission to stop leading apologetically and start leading powerfully — in your own way.

Your compass has been pointing here all along.

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Workbook + Action Assignment

Before you move to Movement 2, open your workbook to the Movement 1 section and spend some time with these four questions:

- Where in your life have you led in a Compass way without naming it? What did that look like?
- Where have you tried to lead the patriarchal way and felt it was wrong for you? What was the cost of that?
- Which of the Five Principles feels most natural to you right now? Which feels most challenging?
- What would it mean — practically, in your business today — to fully claim Compass Rose Leadership as your model?

Action Assignment — Before Movement 2:

1. Complete all four workbook prompts above.
2. Complete your Compass Rose Leadership Self-Assessment (the separate one-page tool).
3. Identify your strongest principle and your growing edge. Bring both into Movement 2.

Movement 2 is The Case — where we make the business argument. Because Compass Rose Leadership isn't just more aligned. It's more profitable.

Your compass is already pointing. I'll see you in Movement 2.