



Female Leadership in Our Time



2016 Special Edition

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From the Editor

“I believe that true passion has no gender and focusing on your goals and dreams helps you to overcome gender and cultural boundaries.”

*Simonetta Di Pippo, Astrophysicist,
Director of the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs*



We welcome you to our first Female leaders supplement*, *Female Leadership in Our Time*, which coincides with our March/April issue of TEBR. This is the first of what we hope will be an ongoing project. It seemed to us that a handful of names in technology and politics are recycled time and time again when people talk about women in leadership. In this supplement, we go behind the headlines and sound bites to bring to life the experiences of women who are following their passion and advancing in their careers.


Women's roles are constantly evolving in our modern times and we go to press at a time of unprecedented anticipation, as Hillary Rodham Clinton makes her second bid to become the first female President of the United States of America. In its almost 240 years of history, it is notable that a woman has never been elected from the ranks of American women to rule that country, while in its backyard in South America, women scaled the heights and have become heads of states in their respective countries: Isabel Martínez de Perón (Argentina, 1974 – 1976), Violeta Chamorro (Nicaragua 1990 – 1997), Mireya Moscoso (Panama 1999 – 2004), Christine Fernández de Kirchner (Argentina 2007 – 2015), Veronica Michelle Bachelet (Chile 2006 – 2010, 2014 –), Laura Chinchilla (Costa Rica 2010 – 2014), Dilma Rousseff (Brazil, 2011 –).

We go to press a few days after that formidable woman, Aung San Suu Kyi scored another decisive victory in Myanmar (Burma). Her party, Myanmar National League for Democracy (NLD), successfully created a new powerful role of State Counsellor, which circumvents the constitutional ban on her serving as President. As State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi will serve in a position akin to that of a Prime Minister thereby fulfilling her election promise to occupy a role above the elected President. And as Baroness Patricia Scotland takes office as the first female Secretary General

of the Commonwealth, we pause to ruminate on the nature, extent and challenges of Female Leadership in Our Time. From the USA to Africa, from Asia to Europe, women are playing their part in shaping the future of our world at all levels and across many industries and professions.

In this collection of interviews, we hear the voices of women leaders from different industries and different parts of the world telling their own story about their journey to leadership. They talk about their career choices, they address questions of female representation in their industry, issues relating to work/life balance, their leadership styles, and they do not shy away from exploring the challenges they face as women in their chosen fields.

What reverberates through all these interviews, and defines all these women - all of them without any exception - is their passion for what they do and what they can achieve. Yes there are cultural biases, there are gender biases, but they all show us that true passion has no gender, has no limits. With passion these women have scaled professional, societal and cultural boundaries. These women have accepted challenges, taken risks and these women in their own way “have not taken biases too seriously so as to put limitations on themselves and their career choices” (Franziska Gsell, CMO, IWC Schaffhausen).

We hope that you will enjoy this supplement and you will return to it time and time again as a source of inspiration and joy. 

Tunde Olupitan
Managing Editor

**We invite you to be part of our next supplement. We would like to feature you, or any female leader that you think should be part of this ongoing project. Please do not hesitate to drop us a line so that you or anyone you know can be part of our next supplement.*



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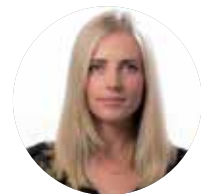
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Big Pilot's Watch Edition "Le Petit Prince".

Ref. 5009: "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly. What is essential is invisible to the eye." These words have assumed a meaning beyond their literal sense. And when Antoine de Saint-Exupéry put them into the mouth of his little prince, he probably knew already that we need only turn our hearts to the stars in all their brilliance to recognize our dreams. Making them come true, however, calls for men with the courage of a Saint-Exupéry. By becoming a professional pilot, he not only fulfilled a boyhood dream but was also inspired by flying to write his literary masterpiece and international

bestseller, "The Little Prince". Reason enough for IWC to honour his life's work with the Big Pilot's Watch Edition "Le Petit Prince". Limited to an edition of 250, the watch has a chapter ring recalling the elegantly reduced design of the cockpit instrumentation in classic aircraft. An image of the little prince, whose imagination, sincerity and openness took people's hearts by storm, is taken up as an engraving on the back of the case. In the same way that Saint-Exupéry – pilot, poet, and pioneer – gifted the world a story that tells of human strength and goodness, IWC gives us this watch as a reminder to live out our dreams. **IWC. ENGINEERED FOR MEN.**

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**ENGINEERED FOR MEN
WHO FLY THEIR DREAMS.**



IWC
SCHAFFHAUSEN

A professional portrait of Franziska Gsell, a woman with long, wavy brown hair, smiling at the camera. She is wearing a dark blue, short-sleeved dress with a subtle pattern. Her hands are clasped in front of her, and she is wearing a watch on her left wrist and a bracelet on her right. The background is a blurred office hallway with glass partitions and overhead lights.

CMO, IWC SCHAFFHAUSEN | SWITZERLAND

Franziska Gsell

Franziska Gsell majored in Business Administration and Marketing from University of Applied Sciences, Zurich. From 1999-2006 she worked as Brand Manager and Marketing Manager for Carlsberg SA. She went on to become Marketing Director at Lindt & Sprungli AG and International Marketing Director at Navyboot Zurich. She joined Fogal, Zurich in 2012 as CEO and since 2015 has been CMO for IWC Schaffhausen.

“We women should not take such gender biases too seriously and put limitations on our career choices and ourselves.”

ON GENDER AND CAREER CHOICE

I don't think that gender was in any way a disadvantage for me when it came to choosing my profession. I had always wanted to be in marketing, because it's analytical and creative at the same time. After university, I started working in sales for a Danish clothing company. Then, I took a completely unexpected turn and became the marketing manager for a well-known international beer brewer, a rather male domain. But it turned out to be a very rewarding experience for me. If you are passionate about a product and you know your customer, you can do a great job anywhere. We women should not take such biases too seriously and put limitations on our career choices and ourselves.

ON WOMEN AND LONGEVITY IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY

The turnover rate in the marketing sector indeed might be higher than in other areas. But I don't think it necessarily has anything to do with gender. I have been in this field for many years now. During my career, I have worked with extremely loyal female employees who were at my side for many years. One reason for this perception of a higher turnover may be that women also happen to have children. It's still a delicate issue in the corporate world for women to become a mother and to continue her career.

WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP ROLES IN MARKETING

The fact that there are only few women in senior management has nothing to do with the luxury industry itself. I think most other industries are affected by this deficit, as well. I never had any preparation for my leadership role in the luxury industry per se. However, I believe that having worked in male dominated industries has greatly shaped my leadership style. I am not a person who enters a new environment and turns

everything upside down in the first couple of weeks. My approach is to listen and understand, and to observe with diligence and patience. First you need to understand the brand equity and processes. Then you can slowly start to improve them. I always stay true to myself and would never change my value system. The most important factor is winning the trust of your employees. You need a powerful team if you want to move things forward.

ON JOINING IWC SCHAFFHAUSEN

Joining IWC was quite logical for me. On one hand, I am a Swiss citizen and my family has roots in the Schaffhausen area. I have known IWC since my childhood days. On the other hand, I was always intrigued to work in the field of mechanical luxury watches. These timepieces have an eternal touch and stand for lasting values. People connect with them on a much deeper and emotional level than with other products. So when IWC offered me this position, I didn't have to think twice. The biggest challenge was the change of industry and it was not the first time I changed industry. But it was

IWC head designer Christian Knoop, IWC Schaffhausen CMO Franziska Gsell, Lewis Hamilton and Rosamund Pike visit the IWC booth during the launch of the Pilot's Watches Novelties at the Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie (SIHH) 2016 on January 19, 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland. (Photo by Harold Cunningham/Getty Images)



“I am not a person who enters a new environment and turns everything outside down in the first couple of weeks. My approach is to listen and understand, and to observe with diligence and patience.”

a challenge I was very eager and happy to take on. As an outsider to the Swiss watch industry, it took me some time to become familiar with the detailed processes of the designing, engineering and manufacturing of mechanical watches.

ON IWC AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

I think the foundation for sustainable success is a great product. IWC has laid this foundation many decades ago. And then there is our unique storytelling. We have created meaningful stories around each of our six watch families. We have successfully managed to develop and position all of our product lines while maintaining their rich tradition and heritage. And we are able to deliver our strong messages through various touch points like our boutiques, our website, social media, various advertisements and exclusive events for key customers. Our CEO Georges Kern has been brilliantly executing this strategy, and I think he must be credited with transforming IWC from a local watch maker to a global brand.

IWC CEO Georges Kern (L) and actor Christoph Waltz talk onstage at the "IWC Schaffhausen Talks To" - Event held at the Dolder Grand Hotel in Zurich, Switzerland, September 26, 2015 (Photo by Harold Cunningham/Getty Images)

ON IWC, BRAND IDENTITY AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Our marketing strategy combines outstanding products, great storytelling and authentic partnerships. Our Pilot's Watches, for instance, bring the fascination of flying to people's wrists, while our Aquatimer diver's watches breathe the spirit of adventurism and the oceans. With our stories, we create a depth that is both compelling and highly believable. In addition, we are committed to sustainability and corporate responsibility towards our social environment. For instance, we support the Antoine de Saint-Exupéry Youth Foundation and its projects designed to improve the future of disadvantaged youth. As a partner of the Charles Darwin Foundation, we help preserving the fragile ecosystem of the Galapagos Islands. These are just two examples. IWC masters the combination of evocative storytelling and social commitment like no other brand in the luxury watch market. During my first twelve months, I have been working together with my team to further develop and strengthen our different activation platforms. One milestone was the launch of our new video talk platform "IWC Schaffhausen Talks To". This entertaining format is integrated in all our events and allows our customers and media to gain insight into the professional and private lives of our brand ambassadors and friends of the brand, and their connection to – and passion for – haute horlogerie.

ON IWC'S TAGLINE "ENGINEERED FOR MEN" AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH WOMEN

Our tagline may be “Engineered for men”, but our brand attracts women, too. I know a lot of women who proudly wear a large Portugieser on their wrists. IWC has been popular for many years with women who are fascinated by mechanical watches and looking for a powerful means to express their character and attitude.



But it is true that we have started to expand our product portfolio and launched watches with smaller diameters. In 2014, we have introduced several models of the Portofino Automatic 37 collection; while in January of this year we have presented the Pilot's Watch Automatic 36 at the SIHH in Geneva. With a case diameter of just 36 millimeters, it is one of the smallest watches ever built in Schaffhausen. These watches are an attractive option for women, but they are also ideally suited for men with smaller wrists. While they may be a bit smaller in size, they are still typical, pure and iconic IWC watches and perfectly reflect our tradition of engineering and performance.

ON WHAT SETS IWC SCHAFFHAUSEN APART FROM OTHER LUXURY WATCH BRANDS

I think what differentiates us most is our storytelling. Also, IWC has managed to remain authentic and honest. We live in extremely fast paced times, so maybe factors like consistency and reliability are becoming even more important today. The beauty about IWC is that we look back on 150 years of watchmaking tradition and that we have successfully managed to preserve our heritage, while at the same time remaining contemporary and relevant. After all these years, our customers still perceive us as a pioneer and young at heart.

ON IWC, TRADITION AND HERITAGE AND MEETING THE CHALLENGES IN THE AGE OF THE INTERNET

IWC is very open towards change. And we are quick when it comes to observing and evaluating new trends, and, where appropriate, integrating new developments into our strategy. We have invested a lot of time and effort to explore the possibilities of the Internet and digital marketing options. It is impressive and fascinating how fast marketing instruments have changed and evolved in recent years. For instance, today we are intensively using social media to reach out to thousands of people who love our watches. People want to interact with their favorite product and brand anywhere and anytime. So we need to provide a balanced mix of physical and virtual touch points and



John Helliwell and IWC Schaffhausen CMO Franziska Gsell visit the IWC booth during the launch of the Pilot's Watches Novelties at the Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie (SIHH) 2016 on January 19, 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland. (Photo by Chris Jackson/Getty Images)

experiences to allow them to connect with our brand. While the Internet may affect the way we advertise our products or communicate with our customers, it does not change people's love of mechanical luxury watches.

ON IWC, THE FUTURE AND REMAINING INFLUENTIAL IN 2025

Our priorities will not be so different in ten years' time. We need to win our customers with a great product of long lasting value. Our customers expect to wear their watch for a lifetime. Another priority will be to keep drawing from our tradition. If you have roots like IWC Schaffhausen does, then you have to treat them responsibly. If we continuously manage to connect our company's heritage and legacy with the world and to create deeply rooted stories and emotions around our products, then we will still be influential in 2025.

ON MY WAY OUT, I TAKE...

My IWC Portofino Automatic 37, a clear mind and a big smile. ■

"Our priorities will not be so different in ten year's time. We have to win our customers with a great product of long lasting value."



SIMONETTA DI PIPPO

Astrophysicist
Director, UN Office for
Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)

“I believe that true passion has no gender and focusing on your goals and dreams helps you to overcome gender and cultural boundaries.”



Simonetta Di Pippo is the Director of UNOOSA at the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV). Her experience includes serving as Director of the Observation of the Universe at ASI (2002 – 2008) and ESA Director of Human Spaceflight (2008 – 2011). Prior to her appointment at UNOOSA in March 2014 she was Head of the European Space Policy Observatory at ASI Brussels. Ms. Di Pippo holds a Master's Degree in Astrophysics and Space Physics, and an Honoris Causa degree in Environmental Studies. In 2006 she was knighted by the President of the Italian Republic. In 2008, IAU named asteroid 21887 'Dipippo'. Ms Di Pippo is also the president and co-founder of Women in Aerospace Europe, Academician at the International Academy of Astronautics and lecturer in several important Universities.

ON GENDER AND CAREER

I believe that true passion has no gender and focusing on your goals and dreams helps you to overcome gender and cultural boundaries. When I was young I always wanted a job which could motivate me throughout my career, allowing me to continuously learn and grow, and permitting me to be exposed to the world. I am happy that I'm up until today as passionate about my job as I was years ago and dedicated to it as during the beginning of my career. With this kind of commitment, the decision to follow a career in the space sector became much easier.

ON THE ISSUE OF 16 PER CENT WOMEN IN AEROSPACE AND OUTER SPACE INDUSTRY

The number you are raising is truly worrying. Such a small percentage of women contributing to the aerospace field means that “Houston, we have a problem”. And unfortunately aerospace is not the only industry with these numbers. Science in general was for a long time considered a male sphere. This is not a question of different standpoints: it is a fact. The problem is deeply rooted in our perception of science and its representation especially the stereotype that girls just can't do science are in the minds of our children by the time they reach junior high school.

My path wasn't an easy one either. But I have always liked my job because it was intellectually challenging, and stimulating. I have concentrated on keeping my passion alive and I was, in a way, ready to fight for reaching the goal. I believe that I contributed a lot to the industry, but I feel that the field itself is losing by unconsciously excluding female scientists from its inner circle. My achievements encourage me to go further. After having spent 30 years in the field of aerospace, I can say that joining the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) in March 2014 has been very stimulating for me and added further challenges in my career. One of UNOOSA's task is to promote the use of space-based data for improving the quality of life on Earth and this is truly rewarding. I hope my story can inspire other young women to pursue their dream career in science without any hesitation, and not only women!

GENDER AND LEADERSHIP

During my career I have always been true to myself and preferred to concentrate on the results. This might sound easy and come unexpected. But it is sometimes

“I have always been true to myself and preferred to concentrate on the results. This might sound easy, but it is sometimes underrated how important it is to focus on one's strengths as different rules, organizational issues, perceptions, expectations, can stand in the way of your success.”

underrated how important it is to focus on one's strengths as different rules, organizational issues, perceptions, expectations, can stand in the way of your success.

First of all, leadership by itself is the result of a long career journey. Professional knowledge accumulated over time, together with the qualities like integrity, commitment, understanding of the environment and ability to think outside the box when needed raise a good leader. These are qualities that are universally admired. The difference comes when we talk about the leadership approach and how the male dominated environment perceives a female leader.

The same approach by both genders can be perceived in different ways and often is misperceived. To name one example - If a man is authoritative and straightforward, he is a good manager and leader. If a woman uses the same approach, she might be perceived as aggressive. In these situations it's even more crucial to concentrate on the results, like I did in my career. This method worked for me quite well.

ON THE FUTURE OF WOMEN IN THE AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

I strongly believe women have to trust themselves and believe in their strengths. That's the primary and mandatory first step! Don't listen to those trying to inject doubts in you. Try to separate yourself from the negative buzz around and concentrate on your results. Secondly, try to follow a simple rule that I use in every situation: If I have a problem, I fix it! And do not be satisfied until the task is fully completed. Thirdly, don't only speak about rights, but also think about your duties, it helps a lot to get your priorities straight.

After all, we all need to concentrate

equally on the improvement of the human environment. Therefore we should use our best resources to participate in what the Economists call the “war of talents”. The next step now would be to encourage young women to enter the “battlefield”. And I hope I can help here.

When I discovered I was considered a role model, I first felt uncomfortable. But then I realized that I had a mission in this case. I had to help others, even if no one helped me when I was young and not knowing how to proceed and didn't know how to find my way. But following the simple principles I mentioned before, I became the professional I am today.

ON CAREER SATISFACTION

My job makes me happy everyday. Why? Probably because it satisfies me intellectually. I learn something new every day, I meet very interesting people, I have a lot of friends all over the world, I travel a lot and I'm still enjoying every aspect of it. Participation in the



aerospace industry by itself gives me a feeling of fulfillment and pride of the human achievement. It gives you a unique angle on the humanity; where you can detach yourself from the daily routine and think about the world as a whole, understand our hyper connectivity and interdependence.

I have respect for and dignity in my profession, it benefits and inspires humanity. It is important to have the same feeling when choosing your future career. Trust yourself!

ON RISK-TAKING

Every challenging job has its risks. I believe I am good in risk management. I take risks, when needed, but always use the motto: if you fail to plan, you plan to fail! The biggest risk I've taken was at the very beginning of my career, when I had to face a choice of staying at a very good position in an important company or joining the then to be established Italian Space Agency with no assurance that I could have been hired at the end. You could guess if I took that risk!

ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Everything I do brings me joy, therefore I can't say there're any sacrifices in my life. I have a son with whom I have

“I have respect for and dignity in my profession, it benefits and inspires humanity. It is important to have the same feeling when choosing your future career. Trust yourself!”

a great relationship with, even if we live in different countries. I try to find balance everywhere, and looking for it can induce stress. But the balance comes natural, if you are a balanced person.

Free time is rare. I enjoy going to the theater and Vienna is a great place to be when you're a theatre enthusiast. I spend my weekend discovering Vienna and its museums and I also like to explore the neighboring cities and towns. Sometimes I don't feel like going out and end up spending the day reading a book and watching movies. One of my friends who owns a publishing company said to me: “reading books and watching movies is like having multiple lives without leaving your couch”. I could not agree more!

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

In five years, I see myself still leading the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs as I love what I am currently doing. With more and more countries joining the industry every year, the demand for outer space cooperation and regulation increases. I see UNOOSA keeping its leading role in the promotion in the peaceful uses of outer space with more Member States and people being engaged in the process.

I feel that challenges are always waiting for us, and I'm also good at looking for them! Today I have one clear dream in front of me - I would love to be able to see the next step in space exploration, where humans will be able to go into space even more frequently, where spending time and working in outer space is nothing out of the ordinary anymore. I am sure this dream is feasible and I hope to see it coming true with my own eyes.

ON 3 THINGS YOU ALWAYS TAKE WITH YOU

On a lot of occasions I leave my home to go straight to the airport. I always bring with me my mobile gadgets (they help me to stay organized), a set of business cards (networking) and an issue of Scientific American, not to lose too much my scientist's roots. Continuous learning is key! ■



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MAGDALENA MOOK

Executive Director & CEO
International Coach Federation

“We all take risks in life and that’s why working with professional coaches is important; it should not be a matter of good fortune.”



Magdalena N. Mook is the Executive Director and CEO of the International Coach Federation (ICF). She joined ICF in 2005 and has supported ICF with extensive experience in fundraising, development, consulting and association management.

Magdalena was previously Assistant Director of National Policy and Director of Development with the Council of State Governments (CSG), a national association of state officials in all three branches of U.S. government, where she oversaw the design and implementation of development strategy for CSG, coordinated policy-specific research and implementation activities, and worked closely with the USAID’s US-Asia Environmental Program, overseeing grant programs in 11 nations of Southeast Asia. Prior to CSG, she served as program manager for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service.

Magdalena is an economist and a trained coach.

ON GENDER, CULTURE AND CAREER CHOICE

Being raised and educated in Europe and America was a great help in providing me with the perspective to deal with those issues. As an economist who had studied international management and consulting, the career opportunity in the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture offered me the opportunity to use my academic qualifications to develop my international business abilities. It also enabled me to make a positive contribution to issues of personal importance to me, such as economic empowerment and the environment, through my work coordinating technical assistance programmes and implementing special programmes in Europe and Southeast Asia. Not everyone is so fortunate, but when I joined the staff of the International Coach Federation in 2005 I realised the value of having my own mentors, role models and coaches. Ultimately, I took steps to study systemic coaching.

ON LEADERSHIP

Working on policy and development with officials from all three branches of government provided important insight into the exercise of leadership in and for government, but perhaps just as important was the period I spent at ICF as assistant executive director prior to being appointed CEO and executive director. Partnership with the ICF Global Board of Directors is key to my current role, and I like to think that my training as a professional coach plays a significant part in being able to communicate effectively and with purpose, not only to the board, but with our task forces, committees, and our members worldwide.

ON WOMAN IN THE COACHING INDUSTRY

You’re correct that coaching has successfully attracted numerous women. According to our last *Global Coaching Study*, conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers, the majority of coaches (67 percent) were female; we expect to see a similar proportion when we release the 2016 iteration of this research later this year. Women have taken leading roles in ICF from our earliest days. More than half of our past Global Board Chairs have been women, and women hold the three top leadership positions in our 2016 Board.

ON WOMAN IN LEADERSHIP

Do women lead differently? Most studies on women in

“Studies also show that women leaders achieve greater results – in other words, they do all that men do, only differently.”

the boardroom seem to suggest they do. Because coaching helps individuals tap into their own, unique strengths, our research with PricewaterhouseCoopers shows that a growing number of women are turning to this modality to achieve diverse goals, such as defining personal strengths and weaknesses and enhancing work/life balance. Studies also show that women leaders achieve greater results – in other words, they do all that men do, only differently.

ON ICF, GLOBAL EXPANSION AND DIVERSE CORPORATE CULTURE

Our continuing international research programmes, active engagement and development of ICF Chapters have been and will continue to be important. But the recognition of quality assurance and professional standards that ICF membership provides worldwide to organizations and individuals who provide and use coaches is key.

