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**FINDING YOUR VOICE IS A PRODUCT OF CONFIDENCE AND AUTHENTICITY — AS A LEADER, A PERSON, A CREATOR, A FAMILY MEMBER.**

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# AN UNSTOPPABLE FORCE

Women are transforming family business, changing the narrative and inspiring innovation

**W**hen I started my career as a writer, reporter, wordsmith, storyteller type, it never occurred to me — not a single time — that the fact of my gender would be an obstacle. And for the most part, it never was. Largely because I never let it become an issue.

That is, not until the tapping incident, which happened in a boardroom somewhere in Atlanta. Likely on a street named Peachtree, although I can't remember.

The first time I heard the tapping, I wasn't sure what it was. A woodpecker outside the meeting room? Maybe on a windowsill? Maybe it was in my head? No. It was coming from inside the room. It was far too tappy to be someone's foot kicking a table leg. I looked around kind of subtly, but maybe not that subtly. My eyes scanned from one dude's face to the next dude's face. Nope. No movement other than heads nodding in agreement with something.

I glanced to the front of the room — head of the table area — and finally at long last found the source. Lo and behold it was the CEO tapping his pinky ring on the conference table. Yes. An actual *pinky* ring.

*Tap. Tap Tap.*

I mean, why not, I guess? We were discussing ideas about how to get more people to a trade show booth. The solution, according to Pinky Ring Guy, was to bring in an espresso cart and have a "booth babe" act as a barista. Charming. Imagine my surprise when he stopped tapping the pinky ring and looked straight at me and said, "Maybe you should do it."

*What did he just say?* I reached down deep — way into that well of great comebacks — to find a proper response. I thought back to all those practiced retorts reserved for moments like this one.

All I could come up with as a response was "OK."

I was appalled. At him. At myself. Fortunately, I didn't end up serving the coffee in a short skirt because, uh, no. But I'll never forget that moment when I was voiceless. And the sound of that pinky ring followed me around for most of my career, urging me to speak up. And trust me, if you're a woman in business — or anyone, really — you have a story to tell, too. A moment when your voice was silenced. We all do.

Our aim with this issue is to help you find your voice — whether you're an introvert, an extrovert, a man or a woman — and use it in your family business. You should never feel ignored or voiceless in a boardroom, meeting room or family council meeting.

Women in family business are uniquely positioned to have an impact in their business and the boardroom. The key is finding confidence and community. That's what this issue is about. We're celebrating 10 influential women transforming family business their own way and in their own voices. Their stories and their lessons will inspire and motivate all of us.

Finding your voice is a product of confidence and authenticity — as a leader, a person, a creator, a family member. Along the way, you'll find community — and, like the 10 women we celebrate in this issue, you will find new ways to collaborate across genders, ages, barriers and expectations. **FB**