

INNOVATIVE WOMEN

**HOW THE WORLD'S TOP FEMALE
ENTREPRENEURS MAKE IT HAPPEN**

JUSTIN SACHS
with **EMILY ESPEY**

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The shrewish shriek of the alarm snaps you headfirst into the new day with as much grace as a sumo wrestler slamming your face into the floor of a boxing ring. You drag yourself out of the nest of sheets and pillows, and force feet onto cold carpet. Every cell in your body screams for coffee. You begin your day with a bowl of suspiciously stale cereal and a cup of blonde caffeine. After a shower and the routine of hair dryers, curling irons, mousse, makeup, blouses, heels, and a splash of perfume, it is time to face the day. Keys, purse, phone, travel mug. With the necessities safely gathered, you take one last, longing look around this quiet haven that you will not see for another 10 hours, and you click your way to the car. Time for work.

Early morning traffic is enough to turn any saint rogue. By the time you finally step into the office, greeted by the smell of lavender air-freshener and hot printing paper, all the energy that you hired your caffeine to sustain has already been sapped from your system, and it is time to hit the coffee machine. Your boss acknowledges you with a curt nod as he

sails past in a cloud of Old Spice. He is a decent boss, as long as you do not use too many adjectives in your reports, and as long as he is not calling two-hour meetings — and as long as he does not catch the fellow in the cubicle next-door on social media for the third time this month. Truthfully, he is a decent boss except when he is working in the office.

The co-workers are decent, too, when they are not teasing you with feminist names, mistaking your assertiveness for bossiness, or your self-confidence for an invitation. As much as you appreciate your job, and the food it puts on your table and the clothes it puts on your back and the new gadgets it occasionally allows you to indulge in, secretly you cannot help but believe that there must be something more a job is supposed to be.

What if you woke up in the morning and could not wait to get to work? What if you genuinely enjoyed making a living — relished it, even? The prospect seems far-fetched, to say the least. People go to work, they make money, and that is the way that life is supposed to be. No one likes it very much (unless they are one of those workaholic types, of course, and even then they seem to wear a perpetual frown), but we are all resigned to do it just the same because that is what we are told that we have to do. That is how you do life. You work. Grit your teeth and work, day in, day out, every month, every year, until eventually you discover the meaning behind that vague magical term: *retirement*.

But what if we are all wrong? What if there is another way to do life?

Let us come at it from another angle. What do Martha Stewart, Mary Kay Ash, Arianna Huffington, and Oprah Winfrey have in common?

The answer is twofold: they are women, and they are entrepreneurs.

Once upon a time, corporate companies lorded over the economy, but this is simply no longer the case. Small businesses have generated over 65% of the net new jobs created since 1995. The SBA defines a small business as an enterprise having fewer than five hundred employees, and going by that definition, there are currently close to 28 million small businesses in the United States — and over 22 million of those are self-employed with no additional payroll or employees. The time is ripe to take a leap into the world of entrepreneurship.

Let us take a moment to turn back to Martha Stewart, Mary Kay Ash, Arianna Huffington, and Oprah Winfrey. What these women have in common is this: they have discovered the secret. They have found the other way to do life, the better way. And, the best part is that it is hardly a secret; hundreds of women across America have already caught on and are following in their footsteps. We interviewed twenty-five of them — twenty-five female entrepreneurs, all presidents of highly successful U.S. businesses — to discover the commonalities that have brought each of them such breathtaking success. How do they do it?

First off, we are going to look at motivation. Running your own business can be a formidable enterprise, and there is no

denying that it takes a special kind of fuel to thrive in such a life. There are a few key ingredients in the magic potion female entrepreneurs drink every morning to get them through their day. I will give you a hint: caffeine is not one of them (although, who am I kidding, it sure helps).

Next, we are going to look back on experience. The reason that there is no cut and dry formula for entrepreneurial success is because of our individuality. Each of us brings different fears, weaknesses, beliefs, and talents to the table. All of these things are derived from experience: your life, from your very first birthday right up to today. Like it or not, your past shapes who you are today. So why not exploit that individuality? Use it all — every weakness, fault, and scar that you have since tried to thrust from your mind — everything. Don't hold anything back.

One of the most important obstacles that you will face in the business world is fear. It is important because it can be a double-edged sword: it can work to your advantage, or it can cripple you. The choice is entirely yours. Some fears are healthy, while others are harmful. Learn to tell the difference. Right now, you may be quietly praying: *I can face all of my fears, if only I can make it in the business world without bumping into any public speaking. That's doable, right?* Unfortunately, you are not going to like the answer to that one. I will spare you for a few chapters.

Fear is not the only bump in the road that you will encounter on the road to successful entrepreneurship. How do you deal with big-name competition when no one knows who you are? It is hard to find confidence when you feel like a tired

little ant competing against magnificent monarch butterflies with their corporate wings and Wall Street antennae. Then, there are all the feminine stereotypes that you will inevitably face as a businesswoman. *Why won't they take me seriously?* Not to mention the failures that you are bound to experience, and the nay sayers who will refuse to admit when you've got a good thing going.

Along the way, it is a good habit to keep stock of where you are. There will never be any shortage of planning to be done. When planning to hire, how do you recognize a good employee when you meet one? When planning to advertise, how do you take the bull by the horns and use social media to your advantage? When planning adjustments to your business plan, how do you strive for improvement? Make it a habit to take a personal inventory every so often and recognize how far you have come and, even more importantly, where you are heading. Plan ahead.

That said, no one knows better than the entrepreneur that things do not always go according to plan. In fact, a perfectly executed plan is a rare and exotic enigma in the business world. Change is an irrevocable part of the way the universe operates, and learning to manage it is essential not only in business, but in every aspect of life. There are certainly steps you can take to buffer yourself against the potential for negative changes in the realm of your business, but to be a successful entrepreneur, it is equally important to embrace a certain level of change and use it to the betterment of your company. Change does not have to equal stress. Change can be a blessing. Change can be an advantage.

And now, for the best news of all. Everything to be gleaned from our extensive interviews with these twenty-five female entrepreneurs can be boiled down into four words. Just four. At the root of it all lie these four words, four essential truths, which are not only the keys to understanding our interviews and the common themes running behind these women's journeys — they are the keys to entrepreneurial success, and they are now being handed over to you.

The road to success in entrepreneurship is rugged. That should come as no surprise; anything worth fighting for is sure to take plenty of fighting. But, at the end of the day, these women's success stories speak louder than any fear, doubt, weakness, or misgiving. It is worth it. You can do it.

It is true what they say: where there is a will, there is, most surely, a way.

CHAPTER TWO: MOTIVATION

Before you begin to plan the launch of your own business enterprise, you must be fully aware of the commitment that it will require of you. Cass Butler, head of The Butler Enterprises, LLC, warns those considering the path of entrepreneur-ship: “*Do not go into business for yourself because you’re tired of working for someone. You are leaving a 9 to 5 [position] to truly invest in a 24/7.*” The passion and dedication that it takes to thrive in such an environment is not for everyone. Success will demand all of you. Nothing less.

There are several driving motivations for choosing the entrepreneurial path. In this chapter, we will look at five of the biggest and most essential motivators: necessity, passion, people, progress, and, yes, money.

Growing up, Mary Crafts-Horner made assumptions about her future — as do we all. She assumed that, like her mother and her mother’s mother, her destiny was to be a stay-at-home mom. It was not that she found that plan upsetting, or that she had resigned herself to her fate — she just figured

life would play out that way. But life had other ideas. Instead of the quiet, pleasant future that she had counted on, she got dealt a husband who turned out to be bipolar, paranoid, and abusive. She realized that it would be highly unfair and impractical to rely on such a man to support a wife and two little boys, and it was then that Mary found herself at a fork in the road on a path she never dreamed that she would be traveling. A friend knocked her out of her daze with the hard truth: “It’s time to stop whining and decide who you’re going to be.” Mary buckled down and did just that. Against all odds — a tumultuous marriage, financial stress, the limited expectations of her church, and the many roles that she did not know how to play — her catering company, *Culinary Crafts*, was born. Since its humble beginnings, *Culinary Crafts* has grown into an enormously successful enterprise, becoming Utah’s largest off-premise catering resource.

Culinary Crafts was born out of the motivation of necessity. Sometimes, the decision to go into business on your own is thrust upon you, and sometimes it is the only option left with any color to it. Necessity comes in many shapes and sizes. In Mary’s case, the necessity came in the form of providing monetarily for her boys. Gale Rosenberg of *Web ‘n Retail* faced a different flavor of desperation in 1991, when the market for music distribution — the market she spent so many years in school to serve — rapidly began to disappear. She found herself thrown into a dizzying spiral of working for company after company, being laid off time and time again as each company either struggled to downsize or went bankrupt and shut down. She became desperate for a steady job. During employment breaks, she picked up freelance jobs in her field and eventually began networking within the industry to dig

out jobs higher and higher up the line. Eventually, she took the leap and started up her own firm.

The necessity that birthed Janet Aizenstros' corporation was one of the most desperate needs known to humankind: the need to live. Janet found herself going through the motions of life without actually *living* it. Her dissatisfaction with herself, her life, and her choices reached a point of such dark depression that she sat in the shower one day, with her children watching cartoons in the living room and her husband fast asleep, contemplating suicide. Separating from her husband and starting a business of her own proved to be the key that pulled her out of the murk and back into a full life, one she knew was worth living. Her virtual media company, *Janet Aizenstros Omni Media, Inc.*, has since become a powerful tool for women across the United States to find inspiration in their own lives by changing the way they are perceived in the media. *JAOM* is designed to empower women and give them the opportunity to redefine themselves. Through her struggles, Janet developed strength, and she went on to share that strength with others.

Necessity is an important motivation, but necessity might be described as the key to unlocking a still more powerful and multi-faceted motivation—passion. Necessity is a means by which one may stumble upon a passion that they never realized they had. Passion is an intangible string within the soul, tugging it towards its destiny. Jasmine Lombardi has been following its tug ever since her early years in the village of Singapore, where she walked two miles down a dirt road to school every day, studied by candlelight, and went on to receive a Bachelor of Science in computer science from

the National University of Singapore, as well as a Master of Science in information science from Boston University. In her leadership roles with companies Prospero and Intronis, she has since played a key role in implementing social media applications for some of the world's leading brands, including but not limited to: Major League Baseball, iVillage, Fox News, Microsoft, ESPN, ABC, and Disney. It was her incessant passion for her field of study that drove her so high.

