

Successful Women
Speak *Differently*

VALORIE BURTON



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A Good Start

Talk isn't cheap. It's your secret weapon.

Alisha and Erica are both artists whose work is creatively outstanding. They grew up in the same metro area with similar family backgrounds and identical access to opportunities. Their families did not have the contacts or networks to give the young women any particularly exceptional career start. But take a glimpse at how they've approached their careers and personal lives since the beginning, and you can piece together why one has been much more successful than the other.

Most people would say Erica has more raw talent. She also possesses a few more credentials, primarily as a result of having more formal education and training. She's the one who—on the surface—ought to be more successful.

Alisha's education was more adventurous. She studied abroad in college, exploring art and culture, but she never finished her degree. Driven by passion for her craft and the family financial crisis caused by her father's illness, Alisha left school. She took small jobs working around other artists and savoring every experience.

Erica, on several occasions, was introduced to people who could have opened doors for her career. But afraid of coming across as pushy or opportunistic, she never spoke up or voluntarily shared her aspirations or vision. On the occasions she was asked, she spoke cautiously of her vision, fearing that it didn't sound all that interesting or that her big goals came across as arrogant. This didn't doom her; it just didn't help her. Good opportunities have come her way, and it has occasionally looked like her art career would finally, really take off. But each time, she'd stall. One opportunity never seemed to flow to the next. They were one-offs, false starts.

Alisha, on the other hand, talked about her vision to pretty much anyone who would listen—and she did it in an easy, energetic way. She was sharing her passion, not selling something.

Now in her early forties, Alisha has seized every opportunity for her art, both nationally and internationally. Along the way, she's heard the whispers of plenty of naysayers who didn't think she was worthy. "Why her?" they ask. "She's good, but others are better." Alisha knew it was true: There were definitely others who were better. But Alisha never bought into the idea that her success was solely tied to her talent.

She shows up differently from other artists. She talks about her work differently. She engages in conversations differently. And it has made all the difference. In fact, her ability to "speak differently" has shaped more than her career. Her friendships are stronger because she is courageous and wholehearted in how she deals with people—telling the truth and setting expectations that minimize miscommunication and drama. Her finances have benefited because she isn't afraid to ask for what she wants—whether that's the fee for her work or a price break on a fabulous pair of shoes. An underlying clarity and boldness pushes Alisha a little closer to success than others, no matter what her goal.

Have you ever watched a woman with background and talents similar to your own find greater success? If so, you've probably wondered what made the difference. What caused her to meet her goals while you struggle in frustration, perhaps even feeling that the odds are stacked against you?

Successful women do at least two things differently from the average woman. First, they *think* differently in the face of both challenges and opportunities. Their thought patterns allow them to bounce back and show up in powerful ways in their lives. Second, they *speak* differently—both in everyday exchanges with the people they care about and in crucial conversations in the workplace. The confidence with which they communicate—their presence, credibility, and voice—can be far more influential than their talents or efforts.

It may not seem obvious at first, but the nuances of successful women's thoughts and speech lead to different ways of presenting themselves and their ideas to the world. As a result, they build trust, communicate confidently, and have a great deal of influence in their social and

professional circles even when they are not in an official position of leadership. This book will share many of the habits these women possess and guide you to incorporate these habits into your own life.

We speak through more than just what we say. In this book, we'll explore the four primary forms of personal communication that can empower a boost in success and happiness:

1. Voice

How your voice sounds impacts others' reactions to you—whether they follow you, believe you, interrupt you, or allow themselves to be influenced by you. It isn't always about what you say, but how you say it and how it is received.

2. Words

The words you speak and don't speak matter. Being intentional about your word choice and conquering your fears to speak up when needed and remain silent when it is wise can mean the difference between success and failure.

3. Body

Your body speaks even before you do. Understanding how your body projects confidence or lack thereof, warmth or coldness, anxiety or calm, is critical to your success and happiness.

4. Actions

What you do or don't do speaks volumes about who you are. If your actions don't line up with your words, you'll undermine your own communication and send mixed messages that sabotage your best efforts.

Have you ever watched a woman with background and talents similar to your own find greater success?

Speak Life

King Solomon makes a bold statement in the book of Proverbs, saying simply, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18:21 נקיב). We can speak life into situations purely by what we say and how we say it. Successful women know this and are intentional about how they show up and speak up—in relationships, at work, and in their everyday lives. It isn’t always the big, bold statements. It is often the nuances of their approach that shift opportunities their way.

On the flip side, those who are less successful often speak death into situations, dreams, and relationships without even realizing they are doing so. If you can begin to see the ways in which you may have subtly sabotaged your own desires in the past, then with that knowledge, you have the power to entirely recast your future. You can do so by adjusting how you show up and speak up.