Sensitivity to geographic and cultural differences is important to any coach. In most European countries as well as Australia and North America, the issue of women on the boards of major corporations and in senior management roles is impacting the coaching agenda. In many countries, such as India, the recruitment of ICF professional coaches is being used not just to create a common language and position people for success, but to change the traditional top-down management model.

ON COACHING AND RISK-TAKING

We all take risks in life and that's why working with professional coaches is important; it should not be a matter of good fortune. As a CEO of this large global organization, along with my board colleagues, we are taking risks every day, providing a direction for the growth and evolution of professional coaching. That said, by enabling me to put into practice the professional skills and technical abilities I have gained in my career, it has been rewarding on so many levels. Being a partner in the leadership and development of an organization whose members are enabling changes in the way people work and impacting the performance of organizations is a matter of real pride.



"As a CEO of this large global organization, along with my board colleagues, we are taking risks every day, providing a direction for the growth and evolution of professional coaching."

PHOTO CREDIT: International Coach Federation

“It is a challenge for everyone in work and management if, like me, they are going to enjoy their family life as much as their career. Being able to adapt and adjust is as important as being part of an organization that values its employees and recognizes that achieving work/life balance is essential.”

ON LIFE LONG LEARNING

In a word: ‘partnership’. Professional coaches partner with individuals and organizations to assist them in realizing their goals and objectives. Being part of a truly international or global organization gives me, as well as our members, the opportunity to appreciate and learn from the way people in other cultures apply the same standards to meet the same needs. This keeps me grounded in the realities of the challenge for coaching and helps me grow as an individual and a professional. Continuous growth and ‘staying fit for purpose’ is something that is expected of coaches. I could do no different – staying abreast of trends, new techniques, research and the science of coaching provides for ongoing growth and never-ending curiosity.

ON ICF, TECHNOLOGY AND COACHING

Keeping ahead of the game is a particular and peculiar challenge for every international organization. We have to recognize the digital deficit issues that exist for different reasons in many countries and almost every society when we develop our communication and development strategies. We look at technology

as a great equalizer and support for the growth of coaching, bringing success stories to potential new coaches and new clients. Technology will continue to change the way coaching is delivered. However, it will not, in my opinion, change the impact of coaching or the core competencies. In fact, technology may enable access to coaching for those who perhaps would not be able to partake otherwise, including women in the workplace or those transitioning in and out of less and less traditional working arrangements.

ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

It is a challenge for everyone in work and management if, like me, they are going to enjoy their family life as much as their career. Being able to adapt and adjust is as important as being part of an organization that values its employees and recognizes that achieving work/life balance is essential. But as a famous adage goes, find something you love and you will never be working a day in your life.

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES AND ICF 5 YEARS FROM NOW

It is important that I continue to challenge myself in all I do; is it possible to do things better and to good effect? In an uncertain world, five years is an incredibly long time. The one certainty is that coaching can only grow in importance for individuals, communities, businesses and the public in general. Goals and dreams are plentiful. After all, the vision of ICF is to see coaching becoming an integral part of a thriving society; there is plenty to do before we can say that the job is done. I would like to think that I will be able to play a part in ensuring that professional coaching is used in all aspects of life and that ICF is recognized for the standards, quality and relevance it contributes through its members to that process.

ON WHAT I TAKE WITH ME...

A sense of humor, positive attitude and strong conviction that everything is possible. Oh, and it would not be a good day if I did not have my smartphone with me. ■



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CAROLINE FATTAL FAKHOURY

Executive Coaching
Managing Partner, Praesta

“Without influence, competence is powerless... if we refrain from engaging in politics we are effectively withdrawing ourselves as serious candidates for high corporate office.”



Named twice by Forbes Middle East – in 2014 and 2015 – as one of the “Most Powerful Arab Women in Business”, Caroline combines 20 years corporate business experience with the skills of a professional business coach.

She branched out into coaching to share her firm belief in cooperative leadership and organizational development. Caroline held management roles in Europe, Latin America and the Middle East – learning best practices from Unilever, Mondelez/Kraft, Johnson & Johnson and Gillette. She lived and worked in France, Argentina and Dubai and is now resident in Lebanon. Caroline is also a shareholder, a board member and a senior executive at Fattal Group, a multidisciplinary distribution company operating in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

ON GENDER AND CAREER CHOICES

Indeed gender and culture influenced my life. I was born and raised in the Middle East in a family of 3 daughters. The unwritten rule of male primogeniture was still vivid at that time. Thankfully, my parents did not think the same way and both encouraged the three of us to be independent and to build our own careers.

At that time – although not so long ago – not many women had roles in men-dominated environments such as in sales or boards. I was the first woman Sales Director for Unilever in Emerging Markets (MENA and Asia) and had a male-dominated sales force and customer base. After having successfully worked for multinationals in several countries, I was the first Fattal woman to join the family business management team. At a later stage, I had the chance to be the first woman to take a board seat, 4 generations after the inception of the Group in 1897. I am a true believer that women in the Middle East should get more seats on boards, especially in times of economic turmoil and political instability, where having women in the boardroom leads to better-informed discussions and more thoughtful decision-making.

ON GENDER DIVERSITY IN INDUSTRY

There are many economic findings in favor of more gender diversity in companies. Studies by Credit Suisse, McKinsey & Catalyst show that the higher the percentage of women on boards and in executive committees, the better the return on equity, on sales and on invested capital. Findings from former Booz & Co study suggest that economic advancement of women doesn't just empower women but also leads to greater overall prosperity. And there are many more that shows that diversity leads to better quality decision making and better use of the talent pool.

In the branding and marketing industry, **women are the third billion**. In the study that I mentioned previously, Booz & Co stated that “there is approximately one billion women in both developing and industrialized nations, whose economic lives have previously been stunted, underleveraged, or suppressed, and who could, over the next decade, take their place in the global economy as consumers, producers, employees and entrepreneurs”.

Women control nearly 75 percent of consumer purchasing decisions, therefore their contribution to the Marketing & Branding Industry is key.

Yet there are still 29 Fortune 1000 consumer companies with no women on their boards, according

“I am a true believer that women in the Middle East should get more seats on boards, especially in times of economic turmoil and political instability, where having women in the boardroom leads to better-informed discussions and more thoughtful decision-making.”

to research by CTPartners, a global executive search firm.

To help more women grow to the top, two parallel actions need to be done: from one side, the regulators and the corporations have to support and enable upward mobility for women, and from the other side, women have a very important role to play. There is much that women can do to improve their chances of getting promoted.

ON WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP

It takes a hell of a job for women in any industry to thrive and survive. As women, we have to push ourselves, nobody will spoon-feed us, and we have to find our way. I had the chance to have mentors and sponsors at different instances in my career.

One of my mentors was Peninah Thomson, co-author of two books: “A Woman’s Place is in the Boardroom” and “A Woman’s Place is in the Boardroom – The Roadmap”. Peninah has done extensive research on the topic of the development of senior women. She mentions a roadmap and highlights 8 important signposts to consider when thinking about women moving into senior roles. They have guided me along my professional journey.

ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

I work because I love to work, it is not because I am forced to do so and this is a blessing by itself. That being said, it is indeed a big challenge to carry all the hats at the same time (mother, spouse, professional in various businesses, member of NGOs, etc). Hence, “work-life balance” seems more a myth than a reality. At times, it is work that takes the priority and at other times, it is family that prevails especially with 4 kids under 12 years old.

The biggest challenge for me is finding time.

I am blessed to be able to count on the great help of my extended family: my mother, my sisters and my in-laws as both my husband and I travel extensively for work.

In my free time, I simply enjoy being with my family and friends and try to unwind from the city by going to the mountain.

ON RISK TAKING

I take calculated risks but when I am passionate, I become a real risk taker! The biggest risk I have taken so far in my career was to accept a mission two years ago, to turnaround an ailing affiliate in Iraq. It was a mixture of physical danger and business challenge: it took me to all the main cities and their local markets together with devising a strategy to rescue the company on all fronts: people, finance, suppliers, etc. In 18 months and despite ISIS invasion and oil prices dropping, the turnaround was achieved successfully thanks to the help and great support of my leadership team and the teams on the ground. It made me really proud!

Caroline Fattal Fakhoury
at Most Powerful Arab
businesswomen in 2015



“I work because I love to work, it is not because I am forced to do so and this is a blessing by itself. That being said, it is indeed a big challenge to carry all the hats at the same time.”



ON LIFE-LONG LEARNING

I strongly believe in continuous education: that is how I started my second career as an executive coach and went through all the leadership development courses and needed certifications. On the other hand, to become a better Board Member, I developed competencies in governance through certifications from both the International Finance Corporation and the French Institute of Directors.

One area I still want to develop is how to blend competence and influence. Like most women, I have an extreme dislike of corporate politics. Yet as I mention to my women coaching clients, it is something we have

to understand and work with if we want to achieve and remain in senior roles.

Competence and influence are both necessary factors in the assignment of power and neither is sufficient in itself. Without influence, competence is powerless. I understood it well from my own experience and the one of my coaches both male and female: if we refrain from engaging in politics we are effectively withdrawing ourselves as serious candidates for high corporate office.

The way I found best to “crack it” is to think of politics as building alliances, influencing, exercising diplomacy and creating awareness of who one is.

Finding a way to play the political game authentically is my challenge and I am still learning it day after day.

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

We are experiencing troubled times in the Middle East North Africa region. The environment has never looked more Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous. So it is quite a challenge to project myself or the corporation five years from now... I will be approaching my 50's, I hope myself and my family will be in good health and that I will be fulfilled both in my personal and professional journeys. I have had the privilege to be named twice by Forbes Middle East – in 2014 and 2015 – as one of the “Most Powerful Arab Women in Business”. This humbles me and makes me feel how blessed I am. It is an incentive for me to give even more back to the communities where I belong. The key is to work hard, persist, and believe.

I WILL NOT LEAVE HOME WITHOUT . . .

A kiss to my husband and kids, my hand bag and my smart phone! ■

“I have had the privilege to be named twice by Forbes Middle East – in 2014 and 2015 – as one of the 'Most Powerful Arab Women in Business'. This humbles me and makes me feel how blessed I am.”

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ARTIST AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR | NIGERIA

Nike Okundaye

Chief (Mrs.) Nike Monica Okundaye popularly known and called “MAMA NIKE” by her numerous fans, is a multi talented, award winning artist and social entrepreneur. She is a painter, a textile artist, weaver, and embroiderer. As a social entrepreneur and a philanthropist, she is well known for championing the cause of the neglected Nigerian rural women using art as a tool to self emancipation. Nike Centre for Art and Culture, in Osogbo has trained over 3000 young Nigerians (mainly violated and abused young women) who have gone on to earn decent living through art. Amongst her numerous awards is the 2006 “Ordine Della Stella Della Solidarieta Italiana” one of the highest Italian national awards of merit given by the government of the Republic of Italy in appreciation of her efforts in using art to address and solve the problems of Nigerian sex workers in Italy. Nike is happily married with children.



ON GENDER AND SOCIETY

You may call me a socio-customary deviant. From my early years I started to notice and question the disparity in treatment between men and women in my immediate community, my immediate family inclusive. My father extended that same disparity to me after the death of my mum. There were only two of us, I had a younger male sibling, Joseph, who has now passed away. I rightly thought then that my father liked Joseph more than I: I did all the hard domestic jobs while Joseph would play around and would still be favoured with all the good things.

When I was 13, I discovered that my father had arranged to marry me off to a rich local politician in my village. What was my father's reason for trying to force me into an early marriage? He was to use the dowry to pay for Joseph's education, and marry a wife for Joseph. At that early age, I saw that attempt to force me into child marriage as a violation of my basic right to self-determination. I saw early marriage as a bar to a successful life because I had seen suffering in the lives of young girls in my village who had been forced into early marriages. Running away from my father was a quick option to avoid early marriage and a route to a better alternative else where. That was the hardest decision I have ever taken in life. I knew that it was not going to be easy and that there would be challenges along the way.

ON THE ROAD TO ART

Yes! One of the challenges in my adolescent life was what appeared to many to be a jump into a polygamous marriage. I unwittingly became part of a polygamous family because I was promised a job as a trainee dancer/singer in a dance troupe owned by a man who became my master/husband. I was forced and tricked into marrying my master who had promised to give me care and fatherly protection, which I missed as a child.

As it happened my master/husband was one of those who benefited largely from what later became "The Osogbo Art Movement" which was put together by Mrs. Georgina Bier. My husband would sometime

“Yes! Income is key to decent living and decent living provides the necessary tools for a woman to occupy her rightful and respectable position in society.”

call upon me to do some drawings for him in his art studio because he often told me that I was naturally good at drawing, only to the envy of my co-wives. While, this ugly situation was playing out between my master/husband and I, I learnt about an Austrian artist living in Osogbo, Susanne Wenger. I had several secret meetings with Susan Wenger. My master/husband was unaware of those visits. Susanne Wenger became my mentor and encouraged my development in Batik making, a technique I discovered by accident in my youth. This development became a very successful new page in my life. The Batik making and the Yoruba Adire textile making which I learnt from my great grand mother became the pivotal event of my success in life. Living in polygamous setting was most uncomfortable but my inner mind continued to tell me to be patient and remain steadfast.

2004 by Nike Okundaye
Acrylic on canvas
© www.nikeart.com



“Art curating is all involving. I have very serious passion for art management. I think it is inborn in me. It is one of those things that I do best.”



EMERGING AS A FEMALE ARTIST

Being a female artist in Osogbo was a difficult experience because Osogbo art scene was and is still dominated by men. Being chosen as the only woman among a group of all men artists to do a tour of the USA came as a divine gift: that trip exposed me to more radical art forms such as quilting, embroidery, beads & wood decorations, painting on canvas & paper, etc. In fact, my exploit in the USA made me rethink how to employ other media in my artistic expressions, being a textile artist alone was quite restrictive. On my return from the USA, I decided to venture into painting on canvas and on paper, and finishing my works up with pen and ink. I decided to make my paintings unique by embellishing my works with traditional Yoruba Adire symbols. I did some few works with beads and did some quilts using the Yoruba Adire fabrics. My new artworks stood out as positive milestone in my life. As my work started attracting commanding interests from art collectors I started to face stiff opposition

from my male counterparts in Oshogho who complained that I was venturing into areas of art that was exclusively for men. Other allegations made to the police about me and my work were resolved but my spirit continued to tell me that I should not be distracted by the bad things people said about me if I wanted to succeed in life.

Having said all that, women artists' position in Nigeria has changed radically. With more education of women in this country, women are now able to express themselves more radically in their creativities without fear of being maligned. It has become more evident therefore, for women to leave their traditional roles. Education of women created a platform for women's emancipation in art. However, some married women artists still need the cooperation of their husbands in order to practise their profession. But some of us are lucky to marry men who are naturally understanding and cooperative. However, large scale education of our people will help to eliminate the phenomenon of restricting our women to their traditional roles of being house wives, house keepers and raising children.

ON BEING A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

Seeing young girls walking the streets everyday suffering aimlessly without hopes for the future always reminded me of my own beginnings and this drove me to my first project in Oshogbo in 1982. I then opened up my home for 20 young girls. I provided them with food and art materials and I began teaching them how to do batik, Yoruba Adire, Embroidery and traditional weaving. My aim was to provide them with the opportunity of earning decent incomes by using their hands instead of marching the streets aimlessly and sometimes exposing themselves to sexual abuses. That scenario led to my establishing a formal art centre at Osogbo in 1982. Today, I now have such centres also at Abuja, and Ogidi in Kogi State. I also established these centres in order to provide suitable studio spaces for our women to come and use free of charge to do their artworks. Any artwork

“I will advise Nigerian female artists to hold firmly to their styles and art forms. I believe that if you develop your signature art forms and people are comfortable with that art forms, your works will be looked for by those who admire your works.”

they do in the centres' workshops belong to them. Whatever money they realised from the sale of their artworks also belong to them. These centres now train young Nigerian men and women in all forms of art free of charge.

Yes! Income is key to decent living and decent living provide the necessary tools for a woman to occupy her rightful and respectable positions in the society. The saying is that, when you train and emancipate a woman you have emancipated the whole society. Knowledge is wealth. What I have always done in my life, is to provide that knowledge to our women especially our neglected rural women using art as my main tool.

ON THE SUCCESS OF NIKE ART GALLERY

Art curating is all involving. I have very serious passion for art management. I think it is inborn in me. It is one of those things that I do best. In my early age, I developed that instinct and the ability to choose what is best for me and what I think others will admire. Curating an art gallery is not different from building a good structure that can function to meet a set goal. This involves an interplay of good coordination of the few resources that are available to me. In a particular sense, the artworks in the gallery must be well arranged in such a way that they are able to tell good stories of themselves to viewers at any point in time. I always move these artworks around from time to time so that I am always able to bring to focus the beauty of the artworks.

ON THE FUTURE OF NIGERIAN ART

One of the best ways to enhance the works of Nigeria artists world wide, is for artists to continue to creat more works. Continued creativity provides golden opportunity for

artists to improve on their works. Nigerian artists must also endeavour to travel and interact with other foreign artists so that they can exchange notes with a view to developing themselves. Nigerian artists must also work hard to organise regular exhibitions of their works.

ON NIGERIAN FEMALE ARTISTS

I will advise Nigerian female artists to hold firmly to their styles and art forms. I believe that if you develop your signature art forms and people are comfortable with that art forms, your works will be looked for by those who admire your works. I shy away from those artists who change their styles irreverently. I advocate that artists should develop their art signatures and stand by it at all times. However, I appreciate that my view is debatable and open for other discussions.

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

My final goal is to build a "Nike Art Village" at Abuja on the big parcel of land I acquired from the government some few years ago. This my Art Village will feature the following; an ultra modern art gallery, an open play ground, a large ultra modern library, a 2500 seats conference centre, a traditional textile museum, a 4 state of the art cinema halls, a 1500 seats amphitheatre, a 150 luxury bedrooms guesthouse, swimming pool, clubhouse and staff quarters. Estimated cost of construction is put at \$360m. Investors are now being invited to participate in this venture that promises to be one of its kind in Africa.

I WOULD NOT LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

(a) my pen and ink (b) canvas & paper (c) my wisdom to guide me. However, my wisdom to guide me is a constant factor. ■

The Brilliant Outing, 2007
Acrylic on canvas
© www.nikeart.com





SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR | TURKEY

Ozlem Denizmen

Ozlem Denizmen is an opinion leader on women empowerment in Turkey. Ozlem is also focused on financial literacy and inclusion and entrepreneurship of women. In 2010 Denizmen launched 'Para Durumu', a multi-media platform that reaches out to the masses with the aim to increase financial literacy in Turkey. Denizmen is also the Founding Chair of the Financial Literacy and Inclusion Association, FODER (2013).

Denizmen is the first Turkish person to be a Board Member of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and was also chosen as a Young Global Leader in World Economic Forum in 2011 and "White House Delegate" at the 2010 OBAMA' Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship.

Denizmen is a graduate (Industrial Management) of Cornell University, holds an MBA, MIT Sloan School of Management. She has worked in various financial institutions, first starting out as a "Financial Analyst" at Merrill Lynch, then Garanti Investment Bank in Turkey. She is currently Head of Strategy, Dogus Group, Member of Board, Dogus Otomotiv and dogus Oto.

She is also a writer and has 3 published titles: "Kartlarınla Mucize Yarat" Create Miracle with your cards, "Cebinde Mucize Yarat" Create Miracle in Your Pocket, and "Bolluk ve Bereket için Yer Aç" Make Space for Abundance and Prosperity.

ON GENDER, CULTURE AND CAREER CHOICES

I have never shaped myself or my thoughts according to others values. During the time I was a top manager in corporate life, I declared a value most people did not even know in Turkey. I embarked on a mission to teach women, youth, children, all layers in a family, the idea of having budgets, the concept of financial literacy, with the idea that if you manage your money, you can manage your life. Since that day, via my TV programs, my magazine and newspaper writings, my books and through the seminars I have given, I have been able to reach millions of people. I knew though that raising financial literacy could not be achieved by myself alone.

So I founded the company Para Durumu and the Association FODER. Thus I had the opportunity to raise and teach this concept in a mass movement. These were all firsts for Turkey. This was also naturally a first for women.

I have always shaped myself according to my values and set goals to realise those values. Instead of focusing on social prejudices, I set my own goals. I recommend this to all women: Guide your life according to your goals; not according to the dictates of others!

ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN TO THE FINANCE INDUSTRY

According to research conducted, closing down the inequality amongst women and male workers in a country has the potential to effects its GDP by 25%. And the same research also shows that having women leaders effect equity profitability by 41%, and operation results by 56%. Which means the company's performances increases. Consequently women not being in managerial roles affect companies and countries profitability directly. On the other hand, women posses much more analytical minds, their way of assessing risk, and their leadership styles are positively influencing the financial sector. Even this, should be a reason to open doors for women in upper management roles.

ON WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE FINANCE INDUSTRY

I believe and work actively to promote the idea that women should not just be managers in the finance sector but in all sectors, for a sustainable economy. I try to do my best to solve problems this caused by inequality whenever I am confronted with it. Apart from the seminars I give, I am also a independent board member of **Equality at Work** and **Women Directors** of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies' projects. I believe that you will be successful at what you actively participate in.

"I have always shaped myself according to my values and set goals to realise those values. Instead of focusing on social prejudices, I set my own goals. I recommend this to all women: Guide your life according to your goals; not according to the dictates of others!"

ON THE FOUNDING OF PARA DURUMU, TURKEY'S FIRST FINANCIAL LITERACY INITIATIVE

Financial literacy, is a new concept for our country. In developing countries like Turkey, this concept becomes even more important. According to OECD data, financial literacy in Turkey is very low. Not having enough financial literate awareness and infrastructures affects the economic sustainability of a country. With rising financial literacy amongst individuals and families, a country's economy will be built upon a stronger foundation, and the general population will find better ways to avoid economic crises. As a result, financial literacy has a domino effect starting from the individual to the whole nation.

ON RISK-TAKING

The biggest risk I ever took was to leave the comfort of corporate life and go after what I believed in, becoming a social entrepreneur, addressing larger audiences in front of a screen.

Every choice you make in life is a risk. But if you know and believe in the risk you are taking, apart from it being motivating, its success is a given. With the choices I have taken I have had the opportunity to share what I learned with women and youth, touching many lives in the process. Now I can easily say I'm happy to have taken that risk.

ON LEADERSHIP AND SUCCESS

I believe the most important leadership qualification a leader should have is belief, more than overall capability. Every move you make should be realistic and reasonable. As the leader, you should first believe in the topic that you are preaching about. If you don't, no-one else will. That's

“I believe the most important leadership qualification a leader should have is belief, more than overall capability. Every move you make should be realistic and reasonable. As the leader, you should first believe in the topic that you are preaching about. If you don’t, no-one else will.”

why I am always on platforms that represent my beliefs. This has consequently taken me into leadership in those topics. And my leadership style is such that I am the person who brings all parties together, acting as a bridge between them, making them talk and giving them responsibility.