Marisa Silver, owner of *Silverspine Chiropractic and Health*, and private fitness training facility In The Zone Personal Fitness, discovered her passion for physical fitness early on in elementary school, when she would win multiple athletic awards. Later on, she cultivated a more sophisticated interest in holistic health, and merging the two passions into what are now thriving co-existing businesses seemed the most natural route to success.

Claudia Zanes discovered her natural passion for business when her husband, the head of Zanes Law Firm, left with his briefcase headed for court one morning and asked her to “keep an eye on things” at the office for him. She never left.

Mary Crafts-Horner, the inspired mother and head of *Culinary Crafts* whose passion was born out of the necessity to provide for her children, wraps up the importance of passionate business succinctly:

There is the old question of which came first: the chicken or the egg? Which comes first: do you have a passion for something and thus you are good at it, or are you good at something and thus develop a passion for the work? Either way passion is a

must. After thirty years at Culinary Crafts, I still love to go to work, partially because I am passionate about the work and partly because I am really good at it. When passion and skill come together, you have an unstoppable combination that cannot help but be successful.

It is essential to have a genuine passion for the market in which you will be competing. If you do not feel personally invested in the product or service that you are providing, you might as well scrap the whole project now. “If you don’t have the passion, you won’t have the longevity that it takes to succeed – especially when family comes into play,” warns Marisa Silver of In The Zone Personal Fitness. There is no point in entrepreneurship unless you love what you are doing.

Beyond having a passion for the work, it is also necessary to have a passion for the *people* that your company will be serving. It is highly unlikely, if not impossible, for a business venture to prove worthwhile if it is not born out of empathy. The key formula to a successful business idea is to see a need and find a way to fill it. To spot these needs, sometimes needs so subtle no one realizes they even exist, entrepreneurs need all the empathy and compassion that they can muster. Throughout our twenty-five interviews, there is a tangible thread of empathy running through each of these ladies’ stories. Their perception in seeing a need and their motivation to fill it is the ticket that got them on board the entrepreneurial train to success. Janet Aizenstros’ compassion for women seeking to recharge their lives created *Omni Media Inc.* to help those women change the way media perceives them. Nancy D. Butler, head of *Above All Else, Success in Life and Business*, seeks to help thousands

of people become financially successful, in the process creating a bi-product of financial success for herself and her family. Sarah Haley struck out on her own with *Sara Haley Fitness* because she saw a hole in the prenatal fitness market and sought to fill it with a new workout system specifically for “fit” women looking to maintain their health during their pregnancy. All of these women share an innate connection with the people that their businesses serve. It is true for the entrepreneur more than anyone else: empathy is something that you cannot afford to fake.

Passion for people leads inevitably to a passion for progress. Any business that relies on the needs and desires of human beings will inevitably be subject to much change. People change; it is innately part of being human. Thus, if one is determined to thrive in a business that serves the needs of people, one must develop a passion for progress. Progress implies constant development. In business, this means continuously reinterpreting the needs of the market and reinventing your business to suit those needs. Ashley Feinstein of *Knowing Your Worth* shares: “I’m always striving to understand my target markets better, and I’m always learning about new ways that I can improve my reach and message. That’s what most surprised me, and also what’s most fun about running a business.” The invention is never complete; you are constantly reinventing and reconstructing your business to cater to the target market. Ashley continues: “Entrepreneurship is a never-ending adventure where you are constantly striving to improve and grow. If you ever just want to be done and stop improving, that’s when things are going to stop working.”

This last motivator is without a doubt the most controversial of the five, but it remains an undeniable force in the entrepreneurial world. The same Ashley Feinstein who lauded the importance of maintaining a progressive business also admitted, when asked which advice that she would give to aspiring female entrepreneurs and business professionals, that “you can never have enough money.” I do not think that I have to convince anyone that money cannot possibly be the sole motivator behind a business. It is far too weak, too self-centered, and too narrow-minded a motivation to power a successful business venture on its own. However, when coupled with a genuine love for people, a passion for work and for progress, and a need for a change in circumstances, the desire for financial security can be the grease that keeps the wheels rolling smoothly.

Oftentimes, it is not so much a desire for money as it is a desire not to have to *worry* about money. Nancy D. Butler began her business as a single parent whose only means of putting food on her family’s table was by investing all of herself in her business. If the market was unkind to her company, she had no way to feed her family. It was the incentive that she needed to push her forward. After building her business into something worth \$200 million in assets, and then selling that business, she was able to invest her time in doing only the work that she enjoyed. Since money was no longer a necessity or a primary motivator, she found herself free to enjoy the many benefits reaped from her entrepreneurial success, setting up a professional speaking service where she was able to coach, speak, write books, and focus on giving back what she had learned along the road to success. *Above All Else, Success in Life and Business* is a fitting title for her

enterprise, considering her story. When money is no longer a constant concern, it frees up the individual to delve deeper into more important facets of life, whatever those may be. Cass Butler of *The Butler Enterprises* also admits that one of the driving forces behind her success was “the motivation for financial freedom.”

Finding the motivation to run your own business can be daunting, but motivation is the most driving force behind success in business. Whatever your motivation may be — necessity, a passion for your craft, a passion for people, for progress, financial security, or any combination of the five — you must learn to rely on the power of that motivation to push you towards success, sometimes with as much force as a fire hose. It will surprise you, if you let it.

There is another common thread in these women’s stories relating to motivation, and it is that much of their passion and drive is mined out of personal experience. Keeping in mind that motivation is essential, we need to understand how individuality can be converted into fuel for success.

CHAPTER THREE: EXPERIENCE

It is famously common knowledge that there is no set recipe for success. Imagine for a moment, however, if there *was* a single recipe for success, with specific, attainable ingredients to mix. Imagine that there existed a formula which required a set amount of money, a set combination of personality traits, or a set pattern of significant experiences that would guarantee success in business. If this were the case, and all the ingredients set in stone, each success story would read exactly the same way. After all, chemistry is very uncompromising on the fact that mixing the same reactants always results in the same products. *Because* success is non-formulaic, each entrepreneur's success is dramatically unique, satisfying in its own unique ways, and gratifying to unique groups of people for unique reasons. Rather than persisting in the search for a catch-all secret formula, successful entrepreneurs have learned to embrace their individuality and exploit it.

In exploiting themselves, entrepreneurs cannot afford to discard anything as unuseful or irrelevant. They see no need to disregard personal history, personal concerns, or personal

pursuits; entrepreneurship is an intensely personal affair, and all of these seemingly unrelated dynamics will come in to play at one point or another, to the individual's betterment or downfall. The entrepreneur fast discovers that their most reliable source of fuel will always be the fuel mined from their own past experiences, because it is there that lessons are learned and passion is developed. Experience enhances passion, regardless or perhaps *because* of the mistakes made, and the side-trails taken along the way.

Exploiting yourself means embracing the past and accepting its influence on the present. Jasmine Lombardi of *Intronis, Inc.* believes that much of her success can be attributed to her early life in Singapore, as simple as it was. Although her life there did not include any ground-breaking business inspirations or even practical business experience, the lessons she learned about creativity, self-confidence, integrity, independence, and determination just by living later proved invaluable to her entrepreneurial career.

Claudia Zanes of *Zanes Law* has a similar story to tell, a story about how her formative years as a little Latino girl helping to run the family restaurant — manning the cash register and running grocery errands across the border — shaped and honed her natural competency for business management. More than anything, she looked up to her grandmother, a woman of keen business sense who was always joyful, always in “hustle mode,” always investing in the future. Claudia humbly adds: “I’d like to think some of that was passed on to me.”

The most exciting aspect of the “exploitation” concept is

that when you learn to embrace your life as fodder for success, you stop focusing all your energies on your business and start adapting a more holistic approach to life. You no longer have to force life to fit around work, pushing family, hobbies, religion, goals, and other “personal” pursuits to the sidelines. That is the beauty of entrepreneurship: you are behind the wheel. It is your business, and it’ i built around your life. Michelle Dale of Virtual Miss Friday Ltd. concurs that “if you want to live a full and happy life, choose a business that can work around that life – and not the other way around.”

Once you have made the decision to exploit yourself, do not hold anything back. Use everything. Every episode has a nugget of value in it, regardless of how far removed from the business world it may seem. This is something that we noticed time and again in our interviews. The entrepreneur puts no limits on the influence their life has on their business.

When asked to what she most attributes her success, Sara Haley of *Sarah Haley Fitness* answered without hesitation: “Getting pregnant!” Out of this significant life experience, she discovered her niche of pre- and post-natal women’s fitness. Not only that, but pregnancy forced her to make the decision not to sit back and take a nine month vacation, but instead to continue to work hard and balance family, health, and career. Looking back, Sara can see how her life leading up to the birth of her business played a part in her success:

“Everything that I have accomplished throughout my life has aided in the success of my business today. From dance classes as a young girl, to studying theater in college – both of which prepared

me for the big leagues — dancing in the NBA, and my work as a Reebok Master Trainer... Everything I did up until this point, and even today, required a strong work ethic and attention to detail.”

It gets better. What more useless and degrading experience could there be than life in prison? That is where Katherine Graham found herself after making one quick decision to transport drugs for a friend. The ten years behind bars that followed she found filled with fights, illness, injury, near-death experiences, and isolation. Afterwards, thrust back into the “real world,” the obstacles that she faced seeking employment and a new life were boundless. She was tempted to feel as if ten years of her life had been sucked away. She felt shamed and shunned by society, by her family, her employers, her God, and herself. “Little did I know,” she admits, “that the one thing I never wanted to share is what is now pushing me forward in my life and my career.” During her years in prison, Katherine found satisfaction working in the prison yard workforce and on prisoner volunteer projects with Habitat for Humanity. Through these outlets, she discovered that “my love of construction was only outshined by my strength in management and knack for helping people at just the right time.” Once she let go of the shame of her past, she was able to exploit her past to her betterment. Her thriving construction company, *Heritage Contracting*, and her non-profit organization *Do It Girl, Inc.* are the proud offspring of prison life. Without those vital ten years spent as an outcast from society, she would not currently be blessed with working on a five year, \$10 million project with the U.S. Housing and Urban Development.

Katherine Graham's story is testimony to the power of exploiting life. Even the most humiliating of failures can be turned around with explosive results. An anonymous young interviewee shared that her consulting firm, *Klerigi Group*, was born the child of past business failures. She opened her first business, a nail salon, as a teenager. However, due to lack of planning, strategy, and market research perhaps linked to her age and relative naivety, the business was in her words "a complete failure." Instead of wasting time nursing her ego after the nail salon fiasco, she picked herself back up and took the lessons that she learned from the failure to heart. She insists that "learning from failure is a choice," and following her own advice, continued on to open two successful businesses before founding her most recent project, *Klerigi Group*, her mission being to help clients avoid making her own business mistakes. Picking up your ego and firmly setting it on the curb clears the road for a parade of past experiences from which the entrepreneur can draw inspiration, fuel, and support.