After more than 15 years of coaching women in almost every state in America and multiple foreign countries, and after studying the massive research that exists on the subject of happiness and success, I have seen firsthand that women who succeed at manifesting the desires of their heart have a few things in common. Likewise, I have also observed some commonalities among women who struggle to achieve and sustain authentic success and happiness. Can you relate to any of these?

The Successful Woman	The Average or Unsuccessful Woman
Accurately perceives her own abilities; aims high and sets goals that are truly the desires of her heart.	Underestimates her abilities; sells herself short; sets goals that are beneath her potential and the desires of her heart.
Speaks up, even in the face of fear or intimidation.	Holds back out of fear, insecurity, and doubt.
Tells the truth kindly, even when it is uncomfortable.	Beats around the bush, even telling lies to avoid disapproval, conflict, or discomfort.

The Successful Woman	The Average or Unsuccessful Woman
Shows up in an authentic way in all relationships.	Changes to fit a mold shaped by others; is easily swayed by opinion; lives for approval and praise.
Asks powerful questions of herself and others; gets clarity about the way forward.	Makes assumptions; doesn't seek clarity when hearing an answer she doesn't want.
Has the courage to make requests for what she wants and needs.	Accepts what is offered, even when it doesn't meet her needs and goals.
Knows when to remain silent; doesn't overshare or talk excessively; is discerning about who can be trusted.	Speaks from a place of insecurity to release nervous energy and avoid silence; overshares, even with people who do not have her best interests at heart.
Takes ownership; speaks in terms of solutions, not complaints.	Makes excuses; blames; complains without a focus on problem-solving.
Says no to good opportunities in favor of purposeful ones.	Focuses on what she doesn't have rather than what she does have.
Speaks truthfully yet kindly about herself; never puts herself down; receives compliments easily.	Bats down compliments; speaks of herself in negative terms; doesn't give herself credit for strengths, efforts, and good deeds.

My guess is that you already have some measure of success. After all, the kind of woman who picks up a book on success is typically already successful to some degree. But you know, deep down, that you've only scratched the surface of what's possible for you. You may often be praised for your accomplishments thus far, and yet you sense there is something more for you to do and be. Maybe you already know what the big goal is, but for some reason it feels elusive.

I believe our paths have crossed because your full potential does not have to remain elusive. The purpose of this book is to give you that edge—a boost that gets you moving to the next level in your personal

and professional life. It is a level that brings you not just accomplishment, but greater happiness.

What It Means to Succeed

Whatever you assume I mean by the word *successful* in the book's title is what I am guessing you want more of in your life. That word motivated you. And that's good. Most people want success, whether they define it as having a happy family or climbing the corporate ladder or building a healthy bank account or fitting into a size six dress. But before I begin sharing concepts and strategies for success, let's make sure we agree on what success is.

As I define it, success is a harmony of purpose, resilience, and joy. When these three elements flow together, you will experience true success. Think of it this way: *Success is living your life's purpose and embracing resilience and joy as you do.*

Let's break this definition down further.

Purpose: Service Fulfills the Successful Woman

Purpose is about making a difference in the lives of people. In other words, you cannot live your life's purpose unless you are in some way serving others. Although our purpose often brings us joy, it is not about us. It is always about using our strengths in the service of others. Your purpose in life answers a simple question: How is someone's life better because she has crossed your path?

Your Maker endowed you with gifts, talents, passions, and experiences that are unique to you. If I could travel back in time and observe you at 4 years old or 14 years old, I would see traces of your uniqueness. Your strengths have been with you all along, and now it's time for you to use them. There is a greater impact for you to make, and now is the time to make it.

In 1999, while standing in a bookstore, I had an epiphany about my life's purpose: to inspire women to live fulfilling lives, and to do so through my writing and speaking. At the time I was running my own public relations firm, using my gifts and talents as a communicator, but I wasn't passionate about the work. My passion was lacking

because those gifts were not being used for the purpose for which I was created: to serve women.

Maybe you can relate. You've got half the purpose formula right. You're using your gifts and talents, just not in a way that ignites your passion in service to others. Or maybe you're in the right place, serving those you are most passionate about, but you lack the opportunity to use your gifts and talents in the way you've always dreamed. It can be quite frustrating—and as we will learn in a few chapters, negative emotion generated by feelings like frustration can sabotage your ability to be successful. Living your purpose is not only what you're here for, but it also empowers you to succeed.

Resilience: Hope Sustains the Successful Woman

As you set out in pursuit of your dreams, you will inevitably face challenges, trials, and stumbling blocks along the way. A key to your success will be developing a critical skill that every truly successful woman possesses in abundance: resilience. Nothing is perhaps more important to actually achieving success than the ability to be resilient in the face of challenges. Whatever your vision for the future, the likelihood of obstacles on the path to that vision is almost certain.