ON WORK LIFE BALANCE

“There’s always enough time, as long as you use it correctly.” This proverb from Goethe is not just a saying for me. I live with this understanding. Time is not a matter to be accumulated but a matter to be handled sparingly. If I use my time correctly and meaningfully, I have enough time to handle all I mean to finish without problems. I always know where and what I will be doing a month later. I like to spend time with my family, when I’m not working. Then I concentrate on topics that feed me physically and mentally.

(From Left) Ozlem Denizmen, Founding Chairwoman of Financial Literacy and Inclusion Association (FODER) has the leading financial literacy experts in Turkey; “3Kumbara” financial literacy education program aims to teach children about money management, saving and managing their budget from an early age.

Photo Courtesy:
ozlemdenizmen.com

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

My biggest dream in life is to make all women in the world financial literate and that women and men work in equal conditions. I see this as a movement starting from Turkey, spreading in the world. This is a never-ending story and my mission will not end until the goal is reached. In five years time, I see myself as considerably having achieved this goal.

ON MY WAY OUT...

I actively use social media here. So the first thing I would take is my smart phone, you can manage all of these topics with the technology offered with them. As an individual with financial literacy as a mission, I would be sure that I have enough money with me. I may have a very busy schedule, but I always create time to read so I always have the book I’m reading at the moment when I leave the house. ■





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LESLIE PRATCH

Founder & CEO
Pratch & Co

“I am an independent thinker and a creative risk taker . . . It was a big risk to develop and validate my own system . . . I took that leap because I believe my Active Coping Assessment is the only system that really works.”



Leslie Pratch is the founder and CEO of Pratch & Company. A clinical psychologist and MBA, she advises organizations on the human dimensions of executing corporate strategy. She specializes in helping private equity investors and Boards of Directors of public and privately held companies identify whether executives being considered to lead companies have the psychological resources and personality strengths needed to succeed.

pratchco.com
leslie@pratchco.com

ON EDUCATION AND CAREER PROGRESSION

Over the past two decades I have evaluated 566 prospective business leaders for 84 organizations. My journey was no accident. I fashioned the tools and developed the capability to do this work from graduate degrees at multiple universities. I sensed that the ideas that intrigued me just *had* to be valuable to others, just had to impact their success. I just had to figure out how to put them in play

As a graduate psychology student at the University of Chicago, I established a talent program for high potential professionals at Arthur Andersen. When I added the study of clinical psychology, I discovered I had a knack for using sophisticated clinical techniques to assess personality. To use these techniques outside of research I'd need a license in Clinical Psychology. I transferred to Northwestern University Medical School; I received a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. My Ph.D. dissertation used data from research I was conducting at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business. My research developed a psychological approach for predicting the emergence of leaders from a high performing group. After graduate school, I worked with State Farm Insurance Company where I developed a competency framework for the whole organization. From this work I developed my own executive competency framework. It is the foundation of the work I do today. I added an MBA concentrating in finance and competitive strategy from the University of Chicago. This gave me the tools to understand the issues my clients and their candidates face.

BUILDING PRATCH & COMPANY

The world is changing ever faster. Organizations need leaders who have not only strengths in coping with change but welcome and embrace constant change. That is not so much a skill as an orientation to the world; to seek change as an opportunity, not to defend against it as a threat. This mindset demands an open perspective and a stable mentality.

Every person's mind develops its own unique structure: its



Leslie also recently published a book, *Looks Good on Paper?: Using In-Depth Personality Assessments to Predict Leadership Performance* (Columbia University Press; 2014) in which she shares insights from more than twenty years of evaluating executives and offers an empirically based approach to identify executives who will be effective within organizations – and to flag those who will ultimately very

likely fail – by evaluating aspects of personality and character that are hidden beneath the surface. She compares candidates with impressive careers and tries to determine which ones are likely to act with consistently high integrity and exhibit sound, timely judgment when faced with unanticipated business problems. Central to effective leadership is a psychological quality called “active coping,” which she defines and explores by referencing case studies, historical figures, and her own scholarly work.

grooved patterns; its second-nature behavior; each contributes to activity without conscious effort. *Active Coping* is my term for the structure that creates simultaneous stability and openness to change. That is why active coping is integral to my model for predicting business leadership. Making predictions about leaders, whether executives or politicians, reduces the risk of failure in leadership. Pratch & Company identifies strong and competent business leaders and separates these candidates from future “time bombs.”

Over the years, I’ve worked with colleagues who learned to deliver elements of Pratch and Company’s Active Coping AssessmentSM services. As the economy and issues in my personal life change, I practice some active coping of my own.

ON GENDER AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

It was Keynes who told us that knowledge is not subject to the law of diminishing marginal returns. I created an opportunity to get paid to do what became Pratch & Company’s foundational research. My clients and I are each gaining a healthy return on our investment.

In 1990 I submitted a proposal to the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business (now Booth) to lead research to predicting effective leadership. Booth had a problem: How could it reliably select students who would emerge even stronger from a rigorous program for developing leaders but avoid choosing those who would not hold up under those pressures?

Booth appointed me Principal Investigator to conduct longitudinal research into the relationship among coping style,

“Active Coping is my term for the structure that creates simultaneous stability and openness to change. That is why active coping is integral to my model for predicting business leadership. Making predictions about leaders, whether executives or politicians, reduces the risk of failure in leadership.”

motivation and leadership effectiveness. The project lasted four years and studied two elite cohorts of Booth MBA students. The school added a team of statisticians and assistants. The findings supported my hypotheses and were replicated and published in peer-reviewed academic journals. This research validated both the model and methodology. More to the point, it gave me the confidence to take the *Active Coping Assessment System*SM to the Street. I incorporated Pratch & Company and I have funded operations with profits from the business.

You asked about gender bias. Its ever-present rumble was a powerful motivator. Validated legitimacy of my ideas drove me to intense research of the subject matter so that I could compete on equal terms in the marketplace. Forging ahead made sense – even “dancing backwards in heels.”



“I want to see human capital assessment and management become an ingrained part of the plan for creating value when private equity firms are contemplating buying, then building, a company.”

“MY LEADERSHIP STYLE IS COLLABORATIVE BUT DIRECTIVE WHEN NECESSARY. PRATCH AND COMPANY’S CULTURE IS TRUST-BASED. INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY, INTELLECTUAL HONESTY, COLLABORATION, TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, MUTUAL SUPPORT AND RESPECT CONSTITUTE THE BACKBONE OF OUR VALUES.”

ON CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Empathy and making accurate predictions are critical. I track the results of all my work; I follow the decisions that emanate from my work and evaluate the success of candidates selected. I review what it tells me about what Pratch & Company must adjust. In addition to my client activity, I continue to publish aspects of my research to contribute to the field. *The Journal of Private Equity* and *Harvard Business Review*, for example, have published my articles, which emphasize not only the academic aspects of my work but also translate it into its implications for leadership selection.

ON RISK TAKING

I am an independent thinker and a creative risk taker when it comes to work that will produce meaningful results for my clients and me. It was a big risk to develop and validate my own system for assessing executives to predict leadership performance. It was a leap of faith to stake my career on it. I took that leap because I believe my *Active Coping Assessment* is the only system that really works. Failed leaders litter the corporate countryside, litter that is expensive to clean up. Thanks to Pratch & Company’s *Active Coping* approach, my clients have avoided costly failures.

ON GENDER AND THE CONSULTING INDUSTRY

Throughout my entire education and career, females have been in the minority. I’m used to a four to one gender ratio. Being a thought leader gives me legitimacy and I enjoy sitting round the business leadership table with both males and females.

ON LEADERSHIP

My leadership style is collaborative but directive when necessary. Pratch and Company’s culture is trust-based. Intellectual curiosity, intellectual honesty, collaboration, transparency, accountability, mutual support and respect constitute the backbone of our values.

ON COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Pratch & Company’s competitive edge resides in its proprietary, *scientifically proven* assessment system for predicting superior leadership performance. Private equity investors and their

consultants use past performance as a key predictor of future performance. But past performance shows how a leader met the demands of the past. It says nothing about how that leader will handle the challenges to come, how he will open his mind to and even welcome unpredictable circumstances, whether he will remain stable in unforeseen conditions. Personally, I have exploited an MBA alongside clinical skills. I understand at a sophisticated level what my clients are trying to do with their companies and investments: I can understand quickly and think critically about their investment thesis; understand the strategy of their firm; and distill the implications into a specification for the tasks at hand for the candidates we are evaluating. Having a strong understanding of business sits me firmly in the chair as a business discussion partner, not solely as a skilled psychologist.

ON WORK LIFE BALANCE

My friendship circles revolve around ping pong, reading, music, and relaxing at the beach. I meditate, get six hours of sleep, and run or swim daily.

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

My goal is to see that private equity investors exploit all critical variables for their success. No savvy investor makes an investment and then reviews it only when his bank balance turns negative. Such an investor monitors financial health constantly. But many private equity investors will hire a team of executives and only check on team progress when they discover that something is working poorly. But they could monitor human capital health in real time and make sure its vital signs indicate a strong and healthy body. I want to see human capital assessment and management become an ingrained part of the plan for creating value when private equity firms are contemplating buying, then building, a company. I want to continue to help my clients develop more productive relationships with their portfolio company executives and help them work better internally as integrated teams leading private equity firms.

THREE THINGS YOU WILL NOT LEAVE HOME WITHOUT

My breathing and my occasional focus on it, my eyeglasses, and a copy of my favourite poem. ■

Uncover what will make a senior executive succeed or fail.

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Understand whether your key executives will successfully cope with – or fail to cope with – unexpected challenges. Understand if they will capitalize on – or miss – unexpected opportunities.

Understand their minds and how they work.





Empowering Women through the Transformative Power of Coaching

Coaching has long been lauded as one of the most transformative learning interventions, and research indicates that women derive a host of benefits from partnering with a coach.

At the start of the new millennium, the UN set out aspirations for a 15-year journey for the development of civil society. A top three goal was “the empowerment of women” that focussed on the development of women in emerging economies, taking a bottom up approach with equal rights and education as the key drivers. In the rest of the world, concern over the lack of women in senior decision-making positions appeared endemic with many countries introducing various forms of positive action, legislation or quotas.

In the millennium year, only the USA regularly monitored the proportion of women on top corporate boards. In 2015, at least 12 countries were regularly reviewing the gender balance of their top boards. France, Norway, Spain, Iceland and Finland have taken a legislated route. By March 2016 the goal for French companies is 20% female directors within three tiers and 40% within six. Private and unlisted companies have nine years to reach the 40% mark.

The US, Australia, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Poland, Canada and Austria have taken alternative action to achieve the same goal. In 2010, a Commission was set up in the UK under the Chairmanship of Lord Mervyn Davies to address the issue and report on progress. At that time women made up 12.5% of the top UK

company boards. A goal of 25% of female directors on top company boards (FTSE 100) by 2015 was set, effectively doubling the number.

According to the UK Commission’s 2015 report, women were now 23.5% of the directors on the boards of UK FTSE 100 companies. However, as the report notes, these are primarily non-executive directors; only 8.6% of executive directors are women. Addressing the pipeline of women in senior management remains an imperative.

The same report shows that growing the talent pipeline involves myriad company initiatives to identify and invest in talented women. These programs are designed to support talented women in large and small businesses and organisations keen to improve gender diversity at senior levels.

Coaching has long been lauded as one of the most transformative learning interventions: the 2014 Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development Learning & Development (CIPD L&D) Survey found that three quarters of organisations now offer either coaching or mentoring to employees, and believe it offers a particularly impressive ROI. At Barclays Bank to actively support women moving into senior leadership roles, the organisation’s senior executives work with individuals to provide feedback on development areas, advise on skill building, and offer coaching, as well as guidance on the promotion process. They assist in promoting candidate visibility and connecting them with other senior leaders. Between 2013 and 2014,



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20%

female directors within three tiers and

40%

female directors within six tiers

Survey found that **three quarters of organisations now offer either coaching or mentoring to employees**, and believe it offers a particularly impressive ROI.

RESEARCH INDICATES THAT WOMEN DERIVE A HOST OF BENEFITS FROM PARTNERING WITH A COACH. BY NURTURING STRONG COACHING CULTURES, ORGANISATIONS CAN ENSURE THAT WOMEN HAVE ACCESS TO COACHING WHEN AND WHERE IT'S NEEDED.

the programme contributed to over 140 promotions of women to Director and Managing Director levels.

Research indicates that women derive a host of benefits from partnering with a coach. According to the 2014 Global Consumer Awareness Study commissioned by the International Coach Federation (ICF) and conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, women bring a variety of goals to coaching engagements, including optimising work performance, increasing self-confidence, expanding career opportunities and managing work/life balance. By nurturing strong coaching cultures, organisations can ensure that women have access to coaching when and where it's needed.

Creating a strong coaching culture takes more than just good intentions. Senior coaching leaders from the BBC and Visa Europe have explained how they have made coaching an integral part of their organisations.

Know why you're coaching, according to Claire Molin, senior manager in Visa's organisational development and design team. "You need to be very clear about the reasons you are doing coaching. Every organisation will be very different in style and that includes how well coaching will sit within it."

At the BBC there are 80 coaches available at any one time to offer both leadership and career coaching. The broadcaster will soon trial coaching for parents returning to the workplace, and would like coaching capabilities to be recognised more formally in the appraisal process.

According to Magdalena Mook, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of ICF, "We've long known that coaching is a powerful modality that helps individuals unlock their personal and professional potential. Now

a growing body of evidence demonstrates that coaching can be equally powerful at the organisational level." Building a Coaching Culture, a benchmarking research study from ICF and the Human Capital Institute, shows that organisations with strong coaching cultures report higher revenues and employee engagement rates than peer organisations without strong coaching cultures.

The ICF/HCI study suggests that, although coaching takes hold in organisations thanks to the buy-in of a well-respected senior leader who participates in the coaching relationship, the ultimate goal should be to provide coaching across all levels of the organisation to individuals of all ages and both genders.

Organisations with strong coaching cultures have achieved their goals by using a combination of external coach practitioners, internal coach practitioners and managers and leaders across the organisation trained to use coaching skills as part of their management role. With external coach practitioners, rigorous hiring practices are essential. Familiarity with and understanding of the culture of an organisation, or knowledge of an industry sector, may be important in selecting a coach. So, too, is the assurance of the standards that are part and parcel of ICF affiliation. ICF members must complete at least 60 hours of coach-specific training and pledge to uphold a stringent code of ethics. ICF-credentialed coaches fulfil additional, rigorous education and experience requirements.

There is no escaping the maxim, "If you can't measure it... you can't manage it." Make a strong investment and measure the returns. Being clear about the expectations for coaching outcomes is only the start. Developing a coherent means of measuring coaching effectiveness is as essential as communicating the goals for coaching across the organisation.

Fifteen years on, the bottom up approach of the Millennium Goals for empowering women meets the top down approach for increasing the numbers of women on corporate boards and in senior executive management positions. It is a junction where support to leadership through coaching is the pipeline to achieving and changing the goal. ■

WOMEN'S GOALS FOR COACHING ENGAGEMENTS:



optimising
work performance



increasing
self-confidence



expanding
career opportunities

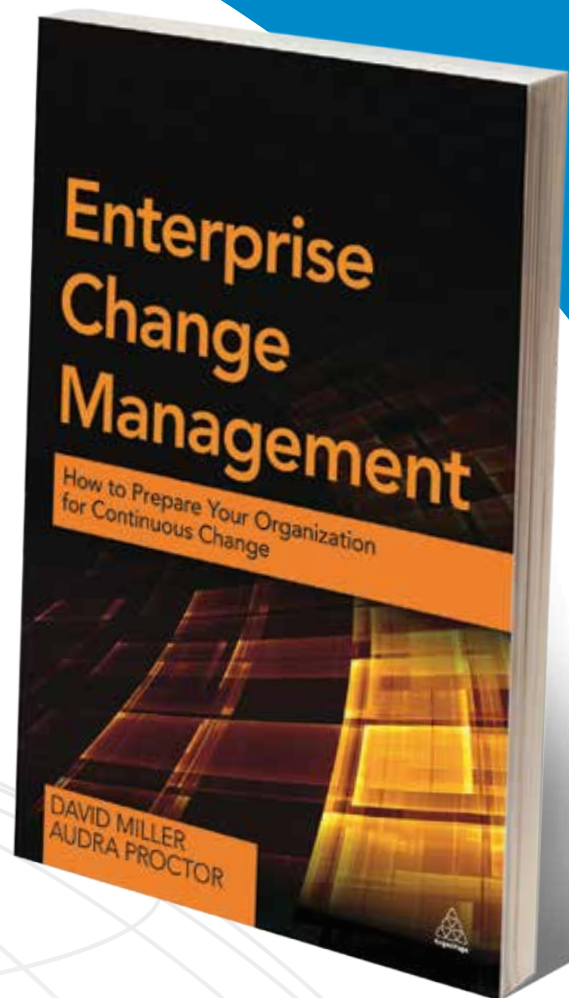


managing
work/life balance

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PEACEBUILDER AND POET-PERFORMER | INDIA

Rama Mani

Peacebuilder and poet-performer Dr. Rama Mani has been called 'a catalyst of transformation', 'a cosmic agent of awakening', and 'an evocateur of the possible future'. Rama combines art with politics. She weaves poetry and theatre into her public appearances to bring vividly to life the challenges of global peace and security, and to activate diverse audiences around the world to become co-creators of positive change. Rama is the Founder of Theatre of Transformation and Co-Founder of Rising Women Rising World. She is a Councilor of the World Future Council and Senior Research Associate of the University of Oxford's Centre for International Studies.

See www.rama-mani.com; www.youtube.com/RamaManiNews and www.facebook.com/RamaManiNews, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sat1YQy1Zso



Rama Mani at Global Female
Leaders Summit Berlin April 2015
(Photo by Thies Ibold)

ON GENDER, ROLES AND CHOICES

Both my gender and my culture influenced my choice. Growing up in India, I was torn between love and horror for my culture. I admired the diversity and depth of our ancient Indian culture, rooted in universality. Yet, I was outraged constantly by the injustices imposed in the name of this culture against women and so-called 'untouchables' or lower castes and indigenous people. From a young age, I was determined to do everything I possibly could to end injustice against women and the vulnerable. I realised that this would require a combination of the *power of art* to move hearts and minds and to revitalise our culture, and the *power of politics* to change unjust policies and practices, and make our society more compassionate.

ON THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN POLITICS AND ARTS

Well, when it came to decision time for my studies, I chose to pursue the route of politics rather than art, as it seemed a more direct way of equipping myself to be a change maker. My studies pushed me further away from art, and pulled me more irrevocably down the political path. And it was my work as a peacebuilder in warzones across Africa, and my academic research and writings on genocide prevention, culture and justice that reunited me with my passion for art! My academic and professional background gave me the vital first-hand experience at the grassroots level, as well as the expertise at the global policy level that now fuel my artistic work, and enable my art to be taken seriously by decision-makers, scholars and the wider public alike.

ON SUCCESS

My philosophy as a political artist or an artist who seeks to catalyse transformation is twofold: First, 'May the Beauty we love be what we do', to quote Rumi. Second, that true art is not about 'I' and 'mine' but about 'Us' and 'Ours'. Let me explain why these are so important for me and, I believe, for art and for society at large today.

The first part of my philosophy is directly inspired by the Sufi poet Rumi who wrote: *'May*



the beauty we love be what we do!' If each of us finds the way to link our purpose to our passion, it transforms us personally as well as the world around us. I discovered that true art, like true humanity, is born out of personal and collective crisis, out of the strength that emerges from suffering, out of the power that emerges from pain. This is what makes art transformative. This is what makes us fully human.

The second part of my philosophy is echoed in a simple Sanskrit saying: *'Id ne mama'*, which means *'This is not mine'*. A true artist is not the creator of his/her work, but simply the conduit through whom art flows. Art is inspired by something beyond us.

In my experience, the art that touches and transforms individuals and entire societies is not about 'I' but about 'Us'. It speaks to and for an entire people.

Rama Mani at TedX Covent Garden London May 2015

“Through my transformative art, I’m aspiring to shift the old paradigm that governed politics, economics and society so far and destroyed human life: ‘the love of power’ to the new paradigm of ‘the power of love’.”



Dr. Rama Mani at World Investment Forum, UN, Geneva, 15 October 2014

“It is by taking risks that we discover ourselves – whole realms of ourselves that were hidden away as they were never pulled out of their comfort zone and challenged before.”

ON BEING A ‘CATALYST OF TRANSFORMATION’.

It is the transformative capacity of my art that brings me deepest joy and satisfaction.

What moves me is the personal impact my performances have on diverse audiences from totally different cultures and backgrounds. Whether decision makers or the lay public, whether refugees or humanitarian workers, women or men, young or old, audiences everywhere connect deeply to the real-life people and situations I bring to life on stage.

Audiences realise that these ‘distant strangers’ that I bring to life in quick succession on stage are actually familiar kin. In fact, ‘they’ are ‘us’. And like them, we have the capacity to face difficulty and reshape our lives and our world. From audiences they become active participants, as they feel evoked to activate their own creativity to find innovative and humane solutions to the problems we face.

ON RISK TAKING

Yes! It is by taking risks that we discover ourselves – whole realms of ourselves that were hidden away as they were never pulled out of their comfort zone and challenged before. And

it is by trying and even failing that we learn and grow.

Perhaps the biggest risk in my life is the one I am taking now, of stepping out of the comfort zone of my earlier activist, academic and policy work and mobilising the power of art and theatre to redefine power itself. Through my transformative art, I’m aspiring to shift the old paradigm that governed politics, economics and society so far and destroyed human life: ‘the love of power’ to the new paradigm of ‘the power of love’. And I seek to do this by raising it directly with decision makers as well as with the general public, so they can question and redefine it for themselves. To some this may seem risky, but to me it is essential, as it is what the world needs and what most humans long for. And art is such a powerful vehicle for this.

ON WORK LIFE BALANCE

When ‘the beauty you love is what you do’, it is easier to balance life and work because everything is interconnected, because everything you do energises and replenishes you, because you find beauty and

“When ‘the beauty you love is what you do’, it is easier to balance life and work because everything is interconnected, because everything you do energises and replenishes you, because you find beauty and humanity everywhere and in everything you do.”

humanity everywhere and in everything you do. Nevertheless, I must mention two factors that help me tremendously in finding balance. The first is nature and the second is love.

Art requires an inner-oriented time, when you create a new piece, and an outward-oriented time, when you share it with the world. To create, I have found that I simply *have* to spend time in nature. We have chosen to live in a very simple and simply beautiful, rural area in the Jura mountains in France, between Geneva and Lyon.

The second factor is love! I am very fortunate to share my life with my soul mate, who is equally passionate about nature, culture, art and the human spirit.