Setting ego aside in favor of humility is one of the biggest favors that an entrepreneur can do for themselves. Sometimes ego is the brick wall we need to blast through in order to realize our aspirations. This was certainly the case for Claudia Zanes of *Zanes Law*, who found herself partnering up with her attorney husband in his law firm after discovering she had a knack for marketing and management. Doug and Claudia made a dynamic team. The biggest obstacle for Claudia was the fact that she was not a lawyer. How can you run a legal firm without any legal background? This insecurity caused her no end of mental grief. "When I asked myself, 'are you a lawyer?'" and replied, 'no,' I doubted myself. I thought that

I had to be a lawyer to be successful,” she confesses. When she learned to set this question to rest, a question which ultimately did little more than taunt her ego, she found that she had been limiting herself all along. Embracing her natural business abilities for what they were resulted in a profound freedom that she had not yet experienced.

Gale Rosenberg has a different story to tell about the danger of ego. Her business sprouted from humble beginnings, and during the early years when she was still struggling to find her feet in the business world, she was forced to borrow money from family members in order to survive — “not an easy thing for me to do.” On top of the borrowed money, she also realized that she had to downsize her home in order to keep up with rent and insurance costs. She is frank in her admission that “that was my new (and first real) low.” She points directly to personal self-esteem as one of the biggest obstacles that stood in her way. Gale was born of a tenacious spirit, however, and those bleak early years were but a phase in her entrepreneurial journey. Once she was able to recognize it in all of its temporariness and put her pride to rest, buckling down to do the work that had to be done, she found that life became much more satisfying to live.

Every mistake, failure, passion, and every excitement, tear, and laugh holds merit as experience, a merit that usually has the potential to be exploited towards success in business. The counterpart of this truth is that you must learn to know what you do not know. As much as there is to be gleaned from your life thus far, there will always be far more that you simply *do not* know and that you cannot be expected to know given your background and relative experience. There

is always more to be learned, no matter how far you have come — another important reason to set aside ego, which will only tempt you into thinking that you do not need help. Surround yourself with talented, experienced businessmen and businesswomen whom you genuinely respect. Glean all you can from them, and never disregard their advice. Claudia Zanes echoes the importance of mentors:

“Being around more successful people and people who are smarter than you will make you more successful and smarter. The amount of time I could have saved myself and the learning curve that I could have overcome [if I had done that] is tremendous. Had I stopped trying to recreate the wheel and just gotten out there, I would have learned it from someone who had already done it!”

There will always be people who know better than you. Listen to them.

“Success is rooted in being a student first,” Claudia says.

One of the greatest existing myths of entrepreneurship is that the entrepreneur must “do it all.” Society has turned the entrepreneur into an inspiring enigma, someone who skillfully juggles the role of accountant or marketing strategist, financial advisor, Public Relations agent, designer, manager, and creative innovator for their business. This idea of the entrepreneur as the master jack-of-all-trades is only scarcely based on truth. While it is true that the entrepreneur must wear a wider variety of hats than the

average white-collar employee, an entrepreneur is nothing more than a motivated individual with unique strengths and weaknesses like everyone else. Their secret is in exploiting those strengths to maximum profit, while delegating other necessary tasks and roles to members of their trusted team, hopefully maximizing their employees' strengths as well.

Knowing what you do not know means delegation, which in turn requires the appropriate individuals to which tasks will be delegated. Claudia Zanes shares her own struggle with learning to delegate:

“As a business owner, [...] you don't have to do everything. I tried to do everything on my own early on, and I set myself back doing so. I had a million reasons why I was going to do this or that on my own and, truthfully, a lot of it was rooted in wanting to stay in control. The truth of the matter is that you stay in control and have a successful business by leveraging people around you to do the things that you don't need to do. That being said, it's important to have smarter people around you!”

Echoing Claudia, Monique Hayward of *Nouveau Connoisseurs Corporation* attributes much of her success to the “deep, extensive network of people who I can call on to help me solve problems, fill gaps, take advantage of opportunities, make things happen.” Entrepreneurs cannot succeed on their own. They cannot possibly do it all themselves; to attempt to do so would sap them of life and the enjoyment from which it is made. And so, “surround yourself with a trusted and talented team,” Lori Cheek advises. Each member of your team has

their own background of relevant life experience to exploit, and the combined power of a dynamic team each working in sync with their unique strengths can be formidable.

Once you realize the power of exploiting yourself, you begin to live with open eyes, recognizing that every experience has the potential to be a learning experience. Jasmine Lombardi of *Intronis, Inc.* believes that “education is key to reaching goals and getting ahead in life.” She is not simply referring to the education inferred by the diploma hanging on your wall, or the length of your resume. In business, as in life, constant learning is key. Improve yourself whenever possible, exploit from what you have learned, and be able to identify what you do not know.

Consequences abound when you don’t recognize the boundary between what you know and what you don’t. When the boundary line begins to blur, ego begins to take over. A few successes, a little progress, and you begin to think that you cannot go wrong. Kisha Mays learned this lesson the hard way when she “went from learning how to crawl as an entrepreneur to attempting to run full speed ahead without learning how to walk first.” She says: “Talk about bad decisions and mistakes – I made them all.” Once she was able to remove herself from the equation and adapt a broader scope of vision for her team and her company, she turned her company into a million-dollar-producing enterprise focused on business development and women’s empowerment, ironically enough. Not only did she learn from her business mistakes, she exploited them to the great betterment of her company, transforming them into the very product which she then shared with the world.

Michelle Dale, founder of *Virtual Miss Friday Ltd.*, sums up the idea of the entrepreneur's finite knowledge perceptively, saying that "success is generally not about what you know; it's about what you truly believe is possible." Elizabeth Dodson agrees: "I would recommend reaching out for help and mentorship when you need it from the people who have the knowledge you need. You do not have to know everything to be successful; you need to align yourself with the right people to be successful." There will always be more to learn, more experience to be had, more life to live; however, the knowledge is not the driving force behind your success. Never confuse knowledge with passion. Their roles should never be swapped. Passion alone is what will drive you to success.

The last and most important concept to remember when considering the importance of experience on the entrepreneurial journey is that there is little to no benefit in dwelling on the past. It is tempting to dredge up old failures and mistakes. Our pensive human nature longs to reflect on the decisions that took us many fitful nights to reach, and to wonder if we made the right choice. What might have happened had we made different choices? Would we be making even more money now? Would market interest have exploded? Would profitability have increased, or decreased? Would it have mattered either way? These "what-if" questions dangerously skirt the edge of counterproductiveness. Once a decision is made, it is made. Whether the result be failure or success, minor or major, a lesson will inevitably be learned, which means that there was something worthwhile in it. And as long as there is something worthwhile in it, there is no reason to look back. Lori Cheek's advice to aspiring female

entrepreneurs is adamant: “If you truly believe in your idea, give up excuses and doubt, surround yourself with a trusted and talented team, bulldoze forward, and *do not look back.*”

CHAPTER FOUR: FEAR

“There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear of failure,” writes Paulo Coelho in *The Alchemist*, and he could not have put the dilemma of the entrepreneur any more succinctly. The life of an entrepreneur has a solitary sort of ring to it; it has the feel of “going it alone” and “taking off on your own.” While the thought of buckling down and starting an enterprise in your own name may send thrills down the spine, it can also awaken deep-set fears and insecurities. In order to prep oneself for success, the entrepreneur must learn to embrace risks and face fears. These are the types of tasks that make her grit her teeth and shake her head in firm denial, but shutting her eyes will not make reality go away; it will only make for a bigger jolt when she opens them again.

Launching your own business is a risk in and of itself - many of our interviewees would agree, the biggest risk of your life, if you decide to take it. It may seem that you are throwing your entire future on the line, and in many ways, you are. There is no easy way to manage the risk factor, unless

you learn to embrace it. Like the card player who, realizing he has nothing left to lose, bluffs his way to the full pot, so the entrepreneur, perceiving that she have nothing and everything to lose, throws fear to the wind and marches with confidence toward her dreams. Embracing risk can be the trump card that sets you apart from the five thousand other American women with dreams, fears, and potential careers.

Patricia Baronowski-Schneider attributes her success in business to her risk taking nature and dedication to pursuing success. “I’ve never been afraid of taking risks,” she claims, and it’s too hard to believe; she is a licensed skydiving instructor in her spare time, and she chose to start her business in the midst of a nationwide financial crisis.

One of Elizabeth Dodson’s favorite phrases is the “leap of faith.” She took a leap of faith moving across the country, she took a leap of faith leaving her secure corporate position to work for a young start-up company, and she took a leap of faith launching *HomeZada* in her own name, and no one else’s. When she moved across states from a home she had known all her life to a completely new environment, she already knew that “risk-taking really is worth it.” She discovered that “the amount of knowledge gained from working in a fast-paced, up-and-coming organization further allowed for trial and errors and course corrections.” The risks she took often ended in mistakes and messes, but every single one of them proved important in determining the course of her career.

Risks, Elizabeth contends, can be profound contributors to success, a fact to which her story stands testimony. “Risk-taking,” she maintains, “allows the ability to create

environment of change and evolution. Constant change and evolution is necessary in order to continue to be successful in business.”

The biggest risk of Ashley Feinstein’s career came when she decided to leave her “cushy corporate job with benefits and a salary” to go it alone under her own name. “It was probably the scariest thing I have ever done,” she admits, “but also the most exciting and rewarding decision of my life.” She, too, attributes her success to “a lot of luck and getting out of my comfort zone.” Her advice to potential entrepreneurs is potent:

“When I started my new business, I was scared all the time. I still try to do something every day that scares me and something every week that really scares me. We often put limits on ourselves and what we believe we can do, but when you take a leap and put yourself out there, you might be surprised what you can actually accomplish and how much easier it gets the second and third time.”

Embracing risk often means facing fears head on, some of them so old and deeply rooted that you cannot remember a time in your life without it. Ashley goes on to recount her own struggle with a lifelong fear of public-speaking and the astounding truth that she discovered about relinquishing fear:

“I was really nervous to do any form of public speaking, but I realized that in order to get my message out and help more than one person at

a time, I needed to face my fear. I started with a group of ten women and started to [move towards] larger and larger groups. Last month, I spoke in front of 350 women at a conference, and while I was still nervous, I would never have even imagined doing something like that before. That's the beauty of getting out of your comfort zone: your comfort zone keeps getting bigger."