This is where successful women excel. They think differently in the face of fear, failure, setbacks, and challenges. They say different things to themselves in the face of such obstacles. As you read, you will learn to become more self-aware about the thoughts that knock on the doorstep of your mind. You will learn to choose which ones to let in and entertain.

Joy: Happiness Empowers the Successful Woman

Joy empowers you to succeed. As Nehemiah 8:10 reminds us, “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (NKJV). Wherever you are on your life's journey, if you find a way to embrace this season and enjoy it, you will already have found some measure of success.

Joy is not just about what happens in life—the little boosts of positive emotion that come when something makes you happy for a moment. Yes, that bite of chocolate will make you happy for a moment, so, hey, savor it. But deeper joy comes from peace and love and knowing

you are living the life you were meant to live. You can have all the little joy moments your heart can stand, but if you have to drag yourself out of bed in the morning to go to a job you dislike and come home to a contentious household every evening, you are not going to feel successful. Every truly successful woman seeks peace in her decisions, love in her relationships, and purpose in her life.

As women, we have a unique set of concerns and challenges to navigate on our path to success. We have unique societal expectations, ones that often tell us who we *should* be. But who we *want* to be may not fit into that box. I don't know what life is calling you to, but I know that if it's your purpose, you are uniquely equipped to fulfill that calling.

Success will quite likely look different for you than it does for the woman next door or even your mother or your sister. While we are all wired a bit differently, some basic foundations for happiness and success must be present. When it comes to educating yourself on what it will take for you to achieve your next level of success—living your purpose while embracing resilience and joy—you will benefit from a perspective that honors your uniqueness as a woman.

So here's the practical approach you'll find in this book:

- Real-life stories of real women, just like you, who have found that harmony of purpose, resilience, and joy that defines success. You'll learn from their failures and triumphs, and most importantly, their thought processes along the journey.
- Practical, relevant research, some of it surprising, about how successful women speak and approach life differently than the average woman. This research will equip and educate you with the tools and knowledge that can get you to your goals.
- Coaching questions to help you determine your next step. Successful women know that when you ask the right questions, you get the right answers. Throughout the book,

you will find questions to help you gain clarity about who you are, where you're going, and how to get there.

- Spiritual insights to strengthen you for the journey. God made no mistakes when He created you. You were uniquely designed for success in your purpose. When you align your life with your strengths—those innate qualities you were gifted with—you will tap into a level of grace that empowers you to achieve things you could never accomplish in your strength alone. Throughout the book, you will be reminded of the power at work in you when you open yourself to His divine love and guidance.

A Note About Coaching

As you read, you'll see that I use the term *coaching* and provide you with coaching questions. Coaching is the process of asking thought-provoking questions and providing a safe space to explore the answers, empowering you to take action, learn, grow, and ultimately get moving toward your destination.

This is where transformation takes place. While the stories and research insights will inspire you and give you practical knowledge that you can apply to your everyday life, the coaching questions will give you clarity about which steps to take next. Do not skip over the questions. Refuse to hurry through this process. Instead, savor it. If you do, I guarantee that you will experience real change before you finish this book.

As your coach through these pages, my goal is to be a catalyst. I'm just a vessel here to get a message to you. What you do with that message is up to you. I believe the power lies within you to make changes and adjustments in your life that will lead you straight to your dreams. One step at a time, one day at a time, expand and explore your options. Take action. Notice what works and what doesn't, and then make adjustments. Take another step. That's coaching.

My ultimate goal is to help you develop the habit of coaching yourself. You won't always have another person there to coach you—or even

a book to spark guidance and direction—but you will always have you. If you develop the skills to coach yourself, you will have a consistent advantage in life. Because your choices, the ones you make from here on out, will make the difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tabore". The script is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

PART 1

Think Differently So You Can Speak Differently

Uncover the Missing Piece

You Are Capable of Far More Than You Know



Uncover the Missing Piece

*Why talent and effort aren't enough
to move you to the next level*

Key Lessons

- Talent and effort aren't enough to propel you toward your goals.
- Your ability to communicate can mean the difference between success and failure.
- If you want to open doors of opportunity, you need to learn to speak differently.

On paper, she looked amazing. A degree from the top university in the state. Experience that showcased her skills for the job. Volunteer work with kids. And her talent, while narrow in scope, was outstanding. She had come so close to landing the position a year earlier. Her resumé checked every box. Her bosses and bosses' bosses narrowed it to two candidates, and Kimberly was still in the running. In fact, when she found out the other candidate was Lisa, she suddenly felt even more confident the job was hers. She had more experience than Lisa, she'd put in more hours, and frankly, she was the more talented of the two. If you asked some coworkers, they'd probably admit that Lisa had average technical ability.