ON “RISING WOMEN RISING WORLD”

The inspiration was simply this: when my two incredible co-founders – Professor Jean Houston (www.jeanhouston.org) and Dr Scilla Elworthy (www.scilla.elworthy.com) and I came together, we felt that we are entering a new moment in history unlike any before. And we felt that this historic moment needed women to come together around a common purpose. We now need to articulate women’s visions for the future, and their strategies for taking us from here to there. Based on their own experiences of setbacks and breakthroughs, women have the courage and conviction to take us from the violence and destruction of the present to the future of collective wellbeing we long for. Our uniting vision is to ‘co-create a world that works for all’. Our experience shows us that what is essential to bring about outer change in the world is to build our inner resources, and this is a considerable focus of our efforts. A major upcoming highlight is an exciting ‘Femme Q Summit’ in Berlin featuring Rising Women Rising World, on 8-9 March 2016: see www.risingwomenrisingworld.org

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

It would be my dream in five years to see Theatre of Transformation become a powerful global movement, as more and more people at all levels of society, engage in this form of participatory and purposeful art, activate their creativity and become co-creators of positive change.

My other dream in five years is to use Theatre of Transformation as a vehicle to catalyse the paradigm shift I spoke of earlier: from the destructive ‘love of power’ to the restorative ‘power of love’, in politics, in economics, and even in our personal lives.

Through Theatre of Transformation I offer myself, as a catalyst to realise this dream by activating the collective power of our creativity. And I invite you all to call on me wherever I can be of service! With me you will also tap into an exciting global pool of my creative collaborators, around the world – artists, musicians, dancers, scholars and activists with a shared passion for transformation. ■

Rama Mani at Global Female Leaders Summit Berlin April 2015 (Photo by Thies Ibold)



ARTIST | VIETNAM

Tiffany Chung

Tiffany Chung is one of Vietnam's most respected and internationally active contemporary artists. Based in Saigon, Chung has received wide acclaim for her exquisite cartographic drawings and multi-media practice that explore spatial and sociopolitical transformations interwoven with the lingering resonances of historical trauma. She was awarded the 2013 Sharjah Biennial Prize and featured in 2015 Venice Biennale main exhibition *All The World's Futures*.



Tiffany Chung's *Roaming with the Dawn — Snow Drifts, Rain Falls, Desert Wind Blows* 2012.
Comprising of 4000 hand blown glass animals crafted by artisans in Ho Chi Min City.

ON GENDER AND CHOICES

I majored in photography and art as soon as I started college. My decision to choose art as a career was affirmed during graduate school, when I became more convinced of how art could influence and shape culture and society. It was also a challenge that I wanted to take on – to have my voice as a woman artist in the art world largely dominated by successful male artists.

ON SAN ART AND DEVELOPING CONTEMPORARY ART IN VIETNAM

My family migrated to the US from Vietnam as refugees after the war. One of the biggest challenges when I first came back to Vietnam in 2000 was the lack of an art infrastructure and a supporting community that would come together and actively engage in the socio-political issues of a fast changing, post-war society. So I co-founded San Art with Dinh Q. Le and two other artists in 2007. Under the leadership of Executive Director Zoe Butt and our board members, San Art has been playing an active role in promoting critical thinking concerning interdisciplinary practice and knowledge of art within our community through a series of exhibitions, a residency program and an education program called ‘Conscious Realities.’ San Art has become a key meeting point that introduces a broad array of international visitors (artists, curators, researchers, collectors and much more) to the local artistic community. San Art would not be where it is today were it not for a select handful of international foundations and private individuals who have supported us in our struggle to support artists in a country with no financial support for contemporary art.

ON MENTORING THE NEXT GENERATION OF VIETNAMESE ARTISTS

We have come a long way in the past fifteen years. Young Vietnamese artists these days are eager to learn and practice contemporary art, despite the lack of critical thinking in the education system here. With San Art programs mentioned above, we aim to continue supporting and equipping artists with knowledge beyond art; to experiment beyond their training in the plastic arts, to collaborate and

“I wake up every day grateful for being able to do what I do and looking forward to materialize my research and ideas. Living in Vietnam with its current political state, I want my work to function as a protest against this ‘politically-driven historical amnesia’ . . .”

research within other disciplines of research and innovation. In turn, a number of artists have been active in the region and even in the international art scene. I hope young Vietnamese artists understand the most important aspects of this field of work are the genuine interest in issues that matter to society, and the tenacity to keep it going; that our quest for knowledge would take us on a journey rather than just to arrive at a destination. I certainly hope they can sustain their practice by developing a critical voice that demands changes in our society and especially in the education system here, which [in the past forty years] has been deliberately promoting what I call ‘politically-driven historical amnesia.’

ON BEING AN ARTIST

I wake up everyday grateful for being able to do what I do and looking forward to materialize my research and ideas. Living in Vietnam with its current political state, I want my work to function as a protest against this ‘politically-driven historical amnesia’ that I spoke earlier. It is important to encourage the viewer to enter my work through its exciting visual, before realizing the heavy conceptual framework.

As I explore issues of urban progress and transformation, the link to history and geopolitics is inevitable. My academic and ethnographic research leads to excavating and remapping certain unrecorded or denied



histories in countries currently under dictatorship, and those with colonial or imperial legacies. Being given a platform such as the Venice Biennale 2015 has made me think more about my responsibility as an artist. How do I, a former refugee, contribute to the on-going dialogue on global refugee issues? And continuing from this platform, how do my studies of the Vietnam Exodus history inform the development of asylum policies to be applied towards the Syrian refugees and those from other countries? How does my work analyse past experiences and provoke thoughts that lead to the demand for better changes?

ON SUCCESS

If success means the satisfaction of doing the work you love and being able to contribute to society, then the two most important key factors

are having genuine interests in social issues that matter to your own as well as the global community, and the tenacity to keep working, knowing that your work can make a difference however small it is. Perhaps I have been surviving in the art industry because I pay very little attention to what people in the art are currently interested in but instead keep myself occupied with research projects that allow me to unpack and learn from history and world geopolitics. I am just happy to have art as a tool and a platform to explore and discuss things that I am deeply concerned about. It is such a luxury.

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

There are always challenges that need to be overcome and dreams to be fulfilled. I will feel so blessed to be able to continue doing this work in the years to come. ■

Tiffany Chung participated in 'Our Land/Alien Territory', an exhibition that brings together artists from different countries and global regions whose work investigates the relation between space and politics at Central Exhibition Hall Manege, Moscow. (Sept. 16 - Oct. 4, 2015)

An impressionist painting of a vast, colorful field with yellow, orange, and blue flowers. A person wearing a hat and dark clothing is walking through the field in the lower right. In the background, there are trees and a cloudy sky. The overall style is soft and painterly.

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SHERILYN CASIANO

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“When I was about 13, my mother was working for an accounting firm and when I told her that’s what I wanted to do, she brought home some teaching materials – a guide and a workbook for teaching accounting.”



Sherilyn Casiano is the Founder and CEO of S.I. Williams Wealth Management, LLC, in New York City. She holds an MBA from Columbia University. On her first summer job at the age of 14, she wound up balancing the books for the island of St. Croix in the US Virgin Islands – the first time in anyone’s memory that the books had been balanced. She was a key member of KKR’s personal wealth group for the New York general partners, including one of the billionaire founders.

She has headed her own profitable multi-family office for 14 years. She teaches financial management at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), as well as a financial literacy course for the Harlem Empowerment Zone.

ON JOURNEY INTO NUMBERS

I always wanted to be an accountant. Numbers really fascinated me. Also, my mom was very entrepreneurial and supportive. When I was about 13, my mother was working for an accounting firm and when I told her that’s what I wanted to do, she brought home some teaching materials – a guide and a workbook for teaching accounting. So that summer, while my brothers and sisters were all out playing, I was inside going through the exercises in the workbook. I still remember the excitement I’d experience when I’d figure out a problem which I had been stuck on! You go from the frustration of two columns of numbers just not matching, trying repeatedly to figure out the error... then you finally find it, the columns match, and in an instant, you’re on top of the world! That’s what I call the exquisite integrity of accounting. The numbers don’t lie. Certainly people can lie with numbers, or make up something that looks legit. But the beauty of accounting is that once someone runs those numbers through the real process, the truth comes out. The numbers will ALWAYS tell the truth if you let them. So, in any case, by the time I got the job that next summer, working in the Finance Department of St. Croix, I already knew how to do reconciliations.

ON THE FOUNDING OF S.I. WILLIAMS WEALTH MANAGEMENT LLC IN NEW YORK CITY

That was the family entrepreneurial gene kicking in. Beside my mom’s many businesses, other relatives owned the island’s largest bakery, and preceding generations had entrepreneurs in various kinds of businesses. So I think it was only natural for me to want to start my own business. Also, I thought what we were doing for the partners at *Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co.’s* (“KKR”) was pretty cool and very different from what I was taught in accounting school. In any case, by the time I was ready to go out on my own, we had really developed a reliable process for managing the partners’ wealth that let us give them a level of detail and insight that they had never had from even the best outside vendors. It was my conviction that there were many other people with complex wealth needs, who could benefit from my experience, expertise, and the system I had developed in my work at KKR.

ON CREATING DWIMBS – THE DYNAMIC WEALTH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT BUSINESS SOLUTION

Well, the Dynamic Wealth Information Management

“I looked at everything available on the market that claimed to be for the Family Office. But to my surprise and then my frustration, there was nothing that was designed to make the administrative tasks any easier. All the products were designed for the type of Family Office dominated by an Investment adviser/manager – to make *their* job easier.”

Businesses Solution is a software application I created to automate my Dynamic Wealth Management System. I already had the system in place, but I was looking for software that would make the job easier. Delivering the kind of comprehensive and detailed reporting provided through my system is very labor-intensive. I used to have to pull information from many different applications, and use 3 or 4 others to combine and produce reports that showed anything more than just invested assets. But most people's wealth is *not* in the market; it's in various forms of hard assets, some liquid, most not very liquid at all. My system brings *all* the information related to an asset into one place, so that it's readily available when needed. For instance, for a piece of art, a Picasso, my system brings information not just relating to the purchase price, but additional information that is relevant and important to that asset into one place, such as ownership, market value, insurance value and policy, location of the asset etc.

So an essential part of my system is to collect all such information and retain it together, in one place, so you don't have to search in a dozen places and call a dozen people to put all of it together when the client asks for it.

I looked at everything available on the market that claimed to be for the Family Office. But to my surprise and then my frustration, there was nothing that was designed to make the administrative tasks any easier. All the products were designed for the type of Family Office dominated by an Investment adviser/manager – to make *their* job easier. So it could show you the balance in portfolios over 50 mutual funds, but was useless for trying to track the costs and insurance for the staff and animals at the horse farm. Out of desperation I hired a set of programmers to create something to MY specifications. Designed for the Family Office by a Family Office Owner/Manager. That's how the Dynamic Wealth Information Management Business Solution – **DWIMBS** – was born.

ON WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT DWIMBS

DWIMBS moves the focus for effective wealth management from strategy to High Quality Information (“HQI”) and

evidence-based decision making. In the 2008 crisis, all the elegant and clever strategies of the best in the business failed. “Balanced portfolios” – that darling of investment adviser wisdom – were clobbered as the crisis hit all sectors. The few who, like my clients, or Goldman Sachs, were getting HQI and paying attention to the real numbers, parked their money on the side, and waited for the smoke to clear... and then snapped up bargains.

In addition, **DWIMBS** is the first software created to specifically address the desire and need of High Net Worth Individuals and their Families for true control, the needs of the Family Office for operational efficiency and ease of creating accurate, strategic reporting, and the needs of advisers to get relevant and accurate information that empowers them in their work for the wealthy family. No other product serves all three groups equally well, the way **DWIMBS** does.

Lastly, it is built around a proven and reliable methodology and process that is unique in the wealth management arena, one that addresses all aspects of one's wealth, *not just* invested assets.

ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

For me there have been three key points to balancing work and family life.

- Straight talk with the kids
- Setting boundaries and responsibilities
- Giving options and choices

Being a widowed mother of 2 young boys, I felt it was very important to be even more involved in raising them. I did not want a nanny to replace me as their mom, as I've seen happen in other families. So it's been essential to make my children part of the balancing process, if you will. The first step in doing that was to speak frankly with them about how our family life was different from that of their friends, since there was no father in our home. I did not want to pretend everything was perfect or that they have no responsibilities. I felt it was important that they understand my responsibilities as both a business owner/entrepreneur and as a single parent, now that my husband was no longer there to share the duties of raising them as in the past. I made sure that they understood what work I do, why it takes many uninterrupted

hours, and requires frequent meetings or phone conferences. As a result, whenever I've needed them to step up and do what they need to do, they have.

The second part is making sure they know they are part of a family and as such have a right to make their own wishes and opinions known. However, I've also made sure they know that there is only one adult in the family – only one person in charge. And I remind them frequently. They have specific responsibilities such as completing their homework each day, which I still supervise. And nowadays they are often responsible for making their own breakfast or starting dinner.

In line with that, the third key I think is giving them choices. I'll often say "Okay, you guys decide. Here are your options." I usually stick to 2 options. Never more than 3. Other times I'll have to say "There are NO options here – you Have to do this."

My boys each have their own calendars and I make sure I am synchronized with them so that I can manage my scheduling to account for my parental responsibilities, such as school functions and other duties.

That's how I balance my family life.

I am also blessed with a large family who is very supportive. For instance, I have a nephew who comes over regularly to take my boys to Central Park, play video games and sports like basketball. This has provided the kind of male bonding and sense of belonging to our extended family that they needed. One of my sisters, who lives in Florida, is also the project coordinator for my software business, will come to New York to stay with my boys while I'm at this year's Global Female Leaders Conference. In addition, I also rely on a very capable team of consultants and other advisors who help me immeasurably, and who all go the extra mile for me.

The other thing I do is plan weekend road trips and, 2 or 3 times a year, longer vacations of a week to 10 days where my boys and I can discover new places and have great experiences together. For example we spent a week in New Mexico, looking at dinosaur fossils and Indian ruins. We drove from San Diego, California all the way to the Grand Canyon by car - a 10 hour trip! It was also a great adventure, giving them a real sense of the size and diversity of the geography of our country, so different from the concrete canyons of Manhattan. My boys are also at the age where they can now be trusted to be away from me for a period of time. This past summer they spent a month with my brother and his family in St. Croix. While I spoke to them every day, they were excited to be with my brother, who teaches aeronautics and is an airplane engineer. They learned to fly and get a feel for Caribbean culture.

ON CHALLENGES AS A FEMALE WEALTH MANAGER AND SOFTWARE DEVELOPER

I don't think of those things much, so this is a tough question. Better that you ask are there any challenges I haven't met. But I think the biggest challenge has been getting people to see me as more than a bookkeeper. I've had men say to me at a networking event "Oh you do bookkeeping stuff" as if that's all I do. The truth is, nobody does what I do. I know that's a bold claim. But, since leaving KKR, I've spent over 15 years looking and haven't found anyone who gives their clients the level of insight and control my clients get, though many make similar claims. If you speak to the "guy/woman on the street", they'll think that wealthy people can afford to hire the best, and therefore they must have their financial life together. But the fact is that virtually no wealthy person has a clear picture of ALL their wealth and even more important, true control of their wealth. My particular skill set – a unique combination of training, experience and mindset - has enabled me to deliver a level of certainty and control to my clients that I've not seen anywhere else, even at KKR. I originally thought that other family offices must provide the same level of insight and detail, but as I looked at other operations, and especially the big names in the family office market, I realized what I did was very different and much more designed around the client's REAL needs and interests.

So most people automatically assume they know what a personal CFO is and does. But they are wrong. For instance, many financial planners claim to act as a Personal CFO, but they are only involved in the creation of a financial plan, employing the recommended products they represent. They have no part in the day to day tracking and reconciliation of transactions, or in accurately determining the changes in distribution as partners enter and leave an investment partnership. Most people would be amazed at how incomplete traditional wealth management really is. So, clearly communicating to people the uniqueness and immense value of what I do in a way they can "get it", has been one of my biggest challenges.

I have been fortunate that in all my jobs working in someone else's business I have had an excellent experience with all of the decision makers and leadership. My intelligence, my organizational abilities, my penchant for innovation, and my belief that doing a good job was incredibly important, were always quickly noticed and appreciated. As a result, I rapidly took on more and more responsibilities, even in my first summer job at age 14. At KKR, for instance, within two years, I was promoted to the second in command position in the personal wealth group, over other older employees who had been there years longer. This, needless to say, was not popular with those employees, and I had to deal

“I think every female entrepreneur MUST have a team of competent and tough attorneys. Tough is possibly even more important, because the other side will often come after you without a solid case, hoping to win by sheer intimidation.”

with the cattiness and meanness of those other women for the remainder of my time there.

It is surprising that women for the most part have not developed the kind of robust support networks in the workplace that men have. While they tend to have more developed social networks, I've seen all too often that women in the workplace, work against each other rather than for each other. Hopefully more events that bring women together can help change this.

A challenge I've encountered as an entrepreneur and software developer is having my easy-going style, sense of fairness, and respectful professionalism mistaken for weakness. When the first version of my software had been completed by the South American programmers I had hired, the owner of the company tried to add on a charge of \$30,000 for cost and time over runs, a breach of our agreement. He also wanted exclusive rights to sell the product and hinted they could go ahead and sell it anyway if I didn't agree. He was holding my brainchild hostage, and claiming I had no chance of bringing it to market without him! I immediately turned the matter over to my attorneys, who straightened things out very quickly. I promptly got my software at the the price originally agreed upon. I think every female entrepreneur MUST have a team of competent and tough attorneys. Tough is possibly even more important, because the other side will often come after you without a solid case, hoping to win by sheer intimidation, as happened when a Canadian bank challenged our trademark. Again, my lawyers negotiated a workable solution.

One of the big gifts of being an Entrepreneur is the certainty that you're not stuck in a place where you are not respected and valued – that you can walk away. Once you've created something from nothing, you have the sense that you can do it again if you need to. I have created four businesses since I left KKR, and effectively manage all of them.

ON FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

I think I will continue to refine **DWIMBS**. I also have in mind some additional software products, one for Estate Advisers and one for the Private Equity Market. I am also concerned that few people ever mention “information integrity” in all the conversations around “big data.” It seems no one has a reliable process for verifying whether the data being collected has been properly vetted, if at all, and is relevant and timely, and how to organize it to be useful and easily understood. So I have my work cut out for me.

THREE THINGS YOU TAKE ON YOUR WAY OUT...

Well, if you mean what's my mind-set for starting the day, the 3 things I take with me are:

- The knowledge that I'm innovative
- That I can learn and teach others
- My commitment to doing an excellent job

If you're asking what physical things do I never leave home without, they are:

- My digital office i.e my iPhone and personal hot-spot
- My Keys
- My pocket book (usually the large one that can hold my laptop and what ever else I need for the day, such as a change of shoes, lunch, etc.) ■





ANNELISE ALIG ANDERHALDEN

**Director, Aargau Services
Economic Promotion**

“I am convinced that passion
is the key to success.”



Annelise Alig Anderhalden is a trained engineer and Director of Aargau Services Economic Promotion. She had experience as a Management Consultant prior to joining Aargau Services.

Aargau, one of Switzerland's leading high-tech cantons, provides employment for 300,000 people and is home to 30,000 companies. Switzerland has topped the ranking of the Innovative Union Scoreboard in Europe for many years, and in 2013 was again awarded the top spot. Standard & Poor's also rates Aargau with "Triple A", the best rating for business locations.

www.aargauservices.com

ON THE FIVE MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS OFFERED BY AARGAU

The region offers a remarkable concentration of skilled staff with high-tech expertise. It is renowned for its research and educational institutions and the high-quality education. Furthermore, the region offers excellent national and international connections and an attractive tax environment. You find idyllic living close to beautiful rural environments as well as historical cities with lively cultural and leisure options. These factors make the canton of Aargau a place where companies and their employees can all benefit.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF AARGAU'S UNPRECEDENTED GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Its outstanding location, just a short distance from the international airports in Zurich and Basel, means that companies profit from proximity to customers and partners in Switzerland or Europe as well as to internationally experienced logistics providers. Companies have access to an immense talent pool as commuting from all major Swiss cities to Aargau is easy.

ON THE QUALITY OF THE WORKFORCE IN THE AARGAU REGION

Aargau is number one in Switzerland in energy and electrical engineering, nanotechnology and plastics. Many companies in the plastics sector develop and manufacture medical devices. Other key sectors in Aargau are the life sciences industry, information and communication technology, and also the machinery and metalworking industry. Thus, many highly skilled specialists can be found in the region.

Quality never is cheap. Talking about labour costs, one has to have a closer look at the costs per productive hour and should not forget the hidden costs from strikes, regulations such as unions etc. The Swiss labour law is very liberal. Swiss workers are highly productive, reliable and loyal to the employer. They see the working relationship as a partnership and are well educated from the labourer up to the manager. People know what they are doing, and they are doing it with the highest quality – for which you get a good market price. Furthermore, companies profit from the outstanding Swiss infrastructure, the stable and safe environment and an intact nature.

“Aargau is the place to be for innovative companies who need specialised staff for their research & development or who want to profit from the 'Swiss made' label in the production of high-quality and high-tech products.”

ON AARGAU'S APPEAL TO INTERNATIONAL INVESTORS AND COMPANIES

Aargau is the place to be for innovative companies who need specialised staff for their research & development or who want to profit from the "Swiss made" label in the production of high-quality and high-tech products. Thus, companies that settle in Aargau value the technological know-how. They develop, produce and distribute technology oriented products or industrial services. Due to Aargau's proximity to renowned research institutions such as the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich), the University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW) and the Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI), companies are certain to find strong R&D partners.

Aargau offers an unbeatable package: a liberal economic system, political stability, high quality of life and moderate property prices and taxes. A large number of specialist suppliers and the central location right in the middle of the strongest Swiss economic region allow easy development of the European market.

In the canton of Aargau, highest levels of safety, stability, economic and personal freedom as well as great health and educational services are standard fare. It is just a stone's throw to any cultural highlight in Switzerland or nearby France, Germany and Italy. The cost-of-living is moderate.

Aargau therefore counts an unusual high number of families and young people.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS, ENTREPRENEURS AND BUSINESS ON OFFER AT AARGAU

The government of Aargau places great stock in research and development as well as the transfer of knowledge to SMEs. For this reason, the Cantonal Executive Council launched the "Hightech Aargau" programme four years ago. Hightech Aargau promotes exchanges and collaboration between SMEs, universities and research institutes, as well as large international corporations. In the context of "Hightech Aargau", the institution Hightech Zentrum Aargau was founded in 2012. This high-tech consulting centre makes it easier for resident SMEs to gain access to know-how, technology, universities and industry partners. It performs innovation check-ups, analyses innovations, and looks for solutions, appropriate innovation partners and financial support. SMEs can reduce the risks that the innovation process poses to the business and thereby save on the costs of innovating. They also spend less time looking for the knowledge, technology and partners required, and conduct their own initial analysis. Companies can also take advantage



From left to right: Campus FHNW, Brugg-Windisch © René Röhtheli; Shopping and relaxing in the old town of Rheinfelden © Aargau Tourismus





From left to right: The Swiss Innovation Park in Aargau - PARK innovAARE
© Visualisation Homberger Architekten; The beautiful landscape of Aargau fosters innovation © Aargau Tourismus



Aargau is also home of one of the five Swiss Innovation Parks. Located in the close proximity to Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI) and its unique complex of large research facilities.

of an active network of public and private research facilities and technology providers. The Hightech Zentrum Aargau also provides access to financial support at either cantonal, national or EU level. The key concept here is speed to market.