The larger that your comfort zone, the more room that your accomplishments and successes have to grow; the more that you find yourself enjoying the spontaneity of life, the more fulfilling that your successes, the less crippling your defeats. The bigger that you make your comfort zone, the more room that you have to live a bigger life.

There is a broad range of fears that one must learn to cope with. Some fears are crippling and need to be fully conquered before you can move forward with your life. Other fears can be exploited to your own betterment and success. The trick is knowing which fears to expel, and which to embrace. For instance, many of our interviewees have discovered that the fear of failure is a fear that, if it already exists within a person's psyche, is worth embracing and exploiting. When someone is afraid of something, they tend to push it away from themselves as much as possible. When someone is afraid of failure, their instinct will tell them to push failure away as much as possible. The only way to push failure away is to push yourself towards success. Fear is only dangerous if the fear is irrational either in proportion or in manifestation. To be afraid of the positives is unhealthy. To be afraid of the negatives — failure, solitude, death, or pain — is natural and

healthy, as long as it is not carried out of proportion. To be afraid of failure is natural. To push oneself so hard that you lose sight of the brilliance of life — that is unnatural. The trick lies in the balance.

In the case of entrepreneurs, fear of failure is a driving force that will push them past the boundaries of other, lesser fears (such as the fear of public speaking or of standing on one's own) in pursuit of their dreams. Cass Butler of *The Butler Enterprises* insists that one of the driving forces behind her success in business lies in her dedication, her work ethic, and her “desire for perfection — that mediocrity is *not* enough.” Behind her desire for perfection lies a deep-set fear of being left behind in the drudgery of life, the mediocrity of being just one nameless individual in a sea of white-collar nine-to-five businesswomen. Her fear of being left behind has driven her to incredible success.

The fear of failure can be stated in a much more understandable term: *determination*. I would submit that, if the fear of failure and determination are not interchangeable, they are at least interminably linked. Determination is the force with which one pushes forward, focusing their attention on the horizon and not on what lies behind them. When you take a risk as big as starting your own business, the fear of failure will nip persistently at your heels, calling you names, begging you to reconsider the enormous mistake that you have made, and the consequences that it is bound to bring. To avoid giving into this despair, you are forced to throw off misgivings and push forward with everything you've got as if, like that desperate, bluffing poker player, you have nothing left to lose.

In exploiting this fear of failure, be careful not to let it manifest itself in self-doubt, which will never be anything but crippling. It may seem an overtly delicate balancing act, but the trick is all in maintaining optimism. Do not let yourself slack, keep those consequences and that mediocrity in the corner of your vision, but do not focus on the negatives. “Have faith and celebrate the wins,” as Elizabeth Dodson says. She encourages women to build their confidence early, as preparation for the rocky, foreign terrain that you are bound to encounter and the trips and scuffs that you are bound to make along the way. The key is in focus. Where is your focus? A healthy dose of determination not to be left behind in the faceless crowd is good, as long as it does not become irrational. Sandi Lin of *Skilljar* even recommends practicing speaking with confidence in front of a mirror until you are comfortable, because confidence is so important.

If you constantly doubt yourself and your abilities, your weakness will wreak havoc on your chances at success. Insecurity can slice through your career as sharply as a fresh kitchen knife if you let yourself wallow too long in it. Paige Arnof-Fenn insists to aspiring women entrepreneurs: “You have to toughen up and get a thick skin to be successful. [...] If failure is not an option, you will find creative ways to make it work. Never give up!” In giving this valuable piece of advice, Paige perfectly synthesizes the idea of avoiding self-doubt and exploiting the fear of failure. Entrepreneurs must be tough, but they must also be conscious of the consequences of failure. If there was nothing valuable at stake when you leapt out on your own in the business world, why would the risk be worth it?

Success is about balance. It is about balance between exploiting fears and expelling fears. It is about balance between self-confidence and self-doubt; balance between idealism and realism; balance between meaningful lessons learned from past mistakes, and constantly keeping your focus on the future; balance between risk and reason; and, balance between failure and success. Do not let fear cripple your chances in realizing your dreams. Take the time to examine your unique splay of fears, identifying the ones that need to be worked through, and the ones you can exploit to your betterment. When you find the place where you can plow forward, fueled by determination and a consciousness of the potential for failure *and* the potential for success, and in plowing forward plow through all the barriers created by lesser, unnecessary fears, keeping your goals constantly in sight, Michelle Dale is right: success will be inevitable.

CHAPTER FIVE: BUMPS IN THE ROAD

One of the first bumps you will encounter in the road to entrepreneurial success will come with the introduction of a fresh new face into your specific business market. Everyone recognizes names like Barnes and Noble, Microsoft, Ford, and Capitol Records — but breaking into a market where no one has even heard your company’s name before can be a daunting prospect. You must prove to yourself, to competitors, and to consumers that your company has what it takes to deliver a special value unattainable by the likes of established and reputable corporations.

Patricia Baronowski-Schneider of *Pristine Advisers* admits that breaking her company into the market was one of the biggest obstacles that stood in the way on her path to success. She had already been working in her field, the financial communications and media relations industry, for over 25 years, and was frustrated when her company was initially treated like a group of amateurs. “When people know you are starting and need to get established,” she shares, “they do one of two things. They either panic, assume you don’t have

experience enough to do the job, and move on—or they do the opposite, expecting you to work your hardest while paying you the least, knowing that you need the experience under your belt to have something to show your new Company name.”

Pristine Advisers encountered both of these scenarios during their first years, and Patricia developed strategies to leap this hurdle and move on in her journey. What was her most effective strategy in gaining the confidence of clients and the respect of competitors? She learned to re-brand herself, playing on her company’s strengths. She exploited her 25 years of experience in the field, using it as a key marketing phrase to promote her company. That was her way of setting her company apart from the dozens of other start-up businesses with little to no credibility or experience. Branding your company and playing to your strengths is most key during your companies’ early, foundational years, as it will shape how others in the business will look at you and treat you for, potentially, years to come.

Perhaps the only early bump you will find more difficult than putting a fresh face on the market, is putting your fresh new *female* face on the market. As much as the times are still changing, many feminine stereotypes still linger on in the business world, and it can be unduly frustrating trying to break through those stiff stereotypes in order to be taken seriously by colleagues and competitors. Patricia Baronowski-Schneider elaborates on the unique difficulties facing female entrepreneurs entering the business:

“Female entrepreneurs have to be strong and be willing to fight for what they believe in. They also

have to work harder to be taken serious. I have two female colleagues and we were once referred to during a meeting as ‘Charlie’s angels.’ It is hard to be taken seriously at times, even in this day and age, sadly. We must be prepared to work harder to prove ourselves.”

It is the hard, unfair truth: female businesswomen will always have more hurdles to jump in their pursuit of success than their male colleagues; however, learning to jump those hurdles with grace and ease will only make the success all the sweeter when at last it is reached. This is what Patricia and the rest of our interviewees have found. An anonymous young interviewee repeats this sentiment with unapologetic confidence: “When they say, ‘You throw like a girl! You run like a girl!’, show them how girls really throw and how fast we really run!”

Besides this first hurdle, the one hurdle universal to all entrepreneurs: entering the business, there are also a myriad of other bumps one is bound to encounter along their entrepreneurial journey. Some of them are reflective of the entrepreneur in general, but others are simply the result of the personal ups and downs, ins and outs of your unique business endeavor. There is no catch-all solution to fighting these rocky stretches except to keep your head down and plow forward as best you can, clutching tight to the passion that brought you this far. Not one of our interviewees reached the success that they have today without sloshing through those muddy patches, climbing those rocky hills, leaping over those crevices that threaten the road ahead of them. Each of these women shared with us specific difficulties that they

have encountered in their business, also giving us glimpses of the passion that drove them through.

Monique Hayward of *Nouveau Connoisseurs Corporation* thought she had reached the end of her line when her dessert bar, *Dessert Noir Café & Bar*, began to plummet in sales and revenue. After consulting with her mentor, none other than Morgan Freeman, she realized with chagrin that “even the most optimistic of entrepreneurs like me cannot overcome negative cash flow in the long term.” She now sees the failure of her restaurant business as one of her biggest successes; once she learned to let it go and review her options, she was able to utilize the experience, writing, and publishing for her first book on the subject, and receiving invaluable exposure as an expert in small business. She was then able to reposition and re-launch herself, this time as *Nouveau Connoisseurs Corporation*, and exploit her years of business experience to monumental success.

One of the biggest obstacles that Cass Butler faced in launching *Butler Enterprises* was an aggravating lack of networking within her marketing community. While she was always quick to refer clients, customers, and even strangers to other prospective businesses when the opportunity presented itself, Cass found that the favor was rarely returned by her competitors. She reports:

“I have found that there appears to be an absence of reciprocal referrals. It’s almost as if we have a mindset of, ‘Either I make *all* of the money or none, but I refuse to help another business gain a new customer.’ That is very sad to me. We are missing

out on becoming a mega-conglomerate as other ethnicities (Hispanics, Africans, and Asians) who frequent each other's businesses.”

Naysayers and competitors present what is perhaps the most intimidating obstacle to new business owners. Elizabeth Dodson advocates that “moving forward past the naysayers is probably one of the hardest obstacles that any founder will face when starting their company. It is important to have faith and celebrate the wins.” When competitors feel threatened by your success, they may react with blatant hostility. “Stand tall and be prepared to be bullied,” Patricia Baronowski-Schneider warns fellow female entrepreneurs. “I have had competitors go out of their way to try and put me out of business. Why? Because they are afraid of competition. The way I see it? They *should* be!”

The best way to deal with these menacing faces is to shrug your shoulders and move on. As Patricia says, they are only afraid because they should be; the fact that they are paying you attention means that you must be on to something. Convert their negativity into optimism, and press forward with renewed confidence that you are headed in the right direction. “Don't let anyone rattle your cage,” Marisa Silver directs. “It's just business. Stay focused on your goals.”

Claudia Zanes has seen a different, equally negative side to the bumps created by competition. “At first you're frustrated — you want your competition to use their own imagination instead of stealing your ideas. But then, you realize that this is a good thing because it keeps your company innovative and creative.” In learning to stay ahead of her competitors,

Claudia, too, turns the negativity into useful fuel for the success of her company. Learning this conversion from negative to positive is key if you are going to succeed in business. It doesn't matter what the hurdle is that you are facing; if it is negative, find a way to twist it around and see the other side of the equation. If it were a failure, find the lesson to learn and move on. A negative is never purely a negative. There are always redeemable elements in it to be converted and exploited. The key to the entrepreneur's success is their ability to do just this.