But throughout the interview process, their bosses had the feeling that Lisa could do the job, that she could bring people together, even boost morale—something the company had not even specified they were looking for but definitely needed. Upper management liked her

attitude and loved her connection with colleagues. She was warm and engaging. She asked great questions. One member of the interview team said, “Talking to her just makes me get outside my box and think bigger.” All of the pluses for Lisa were extras, not requirements for the job. They were not listed in the job requirements. You couldn’t really see them on paper. On paper it seemed she was less qualified than Kimberly. But her resumé didn’t account for her most valuable trait: her ability to connect.

Kimberly was disappointed but not discouraged. After all, the management position she wanted *everyone* wanted. It was a large company, and lots of people had applied for the job. She came in second for it, so with more effort and an extra year under her belt, she’d try again when another spot opened up the following year. When the time came, she was ready! She knew the drill, she’d been through the interview process before, and as far she could tell, many of the same people were applying again, which meant she’d already come out ahead of them the year before. Once again, she made it to the final interview round—just two remaining candidates. This time it was Kimberly and Chris. “I was so confident. I knew it was time,” she shared with me later. But it wasn’t. Chris, who unlike Lisa was just as qualified as Kimberly on paper, won over the decision makers with his authenticity. The feedback Kimberly got from a mentor later? “In the end, they connected with Chris. He is relatable and approachable.”

This time, more than being disappointed, Kimberly was frustrated. She’d always believed that her talent and effort would take her where she wanted to go in life and in her career. That was a core belief. And here, no matter how hard she tried, how long she persevered, and how great her resumé looked, she couldn’t seem to break through. She’d checked all the boxes, or so she thought.

But there was actually a box she had missed entirely. It was one that many women disregard or consider irrelevant—and it’s the one that makes all the difference.

This is about how you show up in your world.

The Missing Piece

In all my years of teaching and learning about success, these are the most talked-about strategies I've come across: *Vision. Discipline. Singular focus. Perseverance. Talent. Effort. Having the right team. Goal setting. Resilience.* Perhaps they sound familiar to you too.

Now, don't misunderstand me here. All of those pieces of the success puzzle are relevant. However, there is a missing piece whose value is underestimated. In fact, with this single missing piece, you could completely undermine the greatest talent, effort, and goal setting. You could undo everything a fantastic team or stellar discipline can help you build. The missing piece in the success puzzle is often talked about separately from the others. It goes by different names: *Communication. Influence. Presence. Confidence. Personal branding. Connection.*

I like to call it your *voice*. It encompasses everything you communicate to yourself and about yourself. Your voice is how you speak to the world and how you speak to yourself—a filter through which all your beliefs are processed and presented to the world within you and the world around you. Your voice can sabotage the best talent and boost an average talent. It can speak to the heart of the man who is authentically right for you, and it can protect your heart by serving as a bold shield from one who would do you harm.

This is about how you show up in your world.

Successful women speak differently. And because they do, doors of opportunity—whether personal or professional—open more easily, quickly, and unexpectedly. That's what happened with Lisa and Chris, and it blindsided poor Kimberly. Kimberly had the talent and discipline, put forth the effort, set the goal, and even bounced back from disappointment. But it doesn't help to “check all the boxes” if a missing box never gets checked.

Your voice can sabotage the best talent and boost an average talent.

It seems almost unfair. And if you're experiencing it, that's the biggest frustration. *What am I doing wrong? Why am I not breaking*

through? How is it that someone with less talent is further along than I am? These are great questions to ask, but be careful how you answer them. Refuse to play victim or to insist that the odds are stacked against you. Consider that maybe, just maybe, there is a gap you can close that will make these questions irrelevant to you in the future. You won't wonder why you're not breaking through if indeed you've broken through! The person with less talent won't be further along.

It's time to learn to use your voice in a different way.

You can connect wholeheartedly in your relationships.

You can speak with confidence about your needs and wants.

You can stop using your voice to beat yourself up for mistakes.

You can exude a presence that supports your highest goals.

It's time to find out how.

**"I feel like I'm doing all the right things.
Why am I not seeing the results?"**

Are you missing the piece? Ask yourself these questions to find out:

- Does fear keep you from speaking up, sharing ideas, or asking for what you want?
- Do you sometimes find that people take what you said the wrong way or misunderstand your intentions?
- Have you found it difficult to develop a relationship with a strong mentor or successful colleagues who can help you move your goals forward?
- Do you often rehash what you wish you had said in a conversation because you failed to communicate authentically when the conversation occurred?