Aargau is also home of one of the five Swiss Innovation Parks. Located in the close proximity to Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI) and its unique complex of large research facilities, PARK innovAARE enjoys the collaboration with world leading experts in four main fields: advanced materials and processes, humans and health, accelerator technologies and energy. The purpose of PARK innovAARE is to develop and offer funders and relocating companies an exceptional support programme, to continuously adapt it to the needs of the companies, as well as to market requirements, and to facilitate the exchange between the world of science and the world of business with the aim of transforming investments and technologies into marketable innovations.

The PARK innovAARE will be constructed over different phases. The first building, the deliveryLAB, has been in operation since September 2015. The building comprises the PARK's first high-quality offices and

communication spaces covering 400 m² and offers business and research groups space for settlement. The next construction phase will see the realisation of the buildings with 36'000 m² of floor space. The building will be available for occupancy at the 2nd semester 2019. Wet chemical, biological and physical / technical laboratories are possible as well as workshops and offices.

This, together with strong economic environment, big business clusters and business friendly government, makes PARK innovAARE a place to be for innovative and research oriented companies.

ON THE SUPPORT THAT AARGAU OFFERS HIGH-TECH START-UPS

The canton of Aargau offers a wide range of services and will further increase these efforts to support companies to succeed in their innovation projects. Young talents, entrepreneurs and their families will always find an outstanding, safe and affordable place to work and live.

The government fosters an attractive environment, future-proof structures and services that help companies to run innovation projects and carry out research.

“I truly enjoy cooperating with existing Aargovian companies and supporting start-ups. It fills me with joy to spread the word and make the benefits the canton of Aargau offers widely known.”

The authorities are business-friendly. Our free services include support through the entire process setting up a new business, advice about public funds in Aargau, assistance in finding real estate and in networking with important key contacts.

ON TAKING UP A POSITION WITH AARGAU SERVICES

After my studies at the ETH, I gained experience as a Management Consultant. Thus, I am familiar with the procedures and work flows at management level.

I know and understand the concerns of entrepreneurs. Speaking their language, I can offer them appropriate solutions.

I worked on government projects as well as for local authorities and public services. Based on these experiences I felt ideally prepared for my job at Aargau Services.

The canton of Aargau is home of many nationally and internationally renowned companies and famous market leaders. Aargau is one of the strongest economic regions in Switzerland with great potentials. I truly enjoy cooperating with existing Aargovian companies and supporting start-ups. It fills me with joy to spread the word and make the benefits the canton of Aargau offers widely known.

ON SUCCESS AND LEADERSHIP

I'm convinced that passion is the key to success. I consider difficult tasks as a challenge and I like to work solution-oriented. According to my experience my staff appreciates clear, realistic targets and challenging tasks. They value immediate, direct and honest feedback. This motivates them to reach their top performance. In addition, to truly achieve excellency it needs a high demand for quality and perseverance.

ON RECRUITMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

I look for ambitious, solution-driven people who are eager to reach demanding objectives. I like people who are committed to the canton of Aargau and are enthusiastic about everything they do on the job. I must be able to fully rely on my staff.

ON BUSINESSES AND ENTREPRENEURS AND THE CHOICE OF LOCATIONS

First, assess what are the key success factors of your business. Then evaluate which region best meets the criteria. Ask the local economic promotion agencies for information and advice. Don't get lured by short-acting incentives. Your company must be competitive and successful on the long term. So put your focus on long-acting locational advantages.

ON WOMEN, ASPIRATIONS AND LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

The same as for males – set a good example, be faithful, loyal and authentically honest. Be enthusiastic about your job and work with joy. ■

“To truly achieve excellency it needs a high demand for quality and perseverance.”

Annelise Alig Anderhalden
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First B2B's consultants are some of the most experienced in the industry and can make immediate improvements to your bottom line.

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NANCY NIX

Executive Director, **AWESOME**

“Successful women leaders in senior leadership roles can be an important part of a support network that can help emerging leaders be successful.”



Nancy Nix is the Executive Director of AWESOME (Achieving Women's Excellence in Supply Chain Operations, Management & Education) and formerly Executive Director of the EMBA Program at TCU. She received her doctorate from the University of Tennessee and has taught executive and graduate-level courses in Supply Chain Management. She also has extensive industry experience, serves on the DSC Logistics Advisory Board of Directors, and was Chair of the Board of Directors for CSCMP.

ON GENDER AND CAREER CHOICES

As I was growing up, I was encouraged to be the best I could be and nothing was off limits because of gender. As a high school athlete, I developed a competitive spirit but also learned a lot about teamwork. Those lessons have served me well throughout my career.

I was also a bit of a science and math nerd – always fascinated with learning more and understanding how things (and the world) work – by the way, a never-ending adventure! As I have counseled young women about the great things about a career in supply chain, I have reflected on the incredible opportunities to learn about how your business works, not only internally, but also within the larger ecosystem within which it operates. This was a natural fit for me and is a big part of why my career journey has been such a wonderful experience.

My philosophy has been “Never say no to an opportunity to learn and expand your role.” Often, women hesitate to take on new opportunities if they do not feel 100% prepared for the role, whereas men tend to be willing to jump into new roles and have confidence they will learn what they need to know.

ON GENDER AND SUCCESS IN THE LOGISTICS INDUSTRY

First and foremost, the focus must be on getting the job done, delivering value to customers and achieving business results. While I have recognized that gender plays a role in how I am perceived (pushy broad comes to mind), it is important to stay focused on how you can contribute to achieving business objectives.

Establishing credibility and trust is critical – if people know they can trust you and they have your support, differences of perspective can be openly shared and that diversity of thought becomes a powerful tool. And I have always tried to be a collaborative colleague and to recognize and give credit to those who I have worked with.

And I always try to have fun as part of the work process – humor is a great way to diffuse tense situations and makes work a lot more fun.

ON FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN INDUSTRY

A big problem is the lack of female role models at senior levels of leadership. Our goal is to leverage the power of this network of senior leaders to advance women's leadership in supply chain. We are working to accomplish this in several ways.

“Establishing credibility and trust is critical – if people know they can trust you and they have your support, differences of perspective can be openly shared and that diversity of thought becomes a powerful tool.”

Our signature event, the annual AWESOME Symposium, gives senior leaders a chance to network with and learn from each other and to gain new perspectives about the strengths women bring to an organization, the challenges they face, and things they can do to make a difference for themselves and for other women in their organizations. We are also working through the AWESOME Legendary Leadership award, established in 2014 to bring more visibility and recognition to outstanding women leaders.

The Awesome Excellence in Education Scholarships, supports young women who are majoring in supply chain management to attend the annual CSCMP conference as well as the AWESOME Symposium. The exposure they get to successful leaders and the connections they make give them new insights about the possibilities of a career in supply chain and role models they can look to as they embark on their careers.

We are also collaborating with other organizations to broaden our reach and strengthen our impact. Through our “Powered by AWESOME” initiatives, we are connecting women to panelist and speaker roles at industry conferences, universities and businesses to raise the visibility of successful women at these important supply chain venues.

The biggest challenge is finding and connecting with the senior women leaders we do not know. We have continued to build the network one connection at a time, through our own personal connections and through our collaboration with other organizations. And the network has grown in an amazing way over the 3 years since AWESOME was founded.

ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

This comes up frequently as one of the big issues women face today. And of course, the challenges are different at different stages of your life and career. It is especially difficult to balance work and family when you have young children. The most important thing is that you have a supportive partner who encourages you to achieve your potential, understands that some sacrifices are required,

and shares in the family and household responsibilities.

At this point, my children are grown and have families of their own and my husband is retired. In this stage, he has taken on more of the household responsibilities, and balancing work and personal life is much easier. During the more difficult phases, I did not have role models to look to or mentors to give me advice or to help me see that the challenges would not always be the same. Successful women leaders in senior leadership roles can be an important part of a support network that can help emerging leaders be successful.

ON WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN INDUSTRY

Supply chain leaders need to do a better job of marketing our profession and encouraging young professionals to choose to pursue a career in supply chain. Career in supply chain gives the opportunity to learn about the business from end-to-end, including outside the four walls of your company with customers and suppliers; you gain a global perspective and have the opportunity to work across different countries and cultures; supply chain roles are action-oriented and you can see the results of what you do every day; and you know you are making a difference for your customers and your company.

Efforts to increase women’s progression to senior positions need to focus on both institutional barriers and individual barriers. From an institutional standpoint, the most critical element is to recognize and focus on the importance of diverse leadership from a business perspective. Establishing a culture that values diversity is important and helping leaders understand and eliminate the unconscious bias that still exists is critical.

From an individual perspective, provide opportunities for women to connect with other women and develop a support network – both internally and externally. Encourage advocacy and mentorship from senior leaders and give direct, constructive feedback that encourages women to take on new opportunities to develop their leadership skills and cross-functional expertise. And

recognizing the challenges of work-life balance, provide flexibility when jobs permit and encourage both men and women to take advantage of flexible options – work-life balance is no longer just a “women’s” issue.

ON RISK TAKING

Early in my career, I was offered the opportunity to move from a technical role to a planning manager role in a new location. As a single mother of two boys, the prospect of moving to a location where I knew no one was daunting to say the least. And the role was one for which I had limited background or experience. I can still recall how scary that was.

A number of moves followed that first one, but the one that stands out as most risky was when I left DuPont and moved to India to work for Reliance Industries. I had very limited experience outside the US at that time, and none in India. I had spent 15 years with DuPont and Reliance was a growing company, but relatively unknown outside of India at that time. Scary. But, it turned out to be an opportunity of a lifetime. I loved having the opportunity to live in and learn about a different culture and country. That experience is one I encourage everyone to pursue. The challenges are significant, but you learn a great deal about yourself and about doing business globally. Because of that experience, much of my academic career was focused on global supply chain and international logistics and I was able to lead a number of study abroad experiences, taking students to India, China, and South America to give them a global perspective.

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

My goal is to see AWESOME continue to grow and be successful – to make a significant difference for women’s leadership in supply chain. Success for AWESOME will include the following:

- Women advancing their careers – in senior supply chain leadership positions and the C-suite
- Emerging leaders developing faster into senior leader roles



- More women entering supply chain careers and fewer are opting out
- Women viewed as influential in the industry and sought out for their leadership and business skills
- AWESOME recognized and valued for our contribution to advancing women leaders in supply chain

Awesome Symposium 2016
Photo Courtesy:
awesomeleader.org

WHAT ARE THE THREE THINGS YOU WILL NOT LEAVE HOME WITHOUT?

It is eye-opening and indicative of the world we live in today when I think about my answer to this question. When I began my career we still lived in a paper world. When I moved to India, communications with the family were via fax. Yet technology has made the world such a smaller place and is a key enabler that makes supply chain management such a critical business process today. So I suspect I am not unusual when I say I would not leave home without my computer, ipad and iphone. Between the 3 I can capture and share images, photos, and information, I have access to all the information I need, and can connect with anyone anywhere. ■

“I loved having the opportunity to live in and learn about a different culture and country. That experience is one I encourage everyone to pursue.”



JUDITH OWIGAR

Founder, Akirachix
Co-founder & Operations Director,
JuaKali

“I think the most important thing is to expose women to technology early enough for them to experiment so that when the time comes to making a decision they make an informed choice.”



Judith Owigar is Co-founder and Operations Director of JuaKali (an online and mobile directory for skilled manual workers and tech enthusiasts in Kenya); founder of Akirachix that aims to inspire and develop a successful force of women in technology who will change Africa's future. Founded in April 2010, AkiraChix aims to be the leading women's network impacting technology in Africa.

www.akirachix.com

ON THE JOURNEY INTO TECHNOLOGY AND IT

I was encouraged to enter the field of technology by my brother; he told me that it was a career with great potential. I decided to study Computer Science because it had math and I loved math. When I was making the decision I thought it would be an interesting subject to study and I was curious to know more about computer technology.

ON PASSION, TECHNOLOGY AND AFRICA

At the moment I am interested in using technology to empower young women and youth in Africa. I would like to see Akirachix activities scale to different countries in Africa and I would also like to address the issue of underemployment and the informal sector through JuaKali. I also have a growing interest in how design and usability can improve user satisfaction for applications built in and for African users.

ON INSPIRATION TO BUILD AKIRACHIX AND JUAKALI

I was inspired to co-found Akirachix by my own personal experience as one of the few women in technology in Kenya and by the shared experiences of other women in technology. Ultimately I realized that if I wanted a better future for my self and for other young people like myself I needed to play my part in making it a reality.

ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

I try to balance my work and personal life by integrating the two. It has been difficult trying to achieve a balance per se; sometimes my work demands more time at the expense of my personal life and sometimes it is my personal life that demands more of my time. Due to the nature of being an entrepreneur I find myself working odd hours and weekends. Because of this I have allowed myself to visit family and friends or to my personal interests during the week. To relax I enjoy being with my friends and family, travelling, working out, and watching movies.

ON LONGEVITY IN THE TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY

I believe the community of like minded women in technology around me has been one of the greatest determinants of my staying in the field of technology. Having people around me who challenge and encourage me has been key to me staying and growing in the field. I still have a long way to go and I want to go along with these women (and some men) who have encouraged me along the way. There is an African

“I believe the community of like minded women in technology around me has been one of the greatest determinants of my staying in the field of technology.”

proverb that says “if you want to go fast go alone, if you want to go far, go together”.

ON GENDER, CULTURE AND WOMEN'S CHOICE OF CAREERS

I think the most important thing is to expose women to technology early enough for them to experiment so that when the time comes to making a decision they make an informed choice. I also believe creating an environment where women feel comfortable to try and fail at different things is important. Finally I believe that creating a community for women to share their experiences and their technical skills in order to spur growth is key to retaining women in technology and

ensuring that they progress in the career of their choice.

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

There is so much that needs to be done, world peace? I see challenges all around me especially since I live in a developing country. I feel that we first need to define for ourselves what it means to be developed in our context and then take the needed steps to achieve this goal. This means that there will always be something that needs to be done. In five years working on issues of youth and women at a policy level. For a sustained impact we need to work on the policy level in Africa and work with the right people to implement these policies. ■

US President Barack Obama, AkiraChix co-founder Judith Owigir and President of the Republic of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta on stage at the opening of the Global Entrepreneurship Summit, 2015
Photo Courtesy: Pete Souza, Official White House Photos





Through the Ceiling and Over the Cliff? Catch-22 for Women Executives

This program for women executives combines business acumen with leadership development and career reflection. It's an approach designed to strengthen the key skills needed for navigating the road ahead.

High-flying newspaper editor Jill Abramson and French nuclear power executive Anne Lauvergeon may have worked on different sides of “the pond,” but eventually they found themselves in the same boat—unexpectedly out of a job.

Abramson, the first female executive editor of *The New York Times*, and Lauvergeon, the powerful CEO of the French state-run nuclear utility AREVA SA, had a lot in common. Both worked in troubled industries: Abramson was confronted with a sharp decline in print readership and ad dollars, while Lauvergeon faced growing public opposition to atomic power. In the end, both were forced out against their will: Abramson after just 32 months, and Lauvergeon after a decade of high-profile clashes with politicians.

These two leaders had been hailed as pioneers shattering the so-called “glass ceiling” for rising female executives. But their messy exits—and the recent early departures of several other female CEOs—have sparked discussion about a phenomenon some call the “glass cliff.” Are women who reach the top rung of the organizational ladder more likely to get fired than a male counterpart?

Nancy Rothbard, David Pottruck Professor of Management at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, said it's difficult for researchers to confirm the existence of a “glass cliff” for female CEOs because, unfortunately, the sample size is so small: Just 4.8 percent of the Fortune 1000 businesses are currently run by women. One of the few major studies—released in 2013 by the consulting firm Strategy&—found 38 percent of female CEOs had been forced out over the prior decade, compared to just 27 percent of men.



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“Because women are so rare at those upper echelon positions, every time one falls off the cliff, proportionally, it makes a lot of difference,” said Rothbard, also faculty director of the Wharton program *Women’s Executive Leadership: Business Strategies for Success*. Male CEOs falter, too, she noted, but this rarely receives as much news coverage. “There’s a spotlight on women in these roles—there’s incredible pressure on them to succeed.”

Rothbard said it’s critical that women elevated to a leadership position negotiate not just their own compensation, but also budget and staffing levels they’ll need to do their job well—especially when they take the helm at a firm that is in crisis.

She said the week-long *Women’s Executive Leadership* program at Wharton works with rising female leaders on mastering the art of negotiation, as well as learning what she calls “the language of business” to ask the right questions, and using emotional intelligence to gain sponsorship and support.

Most female CEOs, said Rothbard, struggle to blend the qualities that many workers associate with an organizational leader—a demanding, take-charge persona—with those that are typically ascribed to women, such as empathy and nurturing. This kind of Catch-22 for female CEOs—forced to defy either leadership stereotypes or gender expectations—played out in the widely publicized ouster of the *Times’* Abramson, criticized anonymously by some colleagues as “brusque.”

Northwestern University psychology professor Alice Eagly, an authority on leadership and gender issues, has written frequently that the real problem for rising corporate women is not a “glass ceiling” at the top but a “labyrinth” of biases they must navigate throughout every rung of the career ladder. Navigating these barriers is a prime focus of the Wharton program for female leaders, said Rothbard. After all, a female leader can’t stare down the glass cliff without reaching the summit first.

Women’s Executive Leadership: Business Strategies for Success runs September 26–30, 2016 in Philadelphia, PA. For more information, contact +1.215.898.1776 (worldwide) or execed@wharton.upenn.edu.

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SABINE ECKHARDT

Chief Commercial Officer
ProSiebenSat.1 Media Group

“All that procrastination and weighing up doesn’t get you very far in a male-dominated business world. ‘Just get on with it’ is sometimes the line you have to take.”



Sabine Eckhardt is the Chief Commercial Officer of the ProSiebenSat.1 Media Group and responsible for three of its companies.

At Seven One Media, the group’s sales subsidiary, she is responsible for both classic sales and for the development of new business areas. She also manages the Seven One Ad Factory that handles the development and marketing of 360 degree communication concepts, content marketing and specialty advertising at ProSiebenSat.1. She is the Managing Director of ProSiebenSat.1 Licensing, the license company of the group. Sabine gained a masters in German Language and Literature with Philosophy at Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich.

www.sevenonemedia.com

ON GENDER AND CAREER

First of all, I opted for a degree in a subject that continues to be dominated by women: German Language and Literature. I did so out of a huge interest in literature and stories. My minor in Philosophy still benefits me greatly in my day-to-day work: the ability to explain complex issues clearly is a skill that helps me a lot. An eight-month stint at the University of Pisa in Italy was important for my own personal development. That was an extraordinarily enriching experience.

As a highly communicative, creative type, who values sharing views and ideas with others, my career turned more towards business. That’s something I’ve never regretted, as today I earn my money by creating and realising innovations, dealing with stories and in some cases even making up stories myself.

ON SUCCESS AND LEADERSHIP

I was always curious when I was young and was constantly encouraged to try things out. I’ve had plenty of positive experiences with this and know no fears – not even of making mistakes. I really like holding conversations with other people and find different perspectives both interesting and enriching. And I’m a good decision-maker – which has made many things easier in my (working) life.

Anyone assuming responsibility will sooner or later reach the point where he (or she) is confronted with risk. Some risks have such a long-lasting impact that it would be dangerous to talk about them today. But what I can say is that it always pays off to actively assume responsibility.

ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

I like to go jogging to unwind and collect myself. When I’m running, my thoughts take off, if nothing else, and loads of ideas begin to form. I also love art. New ideas come to me pretty quickly when I’m visiting galleries and exhibitions. Travel is another of my key sources of inspiration and relaxation: other countries, different customs and traditions, interesting people, good food, new impressions – all of this enriches me and helps me deal with new challenges.

ON INDUSTRY INNOVATION

Data and technology will be the predominant topics over the next few years. They are changing products and offerings profoundly – as well as what is known as the ‘customer journey’, of

“I was always curious when I was young and was constantly encouraged to try things out. I’ve had plenty of positive experiences with this and know no fears – not even of making mistakes. I really like holding conversations with other people and find different perspectives both interesting and enriching.”

“For me, it's important to have an exciting job that challenges me and allows me to make decisions and shape things.”

course. To stay on the ball, it's worth holding a conversation with others – even internationally.

The media industry is highly dynamic; the ability to develop new products and respond flexibly to changing conditions has always been a key factor in this sector. The only new aspect is the speed with which things are changing.

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

Who today can say what the world will look like in five years time? For me, it's important to have an exciting job that challenges me and allows me to make decisions and shape things. And nothing will have changed in that regard in five years time.

ON THE GLASS CEILING

I believe that women should be braver and demonstrate more staying power. All that procrastination and weighing up doesn't get you very far in a male-dominated business world. “Just get on with it” is sometimes the line you have to take. ■





VERONIKA LINARDI

Co-founder & CEO, **Qerja**

“The role I have carved out for myself is predominantly based on the experiences that molded me into the woman I am today, my sheer determination and work ethic endowed by my Mother.”



Veronika Linardi co-founded Qerja.com and serve as its Chief Executive Officer. Qerja is Indonesia's first online community for empowering professionals to make the best decision regarding their careers. By creating a platform for professionals to share knowledge, salary and experiences, Qerja introduces transparency to an otherwise opaque working environment. Qerja received an 8 digit valuation series, a funding from SoftBank Indosat fund within 8 months of operation. Veronika also founded Linardi Associates, an executive recruitment agency that has helped hundreds of multinational and local conglomerates fulfill their talent requirements, and Jobs.ID, an online job portal that successfully surpassed all the other existing players and became the leading portal within 2 years of operation.

ON CAREER IN HUMAN RESOURCES

Finding the right candidate for a company is a lot like matchmaking. I had no experience in HR industry, nor did I have any plan in getting into this business, I was just simply helping out friends in need. I soon realized that making connections, helping people to find the company where they can best contribute their skillset, and helping companies meet the candidate who has what it takes to carry the company to greater success and shares the same passion and values, is something I can excel in.

Human Resource is a compelling business because it deals with career, one of the most important aspects of our lives. People not only want to put food on their table, they also need to feel passionate about their lives. No one can be truly happy if they practice a career without passion.