All of these failures and hurdles that interviewees have shared with us are unique to the business owners experiencing them. No two failures should look exactly alike. No two hurdles should be approached exactly the same way. However, what all of these entrepreneurial women share in common when facing these challenges is their binding determination to see it through, whatever "it" may be, to the other side. "When most people would've quit, I only hustled harder," Lori Cheek declares, and nestled in that sentence glows the spirit of entrepreneurship.

CHAPTER SIX: PRACTICAL ADVICE

Even when the road seems smooth and the horizon bright, the entrepreneur faces challenges every day – decisions to be made, employees to hire, plans to construct, and products to promote – there is always something. Like Cass Butler says, your hours are no longer 9 to 7; your career will demand your attention 24/7. Sometimes it is not the great, daunting decisions, and mistakes that threaten to cripple the entrepreneur; sometimes it is the little, everyday decisions and responsibilities that wear us down. This is why we asked each of our interviewees to share with us any practical advice they might have regarding the specific responsibilities of being an entrepreneur. Their answers ranged on topics from personal knowledge and awareness, employees, social media, planning, and seeking guidance. In this chapter, we have sought to consolidate the key pieces of advice that our interviewees had to offer.

The first area this practical advice speaks to is the area of self-awareness. In any area of business, an objective view of oneself and one's company is crucial, and this is never more

important than when making a major business decision. Katherine Graham of *Heritage Contracting* explains the concept of performing “Self Check-In” in the face of these decisions:

“When meeting with a major choice, decision, or opportunity, always perform a ‘Self Check-In’ to chart your personal goals and motivations. Being clear in your intentions will stop you from falling victim to the expectations of family, friends, colleagues, the media, strangers, and society. Perform a personal inventory of your haves and have-nots. When you have accomplished something wonderful, ask yourself, ‘Did I get what I came here for?’ Hopefully your answer will be, ‘Yes; that and more.’”

Katherine points out that the expectations of others often like to masquerade as our own desires. The challenge is not distancing yourself from your personal perspective of the business; it is learning to differentiate between what you truly desire and what others desire of you. When faced with an important fork in the road, be quick to identify the option that factors that genuinely appeal to you as the business owner, as well as the factors that you feel obligated to consider due to the expectations of those around you. Both are important, but being the owner of a business means that your priorities should be of untouched importance.

An easy way to insure that you do not get blind-sided with too many baffling decisions is to outline your business plan using as many specifics as possible, and furthermore, to

keep checking back on that business plan and updating it as necessary. Nancy Butler of *Above All Else, Success in Life and Business* could not stress the importance of a well-structured business plan strongly enough:

“Develop and follow a great written business plan, and track it on a regular basis. Implement a great time management system and model week to better assure you are using all of your time efficiently and effectively. Make sure you take uninterrupted time each week to work on the business rather than in the business. This means time to plan and implement changes you will make to propel the business to greater success.”

Once again, the importance of perspective is heavily stressed. It can be all too easy to let the daily turmoil of the entrepreneur’s life sweep you along; the scenery begins to blur as you are carried along downstream. Nancy’s advice is to keep yourself grounded in reality by implementing a specific, detailed business plan and taking time to step outside of your many roles as an entrepreneur on a regular basis, in order to evaluate and redefine your strategy. Keeping it all in perspective is key.

Another practical way to develop a broader, more objective perspective is to travel. Several of our interviewees told of how their travels abroad served to enhance both their technical knowledge and their overall perspective of their business. Lisa Besserman of *Startup Buenos Aires* specifically points to her travels both nationally and internationally as keys to her success in business. When asked about the advice

that she would give to aspiring female entrepreneurs, her answer came readily:

“I would tell young aspiring businesswomen to travel. See the world, experience other cultures, and gain an understanding of the world in which we live. It will surprise you how much you can learn by going abroad. Traveling has opened my eyes, given me a fresh, new insight of the world, and enriched me in ways that are constantly utilized in business.”

Entrepreneurship is about being a student first, as Claudia Zanes says, and there is no better way to educate oneself about the world than to go out and see it with your own eyes, touch it with your hands, and speak to it with your own voice. “This is the reason,” Claudia says, “I brought in a global leader and speaker like Lisa Nichols to inspire and teach my team at a whole new level. It is why I travel globally, following my own renowned teacher and mentor, Tony Robbins.” By exploring the world, we gain experience that, although challenging to translate into words, will serve us more faithfully than any degree or diploma possibly could. For Michelle Dale, international travel was what first led her to the life-changing to quit her 9 to 5 city job, and make entrepreneurial traveling her life’s journey.

Surrounding yourself with a competent team of individuals focused on a common goal is also important. Elizabeth Dodson recommends that female entrepreneurs “align yourself with the right people.” Monique Hayward advises that “your business is only as good as the people you hire.” Lori Cheek

echoes the importance of surrounding yourself with a “trusted and talented team.” But how to go about building that trusted, talented team? When cover letters, resumes, and interviews begin to overwhelm and the choice seems hazy, it is important to have a clear picture of what you are looking for in a member of your team. Claudia Zanes of *Zanes Law* expounds on the hallmarks of an invaluable employee.

“Attitude is *the number one* thing [to look for in] an invaluable employee. It’s priceless. I also value intelligence, good judgment, and the street smarts in someone. You can get the good grades, memorize the speech, shake hands, etc., but the intelligence I’m talking about is rooted in someone who can understand the black and the white but still navigate the gray – which is where life (and business) usually sticks you.

But you know, as I think about it more, it’s bigger than attitude – it’s your outlook, your perspective on *life*. How you view life will be a reflection on how you view your job, your career path, your peers, and your boss. For instance, most everyone on my team has a pretty great outlook on life. They’re people who allow things to roll off their backs, and no one gets stuck in ‘this or that’ issues for very long. It’s extremely efficient for productivity when you can acknowledge the mistake or barrier, find a solution, and keep on rolling.

Let me make a note here and say I am not dismissing experience as a valuable tool and reminder for

the present. However, if you are still dwelling in the negative, or you cannot transform that problem or mistake you had (inside or outside of work) into an opportunity to learn and move forward, then that says a lot about your outlook on life.”

Tellingly, what Claudia looks for in an employee is the same characteristic stressed to be necessary in the entrepreneur herself: *balanced perspective*. Candidates may dazzle on paper; their resumes may be dripping with credentials, merits, diplomas, and honors — but when interviewing for employees, it is the *attitude* of the candidate that needs scrutinizing above all else. This will require you to read between the lines of their carefully cultivated answers, looking beyond the credentials at what lies beneath. Claudia adds, “Each team member has to be the right fit in terms of intelligence and being in alignment with the culture of your firm or it won’t work — trust me.”

However, the single most important advice that our interviewees have to offer is to *embrace your support system*. Over and over again, we found that the fuel behind these ladies’ successes was directly linked to their reliance on a support system of friends, family, and colleagues who genuinely cared and invested in their success. The profusion of voices heralding the importance of a strong support system is nearly overwhelming. To give you a glimpse of the power a support system can provide, here are a few of the praises sung by our interviewees of their invaluable support systems:

- “I attribute my success to [...] a deep, extensive network of people who I can call on to help me solve problems, fill gaps,

*take advantage of opportunities, and make things happen.”
Monique Hayward, Nouveau Connoisseurs Corporation*

- *“As you grow bigger as a company, your support system becomes invaluable. What I’ve learned (especially in the last few years) is with a team, you can do something grand. But when you have partners, you can do something legendary. You can have a legacy.”
Claudia Zanes, Zanes Law*
- *“Surrounding myself with supportive friends and family during my entrepreneurial journey has trumped any physical tool, book, or resource. It’s been an intense struggle, and I couldn’t have made it this far without these amazing people cheering me on to the finish line.”
Lori Cheek, Cheek’d*
- *“My most important advice is that if you decide to get married, marry someone who supports your goals and your dreams —otherwise, it’s hard to accomplish those objectives.” Marisa Silver, In the Zone Personal Fitness*
- *“Having a partner who understands and supports your passion is very important for women in business. I’m fortunate to have a husband who not only supports my business endeavors and goals, but who also encourages me and understands the hectic lifestyle of an entrepreneur.”
Lisa Besserman, Startup Buenos Aires*
- *“Recognize that your children and your family are your wealth just as much as any work or monetary success.”
Jasmine Lombardi, Intronis, Inc.*

- *“I have a very supportive family who are consistently behind me and my entrepreneurial endeavors, which is an amazing help and very encouraging.” Michelle Dale, Virtual Miss Friday Ltd.*
- *“My parents taught me to work hard, learn quickly, respect others, and take responsibility for my decisions. Their support in my decisions has given me the confidence to take risks in my career. [...] I am very thankful for their encouragement.” Sandi Lin, Skilljar*

The entrepreneur’s road can be a lonely one, but when surrounded by loved ones who support, challenge, and encourage, the road begins to take on a much brighter hue. Once again, perspective is key. When the entrepreneur is reminded that her journey is not one that she has to undergo alone, her confidence will surge a renewed energy and vitality she may not even have believed possible. This is a secret that our interviewees have held dear.

To wrap up, here are a few gold pieces, practical advice from female entrepreneurs who have made it to the top:

- *“Get on social media. Yes it can be time consuming and seem a bit overwhelming, but it will allow you to network and build relationships within whatever industry you are pursuing. Plus, it’s a great way to connect with existing and potential new customers. You can connect and reach people in places you never thought you could.” Sarah Haley, Sarah Haley Fitness*
- *“Give your team a clear set of guidelines to base their decisions off of, and teach them how to dupli-*

cate your efforts. Once you have empowered them, they will find greater fulfillment in their jobs, and you will find the freedom to enjoy your success.”
Heidi Lamar, Spa Lamar

- *“Don’t be afraid to ask. Women often try to do everything themselves and are afraid of being rejected when asking for help, investment dollars, customer sales, and other business needs. You have to ask in order to get what you want. Practice in the mirror until you’re comfortable.”*
Sandi Lin, Skilljar
- *“Be creative. Focus on the task and expand on what you’ve already created to grow your business.”* Shannon Van Buskirk, GovX
- *“Understand the value of independence.”* Jasmine Lombardi, Intronis, Inc.
- *“Take action. Too many people overthink things to the point where they talk themselves out of it. Just do it. Stop procrastinating, and stop asking for permission to live your life on your terms.”*
Kisha Mays, Just Fearless, LLC.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CHANGE

“Change is the law of life,” John F. Kennedy once said, “and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.” Regardless of whether your business is one year old, twenty years old, or is still drifting through the intangible idea stage — regardless of whether your business is in making spas, marketing technology, or retailing vinyl records—regardless of whether you have five employees or five dozen — regardless of whether your niche market is frequented by hundreds or thousands or even simply dozens — regardless of any and all variables, nothing, absolutely *nothing*, can exempt your business from being subject to change. It is, indeed, the law of life, and there is no escaping it. The choices we make when faced with changes, whether in the market environment, within the business itself, or indirectly through changes in lifestyle, will come to shape and define our businesses.

Perhaps the most formidable changes are those that appear to come out of nowhere, often sweeping the unprepared into a sudden panic. There are, however, preventative measures

that one can take to prepare for such changes in the marketing environment. The biggest step that an entrepreneur can take to prepare for uninvited change is to know the market, and the competition. Make it a point to know the environment in which you have invested so much of yourself. Keep up to speed on reading related news and media, keep a tight grasp on your network, and make it a point to constantly broaden your perspective. In focusing on the bigger picture from various points of view, you equip yourself with the perspective necessary to face sudden changes in the environment with wisdom and clarity.

Paige Arnof-Fenn of *Mavens and Moguls* persevered through the recession of 2008-2011, one of the biggest unwanted financial changes in the United States — and not only did she persevere, but she came through the downturn “stronger than ever, with terrific clients.” Her secret? She shares: “I believe that our success is due to hard work, listening to the market, being responsive to changing needs, and keeping the team’s skills fresh. We are constantly learning and growing.” Paige has learned not to let circumstances mold her company, but to respond to change with wisdom and practicality. She knows that “luck plays a role, but you also make your luck by working hard, surrounding yourself with smart people, not taking yourself too seriously, and keeping a good sense of humor.” Do not let negative circumstances fog your vision; keep your attitude light and your focus clear. Know your environment; know how it acts, know how it responds, how it changes and what effects those changes might have. Know it thoroughly, and know it well.

However, not all changes in business are negative, and not all changes need to be warded off. One of the most important concepts to realize when it comes to change is that change is often *good*. It is necessary, but that is not a fact that we must resign ourselves to; the successful entrepreneur learns to embrace change and make it her own. Our first reaction to change should not be fear, apprehension, or panic —it should be, primarily, a reaction of hope, for where there is change, there is always room for improvement and for triumph. As Elizabeth Dodson points out, “constant change and evolution is necessary in order to continue to be successful in business.” Change is important, and it is positive. Change is not something to protest, fear, and avoid; it is meant to be embraced. The entrepreneur owes their entire success to change.

Innovation is perhaps the most important sort of change for the entre-preneur. Gale Rosenberg readily attests to the fact that her firm’s success “stems from constant evolution, embracing the new, and changing retail environments where music is sold.” Gale has discovered a secret. Instead of letting outside circum-stances change her business strategy, she has reversed the psychology by shaping the environment with her own changes. The key to innovation: change the environment; don’t let the environment change you. Marisa Silver also attests to the power of change. Her advice to aspiring entrepreneurs: “Know when it is time to change the game. Never be afraid to experiment — within reason, of course.” Make the changes before the changes make you.

Starting a business on your own implies innovation in and of itself, but in order to keep one step ahead of competition,

you will have to constantly find new ways to innovate and shape your business into something newer, greater; you will find something more exciting, more refreshing, and more unique. Claudia Zanes sees her competition as a good “obstacle” to overcome when chasing success. “At first you are frustrated,” she says. “You want your competition to use their own imagination instead of stealing your ideas. But then, you realize that this is a good thing, because it keeps your company innovative and creative.” It is almost as if she seeks accountability from her competition; knowing that they are watching, paying attention, ready to snatch every brilliant idea you put forth, means that you have to be constantly making up new ideas, creating new strategies, and finding new ways to surprise them. Her approach to business exploits anything and everything; she knows the power of change, no matter what form it may take. Of her love for adopting new ideas, she says:

“I try to read nothing in my specific industry. I don’t run this law firm in a typical or traditional fashion — I never have. Instead, I apply anything nontraditional and successful — plain and simple. If a successful tactic, idea, concept, or trajectory comes from another law firm, then great. But if it comes from a fashion guru who has built a massive empire, that is equally valuable and applicable information to me.”

Nancy Butler of *Above All Else, Success in Life and Business* suggests taking “uninterrupted time each week to work on the business rather than in the business... this means time to plan and implement changes you will make to propel the business

to greater success.” As mentioned earlier, the broader perspective is crucial. Do not let the daily bustle of running a business and wearing all the hats push you under so that you lose sight of the scenery. Make a point of stepping back every once in a while and looking around you, taking it all in, grasping the bigger picture. Consider the direction that you are heading, and what changes you can implement to steer yourself towards the brighter lights.

One of the most important arenas in which positive changes can be implemented for the betterment of a business is in the arena of technology. Nancy Butler is quick to voice praise for the benefits of exploiting modern technology in business: “I absolutely love technology. What is most important is that you do not get ‘stuck’ with any favorite website, gadget, tool, or mobile application for business, since there are constant improvements and new tools to streamline the business and make it more efficient and profitable. Keep your mind, ears, and budget ready to take on opportunities to improve.”

In the spirit of innovation and expanding horizons, we asked each of our interviewees to name us their favorite website, gadget, tool, or mobile application that they use in their business. Below, we have compiled some of their answers, with the hope that they will provide you as an aspiring entrepreneur to embrace new technology and exploit it to the betterment of your business.

- *“My team and I use Asana as our project management system, while one of my favorite apps is Wanderlist... I use (it) to manage my ever growing to-do lists.”
Lisa Besserman, Startup Buenos Aires*

- *“LinkedIn is a great business networking tool that has helped introduce me to many contacts.” Patricia Baronowski-Schneider, Pristine Advisers*
- *“Contactually is my new favorite tool for managing my personal and business relationships. It manages all my contacts and reminds me to keep in touch with people, when I last spoke with them, and it syncs with my texts, email, phone calls, and social media. The wonderful thing about programs like that is that they take weight off your mind, allow you to be more creative, and focus your mindshare on more important things.” Ashley Feinstein, Knowing Your Worth*
- *“Dropbox... keeps me organized, allows for easy sharing of files, and makes sure that my computer doesn’t explode!” Sara Haley, Sara Haley Fitness*
- *“HARO. I use this (Public Relations) tool every day to implement a champagne marketing plan on a bottled water budget.” Heidi Lamar, Spa Lamar*
- *“Snag-It by Techsmith. For those of us who don’t have the luxury of an in-house designer, you can create graphic artwork in a hurry without having to learn Photoshop. We still use professionals when warranted, but about 85% of our graphics (business cards, ads, screencast tutorials for incoming staffers, etc) is done in-house using Snag-It.” Gale Rosenberg, Web ‘n Retail*
- *“EchoSign is a great tool for sending documents via email for signatures.” Cass Butler, The Butler Enterprises*

- *“My iCloud Calendar. My assistants love it! It never lets me down.” Janet Aizenstros, Janet Aizenstros Omni Media, Inc.*
- *“My favorite business websites are Inc. Magazine, Forbes, Fast Company, Entrepreneur Magazine, and anything (that) my peers are recommending.” Claudia Zanes, Zanes Law*
- *“My favorite tools on the internet are Google, Instagram, or Twitter. What better way to keep your ear to the ground and see what the world is thinking about topics (that) you’re passionate about. It’s a great resource for new and inventive ideas.” Marisa Silver, In the Zone Personal Fitness*
- *“Rapportive is a tool that sits within Gmail. I can immediately reverse lookup any email address, and find all of a contact’s social media profiles. It’s very helpful to see a quick view of the person’s LinkedIn history, latest tweets, and more.” Sandi Lin, Skilljar*
- *“I use the Day One app from the Mac store to record an accountability journal each day which keeps me motivated and on track, and I really couldn’t do without Google Apps in my business, and ActiveCollab.com for working with clients and team members.” Michelle Dale, Virtual Miss Friday Ltd.*
- *“Promise not to tell anyone... Pinterest.” Mary Crafts-Homer, Culinary Crafts*

Mary’s answer may tickle a smile, but it also touches on

an important point when it comes to technology and social media in particular: *enjoy it*. While we may begin to feel guilty when we find ourselves enjoying sites like Pinterest, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, it is important to realize that keeping an active presence in social media and interacting with potential clients is massively useful for the promotion of a business. As long as you keep a firm check on the amount of time that you allot to social media, and the ways in which you present yourself and your company online, there is no reason to feel guilty investing yourself in networking. Social networking *should* be enjoyable. Nobody ever said that it had to be done in stolen, guilty moments. Integrate social media in your business plan, and let go of the guilt.

Take charge of your business. Make the changes in order to get the results you want to see. Do not sit back and let the currents pull you where they will; use the oars that you have been given to steer your business in the direction that you want it to go. The entrepreneurs with whom we conversed are living proof that with determination, vision, and a readiness to exploit change, success is more than possible. Consider the timeless words of Mahatma Gandhi: “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.”

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE SECRET WORDS

Now that we have touched on various aspects of the entrepreneurial journey from formation through maturation, visiting many of the twists and turns and bumps along the way, it is time to wrap everything up with the grand reveal. Throughout the interviews we conducted, there runs four important veins — keys that encompass all of the themes and advice discussed so far, and keys to understanding what it is, precisely, that makes an entrepreneur successful. These keys are simple. They are relatable. They can be boiled down into words — just four words; they are words repeated, alluded to, and played on throughout our interviews. Within these four words is embedded the secret to finding success in the entrepreneurial world.