ON GENDER AND FINANCING

I feel very lucky that everything went very smoothly for us. We worked hard, we prepared ourselves, and we started fundraising before we really needed money. So there was no sense of desperation. We wanted to make sure that we aligned ourselves with company builders and VCs with whom we could work seamlessly to rapidly scale us to be the leader in the industry. That means being selective and choosing the best partner who believes in us, have aligned vision and think long term.

ON THE SUCCESS OF QERJA.COM

When I first started Qerja, I didn't have much experience in tech business. I brought to the table my knowledge in HR based on years of working with so many talents and global class companies, and I was determined to build a one-stop career platform where we can be impactful in solving problems and answering questions people have regarding their career and self development.

Almost instantaneously, we had a huge following that supported us with hundreds of thousand user generated content. It's as though the market had been waiting for something like this: a platform for professionals to share knowledge, salary and experiences. This strong user base support has enabled Qerja to be the leading career portal in Indonesia.

ON THE DEARTH OF FEMALE LEADERS IN ASIAN COMPANIES

In Asia there's still more focus and pressure for women to marry and have children. In a large part of society in Indonesia, nurturing career and following passion is not something that is encouraged in women. There is

“We wanted to make sure that we aligned ourselves with company builders and VCs with whom we could work seamlessly to rapidly scale us to be the leader in the industry. That means being selective and choosing the best partner who believes in us, have aligned vision and think long term.”

this gender stereotype that a woman belongs at home, taking care of the husband, the children, and the household. While Western society have moved on from this “norm”, here in Indonesia it is still very common that a wife is asked to resign from her job once she becomes a mother. Parents are more proud of the daughter who gets married at 25 and is now a housewife rather than a daughter who is a successful career woman but still single at 35. It is even frowned upon when a wife’s career is more superior to that of the husband’s.

Having said all that, it is important to note that in Indonesia, we’ve had our first female president. America doesn’t even have that yet. It might be true that the women representation in top corporate position is low, however, among family businesses, it’s relatively high. Notwithstanding, I’ve come across my fair share of strong, beautiful and inspirational women who fight hard for their families and for causes they are passionate in.

ON GENDER AND LEADERSHIP

I put myself in other’s shoes, taking into consideration their background and interests. Some people say I talk too fast which is very true, so I try to slow down when I see that my views are not received well. In negotiation, I learned saying ‘No’ with a smile is more powerful than raising your voice. So perhaps that’s a woman’s nuance.

The role I have carved out for myself is predominantly based on the experiences that molded me into the woman I am today, my sheer determination and work ethic endowed by my Mother. What I bring to the table includes critical thinking from my diverse exposure and my contribution to the company ranges from mediating to fundraising and bringing the right talent on board. I personally

don’t think these attributes are gender specific, but it’s uniquely out of my personality and value system.

ON PROMOTING FEMALE LEADERSHIP POSITION IN INDONESIA

More education is always useful, and nowadays the millennial generation has so much information at their disposal so there is no stopping them, whether they are male or female, to get to where they want to be. It’s more about the grit and determination that sets apart wannabes with achievers.

It would also level the playing ground if women have assistance or a network system to help with traditional responsibilities such as to take care of children, elderly and household duties. I believe through time, open mindedness and exposure, with less talk and discrimination about women shouldering on traditional expectations, more women will

Veronika Linardi speaking on stage at Tech in Asia Jakarta 2015. Photo Courtesy: Qerja



carve out powerful roles in corporations, not just in their households.

ON RISK TAKING

I take calculated risks. Sporadically from time to time, I go out on a limb and embark on new adventures. I go out of my comfort zone, accepting meetings with zero expectations, learn something new, and that's where the magic happens. Every day, every single encounter is an opportunity.

The biggest risk that I have taken so far was taking the jump from being a professional to being an entrepreneur. After that, I took an even bigger risk by starting a second business where the stakes are higher and we are no longer competing locally but at a global level. I have never worked harder in my life. The experience thus far has been not only exhausting, but also thrilling and rewarding.

ON WORK LIFE BALANCE

I have many priorities and they all demand my time. Despite the strong image I project externally, I have to admit that sometimes I also get overwhelmed. My priorities change on a daily basis and it has a direct correlation to how I allocate time. In the midst of all the craziness, the more work I have to accomplish and the more stressed I get, the more I have to connect and re-charge with friends, but at the same time retreat into my personal bubble. I am also very fortunate to have a thin line separating work and play.

In my free time, I cherish quality time with my loved ones, indulge in simple pleasures including exercise, watching a movie, travel, and reading.

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

I aspire to be a super leader who succeeds in scaling my companies to great heights, empowering my team in both their professional and personal development, while being able to achieve work-life and mind-body balance so that I maintain good health, positive attitude, and being spiritually and physically in my element.

Where do I see myself in five to ten years time? Motherhood and I want to be a better daughter, wife, boss, friend, mentor, and overall a better person. ■

“I put myself in other's shoes, taking into consideration their background and interests. Some people say I talk too fast which is very true, so I try to slow down when I see that my views are not received well. In negotiation, I learned saying ‘No’ with a smile is more powerful than raising your voice. So perhaps that's a woman's nuance.”



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STEPHANIE HOLLAND

Founder and Author
Sheconomy

“Support and encourage other women. Because there have been so few spaces for women at the table, this has pitted women against each other in the past.”



Stephanie Holland is the Founder and author of Sheconomy, Speaker and Consultant on Marketing to Women. She also served as Co-owner, President and Executive Creative Director for Holland + Holland Advertising. Working in an industry that is dominated by men, she is one of only 3% of the female creative directors in the country. Stephanie works mostly with male advertisers, helping them successfully market to women.

ON GENDER, CULTURE, AND CAREER CHOICE

When I was younger, I gave very little thought to the implications of being a female in the business world. I would like to say it was because I was such a confident, intelligent and bold feminist. But the truth is, it simply never occurred to me. I was much more insecure about my age (26) when I first started my company. I assumed any resistance to my concepts, ideas and strategies were either a result of being too young to be taken seriously or that my ideas needed more work. I assumed that when male clients punched holes in my proposals and presentations, it was because the work was inferior. I simply worked harder and harder to ensure they could find no holes to punch. And, I say male clients, because a review of the 400+ clients I have served, revealed that 96% of the decision makers were men. I had to learn to speak their language and that was typically in the form of numbers. If I was selling real estate, I talked in terms of reaching performas or absorption levels. If I was working with a medical practice, I spoke in terms of actuary numbers.

But backing up a bit might help to see how I got there. When I graduated from college in the late 70's, there was a terrible recession and all I heard was that I would never get a job in advertising. So, one week after graduation, I accepted an offer with a pro-hockey team. I have always loved sports and that was certainly a fun and exciting job. And it was there that I learned to “work well with men,” because whether it was the management, the media, the players or the fans... it was predominantly a male-dominated industry.

After three years with the team and with the economy improving, I decided to officially begin my career in advertising. I started in the industry as a graphic designer, which was much more accepted than in the positions of copywriter or creative directors. However, my major degree was in marketing and I quickly became frustrated with just being told what to do “graphically” when I felt the concepts and messaging were completely off base. So, I only worked for other agencies for a couple of years before starting my own company with my sister-in-law, also a designer.

Essentially, it was my love for the challenge to develop successful brands and/or campaigns to generate exceptional results for clients that drove me. Results that far exceeded expectations. And that passion overrode any and all of the many obstacles I have incurred over the years. Obstacles that I can now look back and see were indeed a consequence of my being a woman.

“Essentially, it was my love for the challenge to develop successful brands and/or campaigns to generate exceptional results for clients that drove me. Results that far exceeded expectations. And that passion overrode any and all of the many obstacles I have incurred over the years.”

ON SHECONOMY

In 2006 it was clear we were about to face the impending recession. So, I hired a top new business person to lead aggressive efforts to generate new business and ensure we could ride the storm with ease. After a few months of pounding, he came to me and said he had never experienced such resistance – that companies were not only, not hiring new agencies, they were already slicing existing budgets significantly. But he said that in the process of conducting massive research, he kept reading about this new thing called “social media”. He felt strongly that we had to jump in and figure it out, so that we would be able to offer the service on the other side of the recession. It was also becoming evident that this new media would create an irreversible paradigm shift within the advertising industry, essentially turning everything upside down.

The more he researched, he also began to see the implications it could have on new business for the agency and suggested that we start our own blog and networking channels to learn how

to do it for our clients. Shaquille O’Neal @shaq, was one of the first people I started following on Twitter and he had a little more than 12,000 followers. Today he has 11.1 million.

We realized that we needed to choose a specialty to optimize the exposure of the blog. We began a great deal of soul searching and brainstorming to determine just what our agency niche might be. It quickly surfaced that we had been highly successful in marketing to the female for the past 25 years. This direction was also timely, as it had not been that long that so many statistics revealed the power of this sought after consumer.

Hence, we settled on Sheconomy®. And because we recognized that as Creative Director I had successfully worked with men to implement our strategies and concepts, we added the tagline, “*A Guy’s Guide to Marketing to Women*”.

So, the initial purpose of Sheconomy® was to generate new business for Holland and Holland Advertising and to learn social media. But it rapidly took on a life of its own. Sheconomy®

Stephanie Holland at the Mediarun Festival, 2013

Photo Courtesy: she-conomy.com



has been recognized in the national and international media. I have been quoted in the same fashion creating massive exposure. I have been acknowledged for promoting diversity and female advancement within the industry. I am extremely grateful to have been fortunate to speak throughout the US as well as in Europe and have consulted with major brands including Porsche. But I can honestly say I am most appreciative of the calls and emails I receive suggesting that I have inspired women to start new businesses and speak up during meetings and men who say they have been following me for years and use the info I offer to make a difference in better understanding the female audience.

ON GENDER AND LEADERSHIP IN A MALE DOMINATED INDUSTRY

I believe I probably covered some of this earlier, but I would accentuate the point, that I learned to speak their language. I respected what they had to say and I learned to sell them on how to market effectively to the female, with their own numbers or expectations. I cannot say I consciously did this because I was a female trying to fit into a male-dominated industry, but more because I took most criticism as an opportunity to “make the work better.”

It has also required persistence and a passion for delivering result-oriented work.

Below is an excerpt I pulled from a blog I wrote a few years ago:

In my 25 years as an advertising agency owner and creative director whose clients have been 96% male decision makers, I have been called a lot of things:

- Stubborn
- Emotional

- Hard-headed
- Too focused on detail
- Too passionate
- Too feminine
- Argumentative
- Too subtle
- Too research oriented
- Too focused on aesthetics
- Too sensitive

Sound like anyone you know? Perhaps your wife, mother, daughter, sister and every other woman you've ever known? (your target audience?) It's okay. You just don't understand them, and, really, what man does? And women know this. That is why they trust women. Women understand them.

To be fair, I have also been called (after I convinced my male clients to trust me):

- Smart
- Intuitive
- Insightful
- and even Genius (my personal favorite)

However, I would also suggest that over time I lost a bit of who I was in order to do that. That is, I tried to minimize some of the attributes noted in the first list. In becoming the man, you end up losing a part of yourself. I have spoken with numerous women who have experienced the same thing. The female had to adapt to the male business world. I see that changing somewhat and I feel that is a good thing.

ON WOMEN IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY

For starters, I feel she could immediately affect a company's bottom line if she is in a position of authority to call the shots or is respected enough that her ideas are implemented before they are second-guessed and diluted. Women are the most powerful purchasing audience and women know what women want. It is not at all difficult to grasp the profitable correlation here, but the implications are incredibly threatening to most men.

Also, because it is still such a male-dominated field, I feel it has to start with the men. There are some men who have figured out the value in embracing, mentoring, supporting and promoting women. But they are the minority. We need more. A great deal more. That is where it starts.

I feel another area requiring massive change is awards. Promotions as well as new jobs in creative are greatly influenced by creative awards they have received. I believe the more than 200-year intrinsic culture of a male-dominated industry is one thing that has to change. And I feel it has been intensified by awards.



The following cycle occurred for at least 75 years before women became visible.

- Male creatives developed the work.
- Male creative directors judged the work.
- Standards were set – to not be based on results, but instead based on creativity (from male perspective).
- Male juries rewarded male-created work.
- Awards equated with optimum talent.
- Agencies used awards to define optimum talent.
- Optimum talent equals male creatives.
- Agencies hired male creatives.
- Repeat cycle for 75 years.

Add to that a book written by Gloria Moss, a professor at Buckinghamshire New University in London who specializes in gender and visual psychology. Titled "Why Men Like Straight Lines and Women Like Polka Dots," her 10 years of research summarizes that **“men find men’s design more appealing, and women find women’s design more appealing.”** How would that not affect predominantly men judging creative work? It doesn’t.

ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Although I would have to admit I have probably never mastered the balance that we all seek and want, owning my own company has actually allowed me over the years, the flexibility to give it a shot. There have been more times than I could count that I would put my children to bed and head back to work. And, if not for my husband who was also my partner I would not have had a resemblance of the balance I did have. Today, I enjoy time with my grandson immensely and we just found out that we have another on the way, traveling and riding my bike.

ON THE INTERNET AND ITS EFFECT ON THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY

Yes, digital and social media took an industry that has performed essentially the same way for more than one hundred years and turned it upside down in the last five. It placed the consumer in control. It gave them a voice. More specifically, it gave the female a voice. A very loud one. This rapid and seemingly overnight shift has actually reenergized me. I find it both challenging and

“Don’t simply adapt to the men’s business world. Resist advice on how to act in the existing boardroom. Create your own space and bring the male thinking into yours.”

exciting times to be in advertising. There is more accountability and I find that refreshing.

Livestreaming is going to speed things up even more if that is possible. We are an instant gratification society and these capabilities will challenge marketers even further in trying to get consumers to slow down for a mere 30 seconds.

Mobile will dominate as has been predicted and wearable technology will replace it as the next big thing. Challenges will include how to utilize it.

I feel one of the greatest challenges will continue to be how to capitalize on all of the data we now have access to. While the data is there, interpretation is still key and who is conducting the interpretation becomes paramount.

Rich content will not only remain king for a while longer, it will become even more important to differentiate. With digital assistants like Siri and app indexing making it even more complex to reach your market, what you are saying becomes even more critical.

ADVICE TO YOUNG WOMEN IN THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY

1. Don’t simply adapt to the men’s business world. Resist advice on how to act in the existing boardroom. Create your own space and bring the male thinking into yours.
2. Support and encourage other women. Because there have been so few spaces for women at the table, this has pitted women against each other in the past.
3. Don’t compromise. If you have done your research and believe in your ideas, be prepared to fight for them. ■



FOUNDER & COO, DOKU | INDONESIA

Nabilah Alsagoff

Nabilah Alsagoff is the Founder and Chief Operating Officer of PT Nusa Satu Inti Artha (DOKU) with primary responsibilities of business planning, business development and managing DOKU's operations. Nabilah consulted the Indonesian tourism board on how to build a portal that would help the recovery of Bali's tourism industry after the 2002 terrorist attacks on Bali nightclubs; DOKU was formed. Nabilah graduated with a BA in English and Comparative Literature from Murdoch University in Perth, Australia.



ON GENDER AND CAREER

I was very active at school, playing all sorts of sports. In fact, I was doing a Diploma in Engineering before I switched to major in Arts and Humanities at university. Circumstances in my career pushed me to learn about technology, and I seldom turn my back to new things or opportunities.

I started my career doing direct marketing, and dealing with data had always been the central focus of my work. The use of technology eventually became necessary to help with communication to reach the masses and to organise workflows. I've always enjoyed technology and I had fun exploring its usage.

I like to challenge myself in everything that I do. Barriers and limitations are only in our minds. I've always set goals for myself and that helped me with my life's journey.

ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP

My whole career is about risk taking. I've been an entrepreneur for about 20 years and started 3 companies. The biggest one is going into payments; it's another journey into the unknown. Selling online payment ideas to local banks was so tough especially when the demand then was so low.

ON OVERCOMING GENDER BIAS

I must say overcoming the gender bias was not easy. Three of us founded the company. We left the fundraising to our male counterpart, while us ladies focused on running the business. However, we do have to be persistent when speaking to fellow businessmen. After all, it's all about the results that we produce that sparked many interests.

Women have strong minds and we believe that our skills to empower the work force can make a difference in the industry that we work in. Women are an under-tapped resource, and I'd like to help women advance and present them with new opportunities in the tech industry.

I found that women can offer a fresh perspective on product design, ways of working, risk-taking and many other aspects of business, thus breaking the stereotypical role of women in the soft-skills areas.

ON LEADERSHIP

Embrace the challenge, which is the key to survival. Learn and stay alert. Discover and connect with trends and information.

It is important to have a solid blueprint, to be able define future directions for the company and stay focused. Leaders are designers and the architects of the company. Being able to inspire other fellow workers is one philosophy that I hold close to my heart.

ON SUCCESS

We never knew where the business would lead us to when we first started. Our obsession then was to get through the hurdle of getting e-payment acceptance with the local banks.

The business strategy at that time was to create an online portal for Bali. The target audience was tourists and the missing piece was e-payment. We could have used PayPal, but we wanted to process payment in IDR.

Almost 8 years later, online payment is one of the pillars to the success of e-commerce in Indonesia. It is wonderful to get the support of the Central Bank, especially through programs like GNNT (National Cashless Movement). Cash is still king in Indonesia but, I am confident that through payment tech we can improve the situation in a few more years.

ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

I try to hit the gym as often as I can early in the morning before work and I'll do as much as I can to catch up with family and loved ones during short holiday breaks.

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

There are so many aspiring achievements abroad that I hope we can replicate in Indonesia. For one, I would like to see more women in the tech world to drive the industry. And five years down the road, it'll be very fulfilling to see people from all walks of life using DOKU to pay for anything locally, and hopefully, anywhere online. ■

“Women have strong minds and we believe that our skills to empower the work force can make a difference in the industry that we work in. Women are an under-tapped resource, and I'd like to help women advance and present them with new opportunities in the tech industry.”

FOUNDER OF BALLOU PR | GERMANY

Colette Ballou

Colette is the founder of Ballou PR, a European communications and strategy agency that works with high-growth technology and technology-enabled companies, as well as technology investors. Ballou PR has three wholly-owned offices in Berlin, Paris, and London, and the Ballou PR team has had a string of well-documented client success stories including the exit of Musiwave for \$100M+, the successful entry of Facebook and Pinterest in France, and has worked with WhatsApp, Box, Waze, Expedia and AOL. Colette is also active angel investor.



“If you have a strong reputation, you have a better chance of charging a premium for your products, even in price-sensitive times; you have a better chance of withstanding negative events – and of earning repeat business that eventually turns into the lifelong loyalty associated with the most-respected brands.”

ON GENDER AND FINANCING

There are many things about Ballou PR that I am proud of, and one of them is that we have grown using our own cash, we’ve never taken any debt or financing of any kind. We are incredibly careful with our cash flow, and believe in having at least 6 month’s worth of operating expenses in the bank at all times, and our entire management team has financial expertise.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

My guiding principles for success leadership are simple, and are regardless of gender:

1. Learn the numbers; I’m shocked at how few people in creative industries understand the metrics of their industry, what their margins should be, etc.
2. Hire great people, give them responsibility, and get out of their way.
3. Do great work – which means counseling clients, and often telling them things they don’t want to hear. Many agencies simply say “yes” to client assignments they know won’t work. We find that reprehensible. Our job, our responsibility is to be counselors to our clients.

METHODS AND MEANS

We don’t have special relationships with the media so that they cover our clients: we have to earn media attention for our clients by understanding how what they do fits into the news agenda. This involves an in-depth understanding of our client’s businesses, but also where each company needs to go, which is why we insist on a direct line to the top-level management.

SUCCESS IN PR

PR, at it’s best, gives you a strategic advantage. Sure, it can be just tactical – but the most successful companies use PR strategically.

Good PR is about corporate reputation; that is, how you are perceived by your stakeholders – employees, competitors, partners, suppliers, journalists, influencers, investors – and targeting right audience at right time with the right message that drives the business forward.

Now, some facets of corporate reputation come readily to mind: the quality of your products and services. How you respond to a crisis. If you’re a listed company: your results and your share price. All of these factors contribute to the shaping of your corporate reputation.

A strong corporate reputation is important for so many reasons: people want to associate with and buy from companies they trust. If you have a strong reputation, you have a better chance of charging a premium for your products, even in price-sensitive times. If you have a strong reputation, you have a better chance of withstanding negative events – and of earning repeat business that eventually turns into the lifelong loyalty associated with the most-respected brands.

CHALLENGES AND AMBITIONS

My big challenge is to double Ballou PR in size in the next few years – that’s a challenge that I am looking forward to. ■

DIY PR with Colette Ballou at
Pioneers Festival 2012
Photo Courtesy:
womanunlimitedworldwide.com





SHARMLA CHETTY

Regional Managing Director
Duke CE South Africa

“It has been critical for me to embrace tough assignments. It is easier to take the path of least resistance...

It's far better to challenge yourself by raising your hand for the toughest assignments...”



Sharmla Chetty is the Regional Managing Director for Duke Corporate Education, overseeing the Africa region. She serves on the board for Duke Corporate Education Africa, Bigen Africa as a non-executive director and as a trustee on the board of black share scheme for AVI. She is member on the advisory board at the University of Technology of Tswhana Business School and is a fellow on the Aspen Fellowship Programme (ALI- SA 2012). Sharmla studied at the University of Johannesburg (Rau) and holds qualifications in Human Resources Development and has studied with other Business Schools in South Africa. She obtained her MBA from Henley Business School in the United Kingdom. Her dissertation achieved a distinction in the field of corporate social responsibility.

ON GENDER AND CAREER

I have always felt it was important to have the courage to take on jobs or assignments to stretch myself beyond. Instead of shying away from these challenges, I have looked to step up and seek out opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of what I can do.

ON GLASS CEILING OF THE MIND

The key barrier remaining for women is creating their own glass ceiling. We limit ourselves by assuming we can't do something and not taking the risk to try. We need to consistently assume we can make a difference in what we do. To lead any organization one needs to be visionary, thinking about future opportunities and mobilizing your teams to be inspired, motivated to achieve the vision. I had to imagine being already in a higher position and start acting as if I was already in the role. To reach the next level I had to be relentless in being driven to exceed goals and never give up. My perseverance and ability to believe in myself when others have not, fuels my leadership to be prepared for the higher leadership position.

ON GENDER AND CAREER PROGRESSION

It has been critical for me to embrace tough assignments. It is easier to take the path of least resistance by signing up for an easy assignment, doing it well and moving on to something bigger. The reality is that nobody notices when you do an easy assignment well. It's far better to challenge yourself by raising your hand for the toughest assignments, have the tenacity and drive to work hard and to solve problems that no one else has been able to solve and never stop learning. It helps keeping abreast of new ideas, what is happening within your industry and how your industry is shaping with new trends, how we are being disrupted by nontraditional players. In reality your competition comes from where you least expect, disrupting yourself and thinking differently about the work I do and who are our customers today and the future. Doing these things well creates credibility and then I believe it is equally important we as women never shy away from sharing our point of view and doing so with confidence. Creating presence.

ON PREPARING WOMEN FOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

I have been focused specifically on this problem over the last two years now and created the Women

“You own your destiny. Push yourself outside of your comfort zone. Your effort, your determination and your ability to strategically navigate your career is your own responsibility. Keep in mind always life’s journey is never straight or easy, learning from your failures is equally important as your success.”

Leading Africa “Board Leadership–Voices of the Future” programme, out of the recognition that there is a critical need to increase board representation by at least 30 percent for women in decision-making positions in the private and public sector of companies and organizations in North, East, West, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands. In order to excel and reach board level positions, women need exposure to key topics, as well as practical insight for developing the skills and capabilities. Instead of simply expecting women to develop this acumen in a classroom, we instead approach the challenge by giving them practical hands-on experience. For example, we link up with a head-hunting company to give participants some idea of the kind of companies on whose boards they might sit. The programme is unique: it was designed by women for women and strikes a perfect balance of being practical, with the immersion simulating the experience of being a board member and transferring to address the specific strengths and challenges facing women in leadership today.

ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

It’s time to stop fooling ourselves, I prefer not to think of work-life balance as a balancing equation, but just something where you find harmony. If you enjoy what you are doing whether you are a woman or a man, you will spend time working the long hours.

I have always found it important to take time to relax. My favorite stress reliever is spending time with my partner and we love sailing, it’s a wonderful way to de-stress, often forgetting the iPhone and communication and of course learning new skills all the time. My niece and nephews help with the balance. They always find ways to entertain me and stimulate me with

new ideas and I try to keep abreast with generation Z.

ON SUCCESS

You own your destiny. Push yourself outside of your comfort zone. Your effort, your determination and your ability to strategically navigate your career is your own responsibility. Keep in mind always life’s journey is never straight or easy, learning from your failures is equally important as your success. Get started by getting your foot through the door you can make adjustments and learning as you move on. Don’t be afraid to be yourself. Go for it, create and seize opportunities, and be ready to challenge the status quo. Above all, love what you do.

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

In our fast moving world I think the answer of where we will each be in five years is harder and harder to answer. I am focused on being voracious in lifelong learning — always seeking out new information, surrounding myself with great talent and learning from them, and enjoying the ‘learning journey’ of my career while working on personal and professional development toward my career path within the organisation. I am excited to see where it takes me and always open to new opportunities. I definitely want to spend more time in doing things that I enjoy, working to improve the education system on our continent, working on community enablement projects.

ON THREE THINGS YOU WILL NOT LEAVE HOME WITHOUT?

I can’t leave without my iPhone, my purse and my handbag. ■



TECH ENTREPRENEUR | GHANA

Ethel Cofie

Tech entrepreneur and CEO of EDEL Technologies, Ethel Cofie has been featured in BBC and CNN for work in technology and women leadership.

A high caliber IT professional with a wealth of technical and commercial skills acquired over 12 years' experience working in the UK, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone on projects for organizations like Bill and Melinda Gates Mobile Technology, the Ford Foundation and as Head of Commercial Solutions for Vodafone. She is the Founder of Women in Tech Ghana, initiator of the 1st Pan African woman in tech meetup and was shortlisted for the UN GEM Tech Award for work supporting women in ICT. She also sits on numerous boards including Egotickets (an Africa online ticketing platform) and Chillax (A Mobile App for providing tailored entertainment choices for professional Africans) and Social Media week Lagos.



ON GENDER AND FUND RAISING

We have not raised finances yet. This is because the growth of EDEL Technology Consulting is organic based and over the years, EDEL's growth has been based on sales, rather than raising capital. However, we have received Grants from the US Africa Development Funds to help pursue our goals as well as grow the tech industry in Africa.

In terms of the traditional gender bias against female entrepreneurship, I tried to play the game as needed but as I rose through the years, I realised that women have to be encouraged and given the opportunity to grow in technology and this is the main reason why Women in Tech Africa was founded; to encourage young African Girls into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) careers and empower Women with the technical skills, needed to develop by providing them with the opportunities they need to enter the tech field as coders, IT managers and to establish enterprises that increase women's socio-economic well-being to support African development through technology.

ON THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

It has been an interesting journey and I must confess that my story was not always nice and glamorous. Life is full of challenges, and one of the early lessons that I learnt, is the fact that life does not give you what you deserve, but what you negotiate and fight for. I did a Degree in Computer Science and a Masters in Distributors System in the United Kingdom. I was headhunted, and so did not return to Ghana after my Masters Degree.

After a few years, I left my lucrative job and very comfortable life in London and returned to Ghana with the intention of starting a Software Business of my own (EDEL Technology Consulting). I told nobody about it. Not even my parents, because considering that they were the typical African parents, I knew they would object. They only got to know of my intentions after I had shipped all my belongings and arrived in Ghana. Everybody thought I was insane and guess what, there was yet a big blow for me. I failed completely. A lot of my working life was

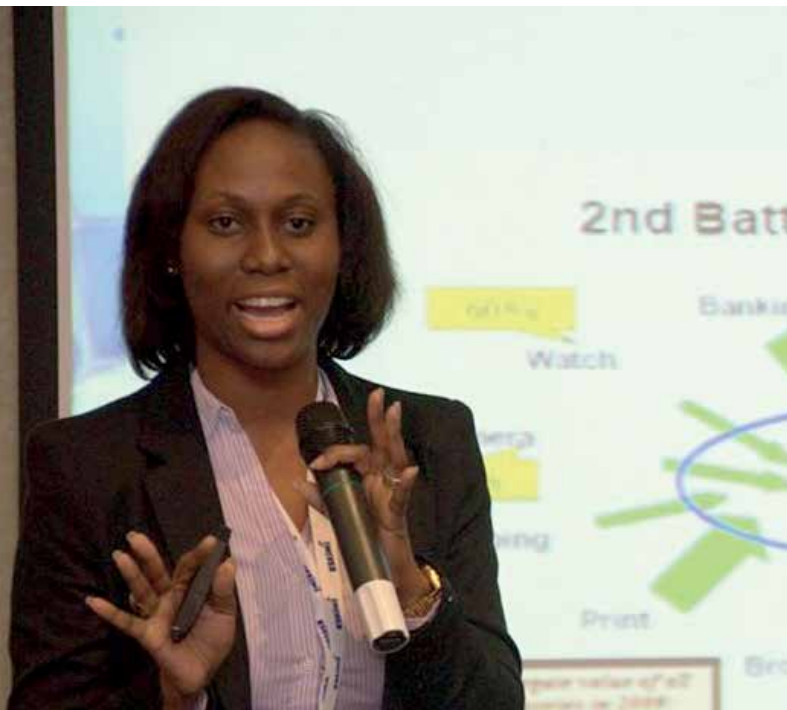
“Life is full of challenges, and one of the early lessons that I learnt, is the fact that life does not give you what you deserve, but what you negotiate and fight for.”

spent in the United Kingdom, where people understood technology. However, I painfully came to understand what it meant to build technology in Ghana, where at the time most people did not understand what it meant. The blow was overwhelming because I had spent my whole savings with little or nothing in my bank account. But I girded my loins, mastered courage and fought the challenges that life gave me. I took on a few jobs, did a lot of projects and started EDEL Technology consulting version two (2) and I am glad to report that the second version has grown to the point where we have clients not only in Ghana, but in the United Kingdom.

ON FEMALE LONGEVITY IN THE TECH INDUSTRY

I have three passions (Female Leadership, Technology and Entrepreneurship), and these passions are what have driven me to





Ethel Cofie EDEL Technology Consulting named Africa's leading woman in tech 2015

Photo Courtesy:
edelitconsult.com

where I am today. Yes, I am aware there are four times more men than women working in the Tech industry and that was my main reason of founding Women in Tech Africa, to help bridge the gap by encouraging Female Entrepreneurship, creating opportunities for women to expand their businesses through technology, organizing routine events such as technical conferences, meet ups and hackathons in order to help women and young African girls identify and learn from other Women in Technology Organizations. As an example, Women in Tech Africa spearheaded and ran the 1st Pan African Women in Tech Virtual meet up which brought together over 150 Women in Technology across Africa to share knowledge about open web technologies. In a nutshell, the zeal to highlight Women in Technology to the World is what has kept me going.

“I must confess that keeping up with all the work and activities has not been easy but with proper planning, I am able to apportion time for work and pleasure.”

ON THE FUTURE OF FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN THE TECH INDUSTRY

Over the years, many Organizations have organised events and conferences that create opportunities for women to develop their businesses and ideas through the use of Technology. With many women now entering the tech field as coders and IT managers, I think women are in the right position and stand a good chance to participate in the largest economic and social shift of this century. Women need to contribute more, their ideas, skills and technical experiences to the growing economy. To increase women's participation in Technology, I think more young girls should be encouraged into the STEM fields. Organizations and women movements must step up their goal to support, encourage and empower women and young girls with the technical skills needed to develop so as to increase women's socio-economic well-being and to support development through technology.

ON CAREER AND PASSION

My interests lie in my passions (Female Leadership, Technology and Entrepreneurship) and I am interested in seeing women in the lead in Technology. I am driven to help African development through technology and to help bridge the gap and create opportunities for women to overcome the traditional gender bias against female entrepreneurs. This excites me!

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

Yes I have goals and dreams and they are still in the making; to grow EDEL Technology Consulting into one of the best Software Developing companies around the world and to step up the Women in Technology Africa group into creating more opportunities for women and young African Girls. I also hope to help celebrate Women around the globe. In five to eight years time, I can only see myself at the top.

ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

I must confess that keeping up with all the work and activities has not been easy but with proper planning, I am able to apportion time for work and pleasure. I usually have the weekends to myself. ■

Challenges Solutions Progress

Mobility has to keep moving – to keep pace with changing times. In light of issues ranging from climate change and a decline in natural resources to traffic jams in urban areas, we all need to go back to the drawing board and find new mobility options that are not only efficient, but also sustainable. The AlphaCity Corporate CarSharing concept and the AlphaElectric eMobility solution were just the first steps in Alphabet's long-term strategy. Experience the future of flexible fleet management now.

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PENELOPE TRUNK

Co-founder & CEO, Quistic
Author, Blogger

“Here's a question I want to see you ask: How can people, who run the economic and social life in their country at large, participate in changing diapers and wiping vomit at 2am?”



Penelope Trunk is a businesswoman, author, and blogger. Trunk is the founder of four startups: Math.com, eCitydeals, Brazen Careerist, and Quistic. Her work focuses on the intersection of work and life. Trunk is the author of the books *Brazen Careerist: The New Rules for Success*, *The New American Dream: A Blueprint for a New Path to Success*, and *The Power of Mentors: The Guide to Finding and Learning from Your Ideal Mentor*. She blogged at Brazen Careerist before leaving that company. She now runs Quistic, her latest start-up venture – an education company – and maintains an eponymous blog featuring career advice. Trunk writes a syndicated career advice column that has run in more than 200 newspapers, including The San Francisco Chronicle, Boston Globe, and Chicago Tribune.

ON MOTIVATION IN JOINING THE IT INDUSTRY

I wanted to make money. I was sick of being poor. I had been in graduate school for English and I felt I dodged a bullet by getting out of academia and into the tech sector.

I was almost always the only woman wherever I worked. And often people assumed I had no idea what I was doing because people assumed women were not technical.

ON THE JOURNEY TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND MATH.COM

I came up with the idea for my current CEO to launch Math.com with the company's intellectual property. I wrote a business case for why the IP would be more valuable in a different company. But I didn't know I was writing a business case. I had no business background whatsoever.

When he said okay to the idea, I negotiated to buy Math.com (less than \$500 at the time!) and I wrote a business plan. Each night after work I'd go to the bookstore and read about how to start a business. Then I'd go home and do next steps, and then I'd bring it to my CEO. I worked like that for five months – having two full-time jobs, until we got the startup funded and he made me full-time at the startup.

ON GENDER BIAS AND WOMEN AS STARTUPS

When you have a startup with investors you have to be all in. That's part of the deal – investors want things to move fast so they get return on their investment fast.

This is a terrible lifestyle for having children. Most founders with children either have a stay-at-home spouse or a very young child with a full-time nanny. After having done both of those things I have to say it's not the best way to be close to your child. To put it mildly.

I think of startups as a sickness. Only do it if you can't stop yourself. It's scary, lonely and financially ruinous.

ON WOMEN, CAREER AND FAMILY: CAN A WOMAN HAVE IT ALL?

No. Of course not. Both careers and children are about time and commitment. You can't give lots of time to both. You can't be hugely committed to both. People who say they do that are delusional.

ON WOMEN AND THE TURNING TIDE: CHOOSING FAMILY OVER CAREER

Women are choosing family over career at higher and higher rates. I think women are realizing that you can work for ten years before kids and twenty years after kids,

so you can have a career and kids. You just can't have them at the same time.

ON ALTERNATIVE WORKING ARRANGEMENT, WORKING FROM HOME: CAN EVERY WOMAN DO THIS?

It means I'm doing both part-time. Parents who stay home and don't work do more parenting than I do. And people who work full-time at an office do more work than I do. I have half of each. I can't tell right now if that means I will have two, lame experiences. Or if I will be glad I got to do both at the same time.

For most parents I think it's BS that they can't afford this option. I was on public assistance in New York City for two years when we ran out of money. We ran out because I was the sole breadwinner and I didn't want to leave the house after I had a baby. But I had no idea how to make money from my house.

We ruined all our credit. We paid rent late every month. We were scared all the time that we wouldn't have money for essentials – like medicine, clothes, etc. But in those two years when we had no money, I figured out how to support the family working from home.

It's very scary to go after the life you want. For anyone. There are a million solutions for poor parents to make staying at home work. People's sense of how much risk they can take is very low. We lead cushy lives. That's fine. It's fine to not want to take a risk. But don't say you have to work. Say you are too scared to take a risk to stay home with your kids.

ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

I have nagging guilt every day. This morning my son saw I was doing email and he asked if I'd watch South Park with him. I said I didn't have time.

Then I said to myself why am I sending email instead of watching South Park?

And then I said: because I like email better than I like South Park. But I want to spend time with my son, and that's what he wants to do. And there are some times when I can't say yes to what he asks, but this time I can. So I watched South Park.

And we laughed together. It's funny. I told him I'd watch another.

“Both careers and children are about time and commitment. You can't give lots of time to both. You can't be hugely committed to both. People who say they do that are delusional.”

ON THE DEARTH OF WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN THE LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE: WHAT SHOULD WOMEN DO?

I don't know. Make tough choices. Work ten-hour days. If you want to have representation in a world where it's all or nothing, then put your all into being part of it.

Or how about voting. I vote. That's enough for me. We can't participate in everything. Here's a question I want to see you ask: How can people, who run the economic and social life in their country at large, participate in changing diapers and wiping vomit at 2am?

ON GENERATION Y AND Z AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Generation Y and Z know that balance is not possible. I do a lot of career coaching, and I'm constantly coaching Gen X parents who thought they could have it all and then hit a wall and don't know what to do. Whereas my coaching sessions with Gen Y-ers are about how to plan for a life where they know they can't have it all.

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

I want to be more confident as a parent – self-doubt plagues me on a daily basis. And I want to have more self-discipline about how I work. I notice lots of time during the day when I could get bits and pieces of work done, but instead I space out. It's very difficult to get work done in fits and starts, but if you parent while you work you have to get really great at doing that.

ON MY WAY OUT, I TAKE...

My phone, a Cliff bar and my kids. ■



GRACE WOO

Co-Founder, **Pixels.IO**

"Since I could remember, my grandma has always explained to me that I have control over nothing except what is in my own head . . . As a result, I have to say that I convinced myself to develop my own brain very early!"



Grace Woo is the co-founder of Pixels.IO, a new company which grows this portfolio of technologies for use in interactive media. She is the inventor of VRCodes: Specially designed visual codes for pictures that leverage how our eyes see differently from the camera. This was first introduced at the 2012 International Symposium on Mixed and Augmented Reality (ISMAR) and advocated a series of methods which take advantage of how the human eyes see differently from the camera.

ON EDUCATION

My own academic background stems from an intellectual privilege I had while growing up in the middle of Illinois, USA. I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on 13th St. where my family was initially very poor as a result of politically oppressive events in China. Nonetheless, my mother is a piano teacher and my father is an engineering professor. I went to the Illinois Math and Science Academy, a public boarding school, as a teenager. I graduated from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign with a degree in Electrical Engineering at the age of 19 and attended the Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where I received my PhD in Electrical Engineering and Computer Engineering nearly a decade later. I am very lucky to be surrounded by people who have similar interests as myself throughout my whole life (so far).

ON GENDER AND CAREER CHOICES

All of my grandparents originally came from very large families with a lot of intellectualism. My grandma, in particular, was very progressive and felt she needed to get an academic degree for herself in a time period when that was very rare for a woman. She also opted to have only one son (my father). My grandma then approved my father marrying my mother, an artist. Since I could remember, my grandma has always explained to me that I have control over nothing except what is in my own head. She told me things like: You do not have control over where you come from or which parents you are born to or whether you live in an environment that hates you or loves you. As a result, I have to say that I convinced myself to develop my own brain very early!

Soft skills are simply a less primitive way to stay true to your own goals and ambitions. I should say that it would be in everyone's interest to develop them, including myself! I used this mentality throughout much of my youth. Since I was so different from those around me, I was given the opportunity to define "my kind" in my immediate environment. The kind and small community around me actually shielded me from the more serious gender problems that many other less intellectually-privileged women experience. That said, I was extremely proud of myself when I led my sixth-grade science olympiad team of all boys to a victory in the vehicular balloon-popping championships... while my sister cheered me on because she is just supportive of anything I do. The reality was that the boys were probably just there for snack-time while I was genuinely excited about putting all my toys together into something that could receive recognition.

ON CAREER IN TECHNOLOGY AND BUILDING PIXELS.IO

Pixels.IO was created to take my PhD thesis topic from paper (i.e. an academic novelty and intellectually very stimulating) to something deployable to the general public. I felt it my job to prove the value of my invention with the help of more hands. In that sense, I prefer to be queen rather than king!

GENDER AND LEADERSHIP IN A MALE DOMINATED INDUSTRY

Sometimes, when I am given the privilege, I use soft skills. Many times, I am not given the space or the bandwidth. In those times, I put myself in the mindset that I have nothing to lose. I gather up all my energy and express myself in a single outburst. It doesn't always work (and occasionally backfires), but I am learning better ways to get my views through. We are in a world full of noise where problems are becoming more complex and evolved. It has become important for both women and men to make the best of the bandwidth they do manage to get.

ON FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS AND FINANCING

As Limor Fried would say: "We know how to do math". So far, we have not leveraged anyone else's money, nor participated in anyone's lottery pool. Many of my female friends have spoken about push back as a female entrepreneur and I absolutely believe it. The reality is that venture capitalists also face the same challenges. The way I see it is that women currently have the opportunity to create a new standard for what is success (which might not have to look like scaled arbitrage). I appreciate the opportunity to step up and look for lesser known financial instruments to create value.

ON INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN TECHNOLOGY

One of the biggest reasons why I picked up computer science is because math and engineering do not lie. At the same time, the best computer science does not rely on sheer muscular strength (the single thing I find absolutely most admiring about men). In that

“THE WAY I SEE IT IS THAT WOMEN CURRENTLY HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE A NEW STANDARD FOR WHAT IS SUCCESS (WHICH MIGHT NOT HAVE TO LOOK LIKE SCALED ARBITRAGE).”

sense, if you ignore the negative aspects of the environment, the computer science and engineering arena can be a relatively fair one to argue for equal wages and societal balance. We just have to be given a chance (and there will be failures along the way just like there always have been).

ON CREATING AN UNOBTUSIVE CODED REALITY

Our mind's control center for interpreting the visual world takes up one of the largest chunks of our brain. It's the primary way most of us experience the world. Thus, it only makes sense for our devices to understand this environment too. We have always built buildings with aesthetics in mind. It only makes sense that we now have to consider our devices and make them interact with our environment too.

ON LIFE-LONG LEARNING

Innovation by far is the most important skill I bring to the table. Innovation is basically identifying problems and then finding effective solutions. It's hard and it requires an understanding of what can be engineered because there is no sense in looking for problems which have no engineer-able solution. I am always looking for inspiration and increasing my knowledge of what is possible. It's very hard to find a place that supports and cultivates innovation that balances out other interests like money and academic fame. This is also part of the reason why Pixels.IO exists today so that we can continue to provide more worthwhile solutions. We just need a couple of really great ideas and of course the best way to have one great idea is to start with many ideas. ■



A portrait of Kathryn Finney, a woman with dark curly hair, wearing glasses and a floral blazer. She is smiling and standing in front of a red wall with a black sign featuring white text. The sign lists various New York City locations: AL PARK, SQUARE GARDEN, ISLAND, TRAL STATION, SQUARE, YN BRID, NATI, STATE P, S, ELSD, ER WEST S, AMER, ATIRO, CH VILL, ITA, S, D T, ES, P, E C, NATOW.

TECH ENTREPRENEUR | USA

Kathryn Finney

Kathryn Finney is the Founder and Managing Director of digitalundivided (DID), a social enterprise that finds, supports, and trains urban tech entrepreneurs with a focus on women. DID leads several successful programs and initiatives, including: BIG, a tech accelerator/incubator for underrepresented women founders; #ProjectDiane, a data project disrupting pattern-matching in tech; and START, a start-up basics workshop.

<http://digitalundivided.com>

“My philosophy for success and leadership is that leaders don’t necessarily have to have all the right answers every time, but they should trust their instincts to lead them to an answer. As women, we have incredible instincts, yet we’re taught to always question them. Follow your gut.”

ON GENDER BIAS, FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS AND FUNDRAISING

Prior to digitalundivided (DID), I started my own online media company in 2003, which became such a successful and established brand that I was able to sell it a decade after. I used that exit money to finance the launch of DID.

ON RISK-TAKING

As an entrepreneur who pushes for innovation, I have learned to live with risk-taking. The biggest risk I had to take business-wise would be starting DID itself. Back then, the conversation on diversity in tech was practically non-existent. People worried if there was a market of “qualified” black women big enough for DID’s focus. Black women tech entrepreneurs were seen as uninvestable, if even seen at all.

There are times when the industry gets discouraging, but over all, I would say it paid off because it got the whole tech space talking and working together to act on the issue. It helped majority of our black women founders to break into the industry, get funded, create more jobs, and pave the way for a more diverse pipeline. Over 40% of the black women who have raised Series A funding have come from the digitalundivided network.