The first of these words is both the most surprising and the most recurring of the themes found in our interviews. That word is *realized*. Each of the women that we spoke with began their entrepreneurial journey with a specific moment of realization, an “a-ha!” moment, in which the idea for their business was first hatched. This was not something that we

had to infer from their answers; the actual word, *realized*, came up time and time again in our conversations. Here are just a few of the notable recurrences:

- *“I had been working for other firms, when in reality, they had no idea what it was I was even doing. I realized eventually that I did not need a big company to service my clients; all I needed was me and my determination.”
Patricia Baronowski-Schneider, Pristine Advisers*
- *“During my journey to learn about personal finance for myself, I realized there wasn’t really anything out there for women in their twenties, and started to work with that market.”
Ashley Feinstein, Knowing Your Worth*
- *“When I became pregnant with my first child, I realized that there was a piece missing in the prenatal fitness market. No one had created a workout system for ‘fit’ women looking to stay safe and healthy during their pregnancy.”
Sara Haley, Sara Haley Fitness*
- *“I was trying to take care of my home and realized that tools did not exist to give me the visibility and management of my home I needed. I continued to search for tools for many years but realized that if there was not a company that was going to help me manage one of my large assets, I had to build that company and solution myself.”
Elizabeth Dodson, HomeZada*
- *“I quickly realized after I left, about three months later, that I wanted to make traveling my lifestyle, and that’s when I started researching ideas of how to make money online.”
Michelle Dale, Virtual Miss Friday, Ltd.*

Even when the word itself was missing, many businesswomen alluded to that magic moment when the idea for their business first “clicked.” One of our anonymous interviewees called it “an epiphany I had,” while Janet Aizenstros refers to it as her “awakening moment.” Sometimes, this moment comes out of nowhere, as was the case for Lori Cheek of *Cheek’d*, who shares the story of how she stumbled on a moment of realization in the most unlikely of settings:

“In February of 2008, I was out to dinner with an architectural colleague. He’d spotted an attractive woman at a nearby table and scribbled ‘want to have dinner?’ on the back of his business card and slipped it to her as we were leaving the restaurant. He left with a date. I left with an idea.”

In other cases, the direction is there all along; it is just a matter of realizing its true potential. This was Cass Butler’s testimony: “Planning, hosting, and marketing have always been in my background, truly for more than twenty years. It was just a matter of time before I answered my true calling.”

The heart of it is, though, that the first step each of these women took toward entrepreneurship was in experiencing that initial moment of realization, of calling. They were *called* to a cause by direct, personal experiences. Awakenings. The entrepreneur is awakened to their calling.

But these realizations share one very important quality, a quality that, in order to ensure a successful business, absolutely cannot be found lacking. That quality is our second

secret word: *specificity*. The entrepreneur's cause must be specific; it must be nailed down and knotted to a very specific niche market. As the journey continues and their business grows, that niche will grow with it, but in order to get people's attention and succeed in an intensely competitive realm, one must tailor their products or services to specific individuals.

Lisa Besserman's specific market was a network of technical connections between Buneos Aires, New York, and San Francisco. Ashley Feinstein focuses on helping young women in their twenties to understand and manage their personal finances more efficiently. Monique Hayward envisioned "sophisticated, welcoming places that take evening entertainment in the suburbs to a higher level of indulgence and sophistication." Sara Haley targeted the market of prenatal fitness, catering to women entering pregnancy as fit and capable individuals seeking to maintain their good health. Lori Cheek founded a company that introduces "a personal approach to online dating by moving the initial encounter offline with a smooth physical introduction." *Janet Aizenstros Omni Media* is a "virtual media company that aids women in changing how they are perceived in media by allowing them the luxury of creating media content on their own terms." Claudia Zanes became one of the only non-attorney spokespeople in Arizona running a law firm. Sandi Lin of *Skilljar* began by "offering... a consumer search engine for online courses."

Specificity is essential. It requires heart: seeing a need and filling it. If you are motivated by a genuine love for others, a desire to make others' lives a brighter existence, you have an incredible advantage in the entrepreneurial world; it

gives you the ability to perceive needs that others gloss over, and in seeking to fill those needs, the entrepreneurial journey begins. Lisa Besserman saw the chance to “make an impact in a city that needed it, a chance to give people the tools and resources they needed for success, while growing a more comprehensive, collaborative environment for entrepreneurship in Argentina.” It was this empathy for fellow entrepreneurs and businesspeople that fueled her determination in the creation of *Startup Buenos Aires*. “Creating a startup community in a foreign country was a big challenge,” she admits, “but one I saw as an opportunity.” Her statement implies a very valuable mindset, focused empathetically on serving others. “To me,” she says, “success is measured by the lives we touch and the impact we make in this world. [...] No amount of accolades or awards are more valuable than the lives we touch and the change we make.” Empathy cannot be falsified

The third of the secret words is one of the most all-encompassing. It has many synonyms, was hinted at in varying degrees throughout the interviews, and is completely intangible, and yet touches every aspect of the entrepreneur’s life. That word is *tenacity*. Tenacity is a character trait that every entrepreneur must share in order to be successful. The tenacity can be fueled by many things — by a passion for people, a determination to reach the top, a love for challenge, the desire to prove something — or by any combination thereof. If there was one character trait required to become an entrepreneur, it would be tenacity. Each of our interviewees has demonstrated this character quality time and again in their journey. As we have seen, the entrepreneur will be tested over and over along the way by a host of trials, fears,

changes, and bumps in the road. Tenacity is the juice that sees them through even the roughest of seasons. Michelle Dale of *Virtual Miss Friday* exemplifies the spirit of tenacity in her succinct advice to female entrepreneurs: “Find something you love to do and give it your all, every day, no corner-cutting or half-measures. Be grateful and appreciative during the good times, and remember to keep going through the bad times – keeping in mind the reasons why you started in the first place – and success is inevitable.”

The fourth and last of the secret words, coming on the heels of tenacity, is *dissatisfaction*. The entrepreneur is dissatisfied with the status quo; they see something that could be better, and they seek to make it so. Entrepreneurs are never satisfied; they are constantly seeking improvement, betterment, and success. No matter how successful their business, they never see themselves as “there” yet. Some of our interviewees have lined their walls with medals and awards given to their business, but even the most successful of them still seemed to express an inexplicable *dissatisfaction* with where they are now, and a tenacity that keeps them pressing upwards, inwards, higher, deeper, and greater.

Claudia Zanes echoes the sentiment of dissatisfaction: “When you reach the top, it doesn’t mean it’s time to rest – it means it’s time to do something better than your competitors, adding more value than anyone else in your market and in your industry.” This year, Lisa Besserman was awarded the 2014 “Business Innovator of Latin America” by the Council of the Americas, and yet, more than anything, she sees this accolade first and foremost as something that has allowed her “to continue to work towards bringing more opportunities

to Latin America.” The entrepreneur is always searching for *more*. More opportunities. More lives to touch. More money to make. More countries to visit. More employees. More dedicated customers. More impact. More success.

Dissatisfaction affects all aspects of an entrepreneur’s life — in and outside of her business. This trait makes the entrepreneur quick to identify issues in both her home life and her business. It fuels her ability to take risks and make sound judgment calls, and it fuels her determination to overcome fears and changes along the way. Dissatisfaction demands improvement, improvement demands action, and action leads to success.

Lori Cheek revealed her dissatisfaction with the present perhaps unknowingly, in a revealing comment that she made in response to the question “what do you most attribute to your success?” She says, “I think my personal approach, passion, and dedication mixed with my relentless conviction that failure is not an option has been the recipe that will ultimately lead to my success.” Keep in mind that *Cheek’d* has been lauded by The New York Times, has been invited to participate on The Oprah Winfrey Show, and has customers in forty-seven American states and twenty-eight international countries. With such an impressive record of achievements, why would Lori still speak of victory in the *future* tense, believing her mix of powerful personal qualities *will* ultimately lead to her success? By anyone else’s standards, she has most certainly already achieved success of the most magnificent kind, but by Lori’s standards, she is still not *there* yet. And, she never will be. Never satisfied, always changing, and always growing. That is the mindset of the entrepreneur.

CHAPTER NINE: THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

There you have it: all the slivers of gold siphoned down from the research and interviews that we invested in writing this book have now been passed along to you. At last, we're even. This book was designed for the prospective female entrepreneur, not to give her the step-by-step guide to growing her business, but rather, to nurture the seed of inspiration in her that is the focal point for all successful entrepreneurs. It was written to help her come to the realization that she does, indeed, have what it takes to thrive as an independent woman in business.

If you have made it this far, you know that entrepreneurs run on a variety of motivational fuels. You know that, while some entrepreneurs find their success out of the most basic tug of necessity, others are driven by a integral passion for their work, by a genuine love for people, by a longing to see progress, and even by the desire for financial security. You know that the entrepreneur's success is rooted in their perception of a need, and in their determination to fill it.

If you have made it this far, you know that every businesswoman has a special story all her own, and that her success is based in the fact that she has learned to exploit the uniqueness of her story for the betterment of herself and her business. You know that entrepreneurship means using everything, whether it be failures, education, connections, or mistakes. You know that the entrepreneur learns to recognize the limited extent of her knowledge, and that she knows when to seek guidance from the wisdom of her mentors. You know that to an entrepreneur, exploiting oneself means using everything and never looking back.

If you have made it this far, you know that even the worst of fears can be transformed into food for the journey. You know that embracing risks and setting your sights on the highest mountain peaks will make the climb worthwhile. You know that learning to face your fears with confidence is half the battle, and that while self-doubt should always be smothered and dispelled, the fear of failure can often be exploited with dynamic results, if you simply determine to never let failure become an option.

If you have made it this far, you know that no journey is completed without encountering bumps and twists in the road, but you also know that female entrepreneurs have successfully traversed these roads before, and that you can do it, too. You know that being seen as a new face in the market can be a challenge, as can be the female stereotypes you are bound to encounter. You know that there will always be competitors to copy your most innovative of ideas and naysayers to remind you of all the reasons why you will never succeed — but, you also know that it is possible to stay

one step ahead of your uncreative competitors, and that it is possible to prove your critics wrong in the most satisfying of ways. You know that you are bound to failure, that there is no getting around it; you also know that your failures are going to make your success just that much more breathtaking.

If you have made it this far, you know that being an entrepreneur means facing new business decisions and crises every day, and you know that many of these are universal to the entrepreneur's journey. You know that entrepreneurs need a strong support system in order to thrive, and that they should travel as often as possible in order to gain a greater perspective on the people that they seek to serve. You know that hiring the right employees is positively crucial. You know that social media can be more of a blessing than many may seem to let on. You know that it is important never to lose sight of your focus, to always have a structured plan in place, and to know when to ask for help when you feel yourself sinking.

If you have made it this far, you know that change is inevitable. You know that as an entrepreneur, it is important to know the market in which you have invested, and to keep a close eye on your competitors and your target of consumers. You know the importance of constant innovation in staying ahead of the pack, and you know that it is better to throw aside limits and use everything from everywhere than to sit back and watch your competitors steal your ideas and push forward without you.