ON THE JOURNEY TO SUCCESS IN THE TECH INDUSTRY: WHAT IS YOUR PHILOSOPHY FOR SUCCESS

It’s a combination of guts, talent, and toughness. There’s a reason that the attrition rate of women in tech is at an atrocious 41%. As women working in a traditionally male-dominated space, expect that you will be singled out and asked time and again to prove yourself. You will be met with suspicion and condescension. That’s why it’s crucial that companies should have their own Sheryl Sandbergs or Ursula Burnses to serve as mentors and models for other women employees. Their visibility encourages more women to join the company and influences policies that support the development of these women.

My philosophy for success and leadership is that leaders don’t necessarily have to have all the right answers

every time, but they should trust their instincts to lead them to an answer. As women, we have incredible instincts, yet we’re taught to always question them. Follow your gut.

ON ENCOURAGING MORE WOMEN INTO THE TECH INDUSTRY

The current “closed” system of tech needs to change. Most women founders are not part of the same network as the “boys” in tech – we didn’t go to the same schools as them (or if we did, we weren’t given the same career paths to follow or belonged to the same clubs). As a result, it’s difficult to break into the industry where social networks and connection are often how you get and maintain your job (i.e. the notorious phrase, “culture fit”)

Changing this not only benefits the women – it also pushes innovation, which is beneficial to all. A system that is too homogenous can only cultivate deviations of existing ideas and can overlook the more innovative and more impactful ones that are outside its circles.

ON THE INSPIRATION FOR DIGITALUNDIVIDED

I’ve learned first-hand the power of tech to change the lives of not just one family, but of an entire community. My dad went from a brewery worker in Milwaukee to a Senior engineer at Microsoft in the span of 10 years all because of tech and because someone showed him the possibilities of innovation. This access to opportunities is the key to bridging the “digital divide” and is what DID strives to provide for other women founders coming from underrepresented backgrounds.

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

My biggest goal right now is to finish raising our venture fund to invest in brilliant women of color entrepreneurs. There are entire markets that are being overlooked because of their race and gender.

ON MY WAY OUT...

I don’t leave home without my sunglasses, cell phone, and my designer sneakers. ■



HEATHER BAKER

CEO, TopLine Comms
Editor and Blogger

“I’m also always learning and trying to improve – I think I’m a much better leader now than I was two years ago. I’m kinder and more forgiving. I try to remember to say thanks.”



Heather Baker is the CEO of TopLine Comms, a leading digital communications, PR and video consultancy that delivers integrated marketing and customer acquisition strategies for tech companies. She is also a blogger and editor of two leading blogs, Small Business Heroes and The B2B PR Blog.

ON GENDER AND CAREER

I don't think I navigated gender biases in my youth or my career – I think I walked face first into them. I went to an all-girls school where we had to learn knitting and cooking alongside maths and physics. I then studied psychology when I would probably have preferred engineering if it had occurred to me, after which I went into PR, which is what lots of women do when they have studied psychology.

Fortunately, my mum was a career woman and my dad always treated me like an equal, which helped me develop some valuable self belief.

ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP

I set TopLine up after the department I was working in at my previous agency was going to be shut down. I didn't really think or plan, I just got some investment and started the business! (And I made every mistake in the book.) The truth is that I only retrofitted TopLine's business plan a few years later. Building the business was SO HARD.

The turning point was when we decided to completely change the strategy of the business two and a half years ago. We wanted to change TopLine's focus to aiming to help businesses grow rather than only focusing on generating media coverage.

It was a tough process. We turned over most of our team, and lost a few clients. But it was worth it – we were finally selling something that businesses really needed – and things took off from there.

ON INNOVATION IN BUSINESS

I tend to take risks, but mostly calculated ones. At TopLine, the biggest risk was changing our business strategy. I'm always up for trying new stuff with the business – sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, but at the very least we are always changing and learning. I think it's important to do this.

ON SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP

I would like to think competence and effectiveness are the big factors in determining which people manage to get to top leadership positions and stay there.

I believe in leading by example. If you want your team to be in the office on time, you have to arrive on time.

I'm also always learning and trying to improve – I think I'm a much better leader now than I was two years ago. I'm kinder and more forgiving. I try to remember to say thanks. I bring my dog to work which improves

“I tend to take risks, but mostly calculated ones. At TopLine, the biggest risk was changing our business strategy. I’m always up for trying new stuff with the business – sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t, but at the very least we are always changing and learning. I think it’s important to do this.”

my mood. I am hugely conscious of how my mood affects the whole team. I try to praise publicly, criticise privately. Hopefully I will be a much better leader in two years’ time than I am now.

At TopLine we also have a system for getting anonymous feedback and I am okay with bad feedback – so I regularly have the opportunity to improve how I operate.

I try to hire really good people and train them well – although I know I still sometimes dump too much stuff on them. I don’t always get it right, but I buy myself some room by being nice to people (when I remember). I try to keep the office positive – we don’t tolerate lying and shouting at TopLine.

ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

I never used to balance work and personal life. I used to let work control me to the point where it almost consumed me and I had a near mental breakdown. That’s when I started to create boundaries between TopLine and me. That was also, incidentally the turning point for the business, and I don’t think that is a coincidence. Balance is important and instrumental to success.

Now that I make time for myself I pursue loads of hobbies: yoga, trail running, ballet, travelling and meditating.

ON STAYING ONE STEP AHEAD

To keep up with what is happening in the industry we go to conferences, we read and we watch what other people do and learn from it. We are always learning. You can never become

complacent and believe that you now know everything.

One big change I see on the horizon for the next year is that creative budgets will be expanded, and we will finally see real creativity emerging – I can’t wait!

ON NEW HORIZONS/THE FUTURE

Of course! I think TopLine could be ten times the size it is now.

I also want to start a citrus farm. Drive a Vespa from London to Cape Town (where we now also have a TopLine office).

I want to learn to do a handstand – and a full pull-up – become a yoga instructor, and get a PhD. Write a novel, become fluent in Spanish, French and German, build a car, climb Kilimanjaro and cycle across Mongolia. ■



A full-page photograph of Sylvia Yin, co-founder and COO of Shoppr, standing on a modern balcony with a glass railing. She is wearing a grey sleeveless top, a black high-waisted skirt, and a blue necklace. The background shows a cityscape under a clear sky.

CO-FOUNDER AND COO, SHOPPR | MALAYSIA

Sylvia Yin

Shoppr was developed in 2013 by Sylvia Yin and Kendrick Wong as an online store aggregator app that gives users clothing recommendations. Later on they moved away from that direction and now Shoppr has become as a place for girls to share their fashion style, influence thousands of other fashionistas and get inspired by fashion around them.

Shoppr has won a handful of startup competitions such as AngelHack Kuala Lumpur and D3 Hackathon, Facebook PARSE, Best App for Commercialisation and the MYDD AT&T Hackathon. In addition, Shoppr raised USD \$400,000 in seed funding from 500 Startups, East Ventures and a Malaysian angel investor via the Angel Investor Forum.

ON THE JOURNEY TO DEVELOPING FASHION MOBILE APPS

I have a degree in economics and have no prior training in fashion nor mobile app development but the switch came naturally because of my interest in Behavioural Economics. I was very fascinated by the use of choice architecture through the theories and principles I was acquainted with during my university days. When the opportunity came for me to build my own mobile app, I saw it as the perfect chance to apply what I learnt in the classroom to real life situations. I wanted to experiment and find practical answers to theories I've been researching through my academic life, such as does choice paralysis exist? – In our case it did, reducing the number of buttons drastically increased all-time clicks on the remaining buttons.

ON GENDER AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

While entrepreneurs come from all walks of life, it is still predominately populated by males. This is especially true if you are building a technology-heavy business like a mobile app. I navigated these biases by acknowledging its existence but choosing not to let it define me. In my opinion, as soon as you let it define you, you start imposing restrictions on yourself. When you are able to free yourself from these stereotypes, you become much more confident in your decisions and actions.

ON GENDER, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND FUNDRAISING

My rule of thumb while raising finance is to always know who you are raising money from. Don't stop at researching about venture capitalists, but go beyond to know who their limited partners are. By understanding all the players in the arena, you will then have a better picture of their risk profiles, goals, motivations and most importantly, if it aligns with yours. This helps tremendously with narrowing down the set of investors you should speak to and reducing the time you are away from product building. At the end of the day, the business you build is hinged on the success of your product and the terms of the raise, not how much money raised.

I find that the rest of the players in the ecosystem have been warming up to the idea of female entrepreneurs. This is especially true when it comes to eCommerce. In Asia, women are increasingly in control of household purchasing decisions such as groceries, home product, furnishing and children product. Of course, in clothing, accessories and cosmetics too. In my opinion, businesses

“My rule of thumb while raising finance is to always know who you are raising money from. Don't stop at researching about venture capitalists, but go beyond to know who their limited partners are.”

focusing on these verticals would greatly benefit from having a founder who herself is a consumer of what she is selling and is able to bring a female perspective to problem solving.

ON THE INSPIRATION FOR SHOPPR

ShoppR was inspired by my own frustration with the process of discovering outfit ideas for different occasions and how to source the teams I have been inspired by. I was frustrated by the hours I needed to spend researching before coming across items similar to what I want. The problem magnified as soon as I moved back to Malaysia, where eCommerce is still at its infancy.

Teaming up with my co-founders, Kendrick Wong and Nikolai Prettnr, we started out by building an MVP and hit the streets for feedback. We interviewed over 150 girls in our target demographic before our official launch in early May 2015. We knew ShoppR is receiving validation when these group of interviewees go on to spread the words about ShoppR to their friends. From here, our group of ambassadors grew organically as one introduces another to join ShoppR. ShoppR ambassadors are key to our innovation process. We receive real-time feedback from them and make necessary iterations based on the information collected.

ON MARKETING, TRUST AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

While subscribing to sites like Tech Crunch helps, nothing beats relationship building. This is important when everything is not readily searchable on Google and in Asia in particular, as there isn't a distributed place to find all about marketing in the SEA context. A lot of information still travel via word of mouth. To keep ahead of the game, you have to build relationships with those not just in your industry but outside of your industry and be willing to share your ideas with them. Asia is a collectivist society so the emphasis on helping one another out is important when creating trust. Social media will continue as the



dominating distribution channel in SEA while long-tail SEO leads the way for mature countries in Europe.

ON WOMEN AND THE TECH INDUSTRY

Shopp'r is strongly for women in tech. We believe in unbiased evaluation of our hires and that is reflected in the equal gender distribution in the company. We recently concluded a programme called "Shopp'r Girls Learn to Code" where each female hire is provided with monetary support and guidance from the development team to pick and learn a programming language of our choice.

From my personal experience of learning to code, I came to realise that I was never into computers and technology because it did not feel relatable to me. But that is wrong because code is genderless. You can use it to build applications that also cater to female issues and needs. In those regards, change has to start early in the education front. More experimentations

on gender personalisation of computer sciences curriculum should be conducted. I believe a simple change in coursework rubrics from using Jenny instead of James would greatly help females feel like they belong.

ON RISK TAKING

I am generally a risk averse person but entrepreneurship has taught me to learn to identify appropriate situations for risk taking. When you are building something from ground up, you have no idea what works or not, so you need to move fast and accept failure as a platform to learn. In this case, being too risk averse becomes detrimental as it slows you down, so anytime a competitor may out manoeuvre you. The biggest risk I have ever taken has to be building Shopp'r. Having just graduated from university at 22 and knowing next to nothing about mobile app development and entrepreneurship, I dived head-first into building Shopp'r with only the clear sense that there is a problem I need to solve and I would like to be the person providing the solution. I was a wild ride at first but I am feeling more confident as each day passes, knowing I have the capacity to rise up to challenges.

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

For Shopp'r, I would like it to be every girl's fashion best friend. When you think of fashion, you think of Shopp'r - the entire journey from seeking fashion advice to shopping for the desired piece. On a personal level, I would like to receive my yoga teacher certification. In five years time, I wish to be travelling across the SEA region overseeing Shopp'r's operations in different markets.

ON THE THREE THINGS . . .

I will not leave my home without iPhone, some cash and a lip tint, of course. ■

"I AM GENERALLY A RISK AVERSE PERSON BUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP HAS TAUGHT ME TO LEARN TO IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE SITUATIONS FOR RISK TAKING. WHEN YOU ARE BUILDING SOMETHING FROM GROUND UP, YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT WORKS OR NOT, SO YOU NEED TO MOVE FAST AND ACCEPT FAILURE AS A PLATFORM TO LEARN."



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FASHION DESIGNER | SOUTH AFRICA

Keneilwe Mampuru

Keneilwe Mampuru is the Founder and Head Designer at Kente by Keneilwe, a bespoke fashion design company which she founded in 2008. Keneilwe studied Fashion Design for 2 years, but struggling to find a job within the fashion industry, she applied for jobs in other fields, and worked for a well known bank for almost 4 years, before leaving to set up Kente by Keneilwe.



“I would like people to think of my brand as not just a fashion label, but as a brand that stands firm against the inferiority complex that plagues the African continent. I want my brand to be one that says ‘superiority can be born as well as prosper in Africa’...”

ON GENDER AND CAREER

I struggled with finding a relevant job within the fashion industry after studying fashion design for 2 years. I decided to branch out and apply for jobs in other fields, which is how I ended up working for a well-known bank as a call centre consultant, and later in the small business department. The lack of employment and money to sustain myself and my family influenced my choice then.

ON FOLLOWING YOUR DREAMS

I have always had an artistic streak in me. My passion in fashion began in high school when I would sketch matric dance dresses (Prom Dresses) for my fellow classmates, I would look at their body shapes/sizes and design something that I thought would be suitable for them. At the bank, I was fortunate enough to see how other businesses were run and knew I could also do it too. I also had a handful of clients already and found it strenuous to manage a full time job and the sewing on part-time. And while I was in the small business department, I think this was where I had the greatest urge to leave. I knew that I was not cut out for the financial sector.

ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ITS CHALLENGES

My biggest challenges were thinking that the business I was getting from people was enough; I didn't know the importance of pricing, financials, time management and I found it hard to motivate myself at first. I sank into a depressed mode as I realised I didn't have the luxury of a monthly income anymore and that I eventually had to sell my car because I needed to sustain my lifestyle. I would like to encourage young African entrepreneurs in the fashion industry to never be afraid to ask, to seek opportunities, and to look out for educational centres with like-minded people, for example; the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship. I also would advise them to have a mentor as starting and sustaining a business of any sort is challenging.

ON INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE

The thing that brings me joy is the fact that I get to work with my God-given talents and my passion. I get to manage the times I work and the time I can do other things. I also love that I get to share my story with younger women and

make them see that it is possible to be a success even when you work for yourself. South Africa has unemployment issues, so I like that I teach the youth to be entrepreneurial and not wallow in the negative. I would like people to think of my brand as not just a fashion label, but as a brand that stands firm against the inferiority complex that plagues the African continent. I want my brand to be one that says “superiority can be born as well as prosper in Africa”.

ON GENDER AND THE FASHION INDUSTRY

I strongly believe that as women from different sectors, we can motivate and mentor one another so that the leadership of women in the fashion sector can thrive. We also need to be educated in business management too and not only be placed in the production chain. If more and more women stood together, this field could be taken more seriously than being mistaken as a glorified hobby.

ON THE FUTURE OF FASHION IN AFRICA

The fashion industry in Africa has grown tremendously; I definitely see it becoming mainstream. We already have African designers that have made a mark in the New York and Paris fashion weeks. There are also a lot of designers abroad that are using African print fabrics in their designs. The plans I have for my label include a big fashion show so that my brand can be well known. I also plan on branching out and selling abroad. ■



Photo Courtesy: <http://www.kenteclothing.co.za>



SUSAN GUNELIUS

President & CEO

KeySplash Creative, Inc.

“I’ve found that the best way to deal with gender bias is with a strong offense, meaning you need to be smart and not be afraid to confidently show just how smart you are. Don’t be afraid to show what you know.”



Susan Gunelius is President & CEO of KeySplash Creative, Inc., a marketing communications and strategic branding company. She spent the first half of her 20-year marketing career in Corporate America directing marketing programs for AT&T and HSBC. Susan has written 10 marketing-related books, including *Content Marketing for Dummies*, *30-Minute Social Media Marketing*, and *Kick-ass Copywriting in 10 Easy Steps*.

www.KeySplashCreative.com

ON THE INSPIRATION FOR KEYSPLASH CREATIVE AND GENDER BIAS AND FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

I opened KeySplash Creative after my triplets were born and I realized returning to the corporate world was no longer the right career path for me. I still wanted to work in marketing though, so I began offering copywriting services as a freelancer. As my client base grew, I decided to form KeySplash Creative. Since I was a solopreneur and offered services – primarily writing and strategic consulting – I really only needed me, a computer, and an internet connection to be productive. I was fortunate that the startup costs were very minimal and I covered them myself.

In terms of the gender bias against female entrepreneurs, I didn’t experience it a lot personally in terms of initially building my business, but I did see it on a daily basis. I built my business through content marketing. I wrote content about marketing, copywriting, social media, and branding on a variety of websites (including my own), and I wrote books about these subjects as well. By spreading my expertise across the web, I attracted new clients. Of course, it helped that I have such a deep background in marketing based on my education and corporate career with AT&T and HSBC. It never hurts to tell a potential client that I directed marketing programs for what were two of the biggest companies in the world at the time. If those companies trusted me to do their marketing, many clients feel confident that they can trust me, too.

Back to the gender bias question – I saw it online every day. It would be me and a bunch of men writing about business on a variety of websites. Big business conferences would be filled with speakers who were primarily men. I’ve found that the best way to deal with gender bias is with a strong offense, meaning you need to be smart and not be afraid to confidently show just how smart you are. Don’t be afraid to show what you know.

ON THE ATTRACTION OF WOMEN TO THE MARKETING/ADVERTISING/CREATIVE INDUSTRY

I think in the past women have been attracted to the marketing field because it’s a field that social cues make women (and men) think is an appropriate place for women to be in business. Fortunately, that’s changing. We see women like Sheryl Sandberg of Facebook and Indra Nooyi of Pepsi paving the way.

This is actually a subject that I’ve written about a lot on my blog, Women on Business (www.womenonbusiness.com). There are many reasons

why women pursue careers in STEM fields less than careers like marketing. Some of the reason is based on how girls are (often unintentionally) conditioned to view themselves from a very early age. Some of the reason is based on the “boy’s club” mentality that hasn’t completely gone away in many of these fields. We’ve made a lot of progress towards achieving diversity in all capacities in business, but we still have a long way to go.

I was attracted to the marketing industry when I was in high school. I often joke that I was the only teenager with a collection of print ads. I still love print! I wanted to be involved in creating those ads. I wasn’t an artist (and this was the 1980s before graphic design software existed), so I pursued the business side instead. I am a writer, so marketing communications and branding became a natural focus for me.

ON RISK-TAKING

I’d say I’m risk averse most of the time. I’m the first person to poke holes in an opportunity and look at it from every angle to figure out what could go wrong and make sure problems are avoided. I had a boss once who told me I was too negative. I told him he was missing my value. I wanted every project to have the greatest chance to succeed, and I wouldn’t nod my head and agree that everything was perfect when I saw possible challenges that could be addressed now rather than later when they became huge and expensive problems. I told him he should be thrilled to have me around because I was probably saving him a ton of money when he’d have to fix things later. I wasn’t being negative. I was being thorough. To this day, I’m not sure what he thought of that response, but it was honest.

I think the biggest risk I’ve taken is starting my own business. Once you leave the corporate world for many years, it’s hard to get back in at the same level. This is particularly true for a woman whose absence is often viewed negatively while for a man, an absence doesn’t carry the same negativity.

When you start a business, you don’t know if it’s going to be successful or not, so knowing I’d have a more difficult time going back to a corporate job if my own company didn’t succeed was a big risk.

ON KEEPING PACE IN THE AGE OF THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA

I stay current on what’s happening in marketing, advertising, and the creative industry by staying involved. I read a lot of publications, follow a lot of conversations and content on social media, and subscribe to a lot of newsletters. I’m always reading! I also belong to a few associations and LinkedIn groups where members are always talking about the latest and greatest marketing tools and trends.

I think one of the biggest changes in social media marketing over the next year will be the need to pay to play. With social networks like Facebook making it harder for businesses to get views on their Page content, “paid social” will become a requirement. I also think we’ll see a bigger focus than ever on personalized content, and I’m not talking about content that has a person’s name on it. I’m talking about content that is so highly targeted that it speaks to consumers based on their location, their position in the marketing funnel, their most recent behaviors, and their needs at a given moment in time. We’ll see this in online advertising, social media engagement, email marketing, and more. It’s not easy to create this type of content, and it will be hard for brands to keep up.

ON PASSION AND INSPIRATION

I’m extremely interested in the startup world right now and helping startups build brands that will not only enable them to launch and gain investors and sales traction, but also



“I’d say I’m risk averse most of the time. I’m the first person to poke holes in an opportunity and look at it from every angle to figure out what could go wrong and make sure problems are avoided.”

“I stay current on what’s happening in marketing, advertising, and the creative industry by staying involved. I read a lot of publications, follow a lot of conversations and content on social media, and subscribe to a lot of newsletters. I’m always reading! I also belong to a few associations and LinkedIn groups where members are always talking about the latest and greatest marketing tools and trends.”

enable them to scale and grow well into the future. I’m helping a few clients do exactly that right now and it’s so much fun!

In terms of what I want to accomplish, that’s constantly evolving. I absolutely love to teach people how to leverage their brands and marketing to build businesses and lives that they love. I’d love to have more opportunities to speak to and coach business owners and to teach college students about marketing and branding. Now that my triplets are eleven, I should have more time to start pursuing that part of my career.

ON LONGEVITY AND WOMEN IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY

I think the secret is working for myself. I get to make the decisions and pursue the types of projects and clients that make me happy.

I choose my own hours, and while I work some really crazy hours, it works for me. I can take my kids to school and pick them up in the afternoon. I wouldn’t be able to do that if I still worked in Corporate America. The flexibility enables me to do it all.

I think a lot of women leave the marketing industry (and many business fields) for similar reasons. They see the glass ceiling. They have no work-life balance, and something has to change. In fact, that’s one of the reasons women are starting their own businesses at a faster rate than men.

ON FUTURE CHALLENGES

My biggest challenge is finding time to take better care of myself and spend more time with my kids. Yes, I have more flexibility as a business owner, but I also work far more than 40 hours per week. There are positives and negatives to every situation.

In five or 10 years, my kids will be 16 or 21. I think I’ll be looking for a nice beach to work on with my laptop because I won’t have to be home to make sure the kids do their homework in between conference calls!

ON MY WAY OUT...

I don’t like to carry a lot of stuff. It’s a result of having triplets. When they were younger, I had to take the bare essentials with me when I left the house because I had to try to hold three kids’ hands at the same time. Today, if I’m just leaving home for a few hours or for the day, I don’t leave without my keys, wallet, and phone. If it can’t fit in my pocket, I’m not taking it. And the pockets on women’s clothes are very small! ■



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