If you have made it this far, you know the four secret words. You know that every entrepreneur has experienced

that epiphany moment when they *realized* a need and felt the call to fill it. You know that *specificity* is crucial in planning a business and identifying a market. You know that *tenacity*, the “never say die” spirit, is a trait that all successful entrepreneurs share. And, you know that the entrepreneur is *dissatisfied* with the status quo, and that it is that innate dissatisfaction that drives them forward, further than everyone else.

If you have made it this far, it means that you have felt the tug to follow in these women’s footsteps, the tug to make your own mark in the business world. If you have made it this far, it means you have the spark of desire to be a woman in business. And, if you have made it this far, we hope that here among these pages, you have become just a little more acquainted with what exactly this endeavor is going to sap out of you, and hopefully it has not scared you away. Then again, if you have made it this far, it is fairly safe to say that that is not the case. Far from being scared away, the very fact that you have indeed made it this far means that something has kept you reading, something has kept you longing for more. That thirst, that dissatisfaction, that passion for more — that is the mustard seed of success just waiting to sprout. Planted in the right soil, it has the potential to grow into something incredible. Are you willing to take the chance?

With this book, our goal was to give you the first rudimentary tools that you need to mobilize you towards starting your own business, if that is indeed your desire. However, we cannot start the business for you. Now that you have read these women’s words. You have heard what they have had to say about their journeys — the good, the bad, and the ugly. Are you

ready to start *your* journey? Entrepreneurship means action. From C.G. Jung, the Swiss founder of analytical psychology, comes the powerful dictum: “You are what you do, not what you say you’ll do.” Who are you, and what will you do?

The meat of the book has been delivered, but there is a bit left to the packaging. Now that you have these tools, these women’s advice and their knowledge and the four secret words pumping through it all, we thought it would be helpful for you to see all of the elements of the successful entrepreneur’s life come together in a more linear model. That is why, following this chapter, we have included three case studies following the stories of three of our interviewees: Claudia Zanes, Lori Cheek, and Monique Hayward. In each of these women’s unique stories, you will see all the elements that we have discussed come together in stories of incredible and profound success.

Following these case studies, we have also included a series of study questions designed to help you as the prospective entrepreneur to narrow down what it is you want to do with your business, and how you are practically going to go about realizing your dreams. These questions are designed to probe you toward making the important formulative decisions and to mobilize you to action. You are what you do. What will you do?

CASE STUDY: CLAUDIA ZANES

Claudia Zanes' story, she says, is "simple, but pivotal." Her husband went to law school already knowing that he wanted to go into the business with his own firm. When they married, his firm had already been on the ground a few years. Meanwhile, Claudia was thriving in her career in advertising sales. When she saw her husband's business struggling, she recognized it as an opportunity for entrepreneurship, and began assisting him with advertising.

Claudia's moment of realization is as quintessential as they come: "One day, I went to the office with him. He left for court and asked me to 'keep an eye on things,' and I never left." She continues: "That is the short version, but it was a big decision to leave my successful career. I made the decision because I saw this as an opportunity to build something great. Doug and I make an incredible team." Herein lies the secret to her motivation for making the leap into entrepreneurship: a passion for progress, and a love for her husband. Very few entrepreneurs are lucky enough to have a teammate that shares their business *and* their last name. Family is perhaps the greatest possible team, even in the business world. Claudia knows this; she understands the preciousness of teamwork. "As we grow bigger as a company, my support system becomes invaluable. What I've learned is with a team, you can do something grand. But when you have partners, you can do something legendary. You can have a legacy."

Family has always been a vital factor in Claudia's life. She told us that she believed that most of her success could be attributed to her work ethic, which, in turn, could be attributed to the influence of her 91-year-old grandmother, the co-owner of a humble restaurant in Nogales, Sonora, and one of the most industrious people that she had ever known. Helping out at the family restaurant, Claudia learned many skills and lessons that she would later integrate in her approach to entrepreneurship. She shares:

“My family worked very hard, and I was treated like an adult very early on. My earliest memories were helping out in the restaurant as young as eight years old. Unlike children today, who get an “allowance,” I was never paid, rewarded, or praised for the work I did. I was just included and expected to help. They would send me to Nogales, Arizona, back and forth, back and forth, every day to buy groceries for the restaurant. I remember that I would go back and forth so much that one time a patrol agent stopped me and interrogated me for several minutes about my school and who was President of the U.S. [...] I learned to use a cash register and to give change in pesos and dollars. I could even convert currency, which I can't do today.”

Claudia's story perfectly exemplifies the concept of exploiting your life for greater success. Similarly, the many fears that she has had to face along the way have only served to strengthen her confidence and success as a businesswoman. Her biggest fear going into the business, as we mentioned

earlier, was the fact that she was not an actual lawyer. The lesson that she learned in conquering this fear, she says, was to “put value on.. strengths, which was being a businesswoman — and a darn good one at that.” She continued: “I realized that what I had to bring to the table was far beyond being an attorney. I finally learned to value it, honor it, and build an empire from it.” Her determination in the face of adversities is inspiring. She believes that the best way to overcome fears and obstacles is to “realize (and believe) that there is always a way.” She says: “when you think there is no way, go back and make sure that you have explored *every* option.”

Like every other business person, Claudia has run into her fair share of setbacks. One of the biggest, she says, was putting together the right executive team. Hiring the right employees is vitally important to building that empire she mentioned. “Each team member has to be the right fit in terms of intelligence and being in alignment with the culture of your firm, or it will not work — trust me.” On hiring the right employees, Claudia’s advice is as follows:

“Attitude is the number one thing [that makes] an invaluable employee. It’s priceless. I also value intelligence, good judgment, the street smarts in someone. You can get the good grades, memorize the speech, shake hands, etc., but the intelligence I’m talking about is rooted in someone who can understand the black and the white and can also navigate the gray – which is where life (and business) usually sticks you.

How you view life will be a reflection on how you view your job, your career path, your peers, and

your boss. For instance, most everyone on my team has a pretty great outlook on life. They're people who allow things to roll off their back and no one gets stuck in 'this or that' issue for very long. It's extremely efficient for productivity when you can see, acknowledge the mistake or barrier, find a solution, and keep rolling."

We discussed briefly the importance of traveling and continuing to learn, soaking up experience and knowledge, for as long as you are blessed to be able to do so. Claudia had much to add in this regard; she is of the strong belief that no matter how seasoned and brilliant you are when it comes to business, it is impossible to know all there is to know. As the times are constantly changing, the market is constantly evolving, competitors are constantly innovating, and consumers are constantly flip-flopping, there will always be room for improvement. The best way to cope with change is to change with it. In another entrepreneur's words, you are never "there." Claudia says:

"In the last two years alone, I have spent over \$200,000 (between my husband and me) on personal development and education. This includes peer groups, coaches, seminars, content based material and resources – anything that's going to help us improve ourselves and thus, improve our company and the people in it. [...] You are never, ever done learning. It's just a matter of where you choose to learn and from whom. That's it. And today, with all the information that we have available to us, it's not difficult to get 'educated.'"

To top it all off, each of the four secret words can be clearly seen in Claudia's entrepreneurial journey. As we already discussed, her moment of *realization* was potently clear. The *specificity* of her field is undeniable; as she herself states, "I am one of the few, if not the only, non-attorney spokespeople that we know of in Arizona. This is not common in my industry." Her *tenacity* can be seen throughout her career in her ability to always push through adversity, industriously work through knots, and especially in her commitment to constant innovation. "Success doesn't just stay where it is. You have to keep pushing the edge and implementing concepts, ideas, and tools that are not typically found in your industry. [...] I'm not afraid to implement concepts and mold them into something that fits the legal industry."

"Go forth and be one of the few" is the refrain of Claudia's challenge. Perfection, although impossible to reach, is the most worthy of goals, and always worth pursuing at all costs. Her final piece of advice to female entrepreneurs:

"If you can see a light at the end of the tunnel... if you can even see shadows... keep going. Keep focused, keep learning and keep perfecting your role. If this is what you want, with the right outlook, the right team in place and a hell of a lot of work, *you'll get there.*"

CASE STUDY: LORI CHEEK

Cheek'd appeared on the cover of the New York Times' Style section. "Move over Match.com," the magazine said, coining *Cheek'd* as "the next generation of online dating." Lori Cheek has introduced a personal approach to online dating by moving the initial encounter offline with a smooth physical introduction, using cards with such memorable taglines as "act natural; we can get awkward later," and "I'm totally cooler than your date."

Lori describes the moment of realization in which her business was born as "a light bulb moment in time changed my life forever." Her motivation is made of the same vibrant clarity. "I have never been more dedicated to anything," she says. In starting *Cheek'd*, she fell in love with entrepreneurship, discovering that the 24/7 work that it demands is in fact the perfect fit for her personality, a personality that insists on a constant drive towards productivity. "I'm miraculously somehow always working," she admits.

This industriousness is not something that began to evolve with the founding of her business; rather, her tenacity is a trait that she has always carried. When asked how she manages to fuse her personal life together with her business life, she walked us through a typical workday for her, a day which consists of ninety minutes in the gym (multitasking by reading articles and e-mails while on the elliptical trainer), meeting with interns in the office, networking, startup pitch

events, and evenings in for a healthy home-cooked meal and time to catch up on e-mails and social media. The near-religious personal scheduling of her time reveals an innate tenacity that has served her well over the years. When it comes to *Cheek'd*, Lori's motivation is inspiring:

“I've got a laser-focused vision to succeed and will do almost anything to keep this business flourishing. [...] I've always been extremely stubborn. When most people would have quit, I only hustled harder. I think my personal approach, passion, and dedication, mixed with my relentless conviction that failure is not an option, has been the recipe that will ultimately lead to my success.”

We discussed in a previous chapter the significance behind her use, perhaps subconscious, of the present tense in speaking of her success, despite the high accolades and company has already received and the milestones they have passed. It is also important, however, to make note of the phrase, “failure is not an option,” for perhaps when it comes to the key word of *perfection*, Lori's phrase sums up the innate sentiment of the entrepreneur perfectly. It is not so much that the entrepreneur honestly desires to see their company reach total perfection; it is that they have determined with everything in them that failure will never be an option. With that decision made, the only direction left to go is forward.

But back to Lori's story. Like the best of us, Lori and her business have had to pick themselves back up after some major pitfalls. Not long after *Cheek'd* was featured in the New York Times in May of 2010, one seemingly trivial

oversight ended up costing the company over \$30,000 in revenue. *Cheek'd* operates based on a recurring subscription model once users make their initial purchase of the *Cheek'd* dating cards. After paying the initial price, users must pay an recurring stipend each month to renew their membership and access to the cards. Their site crashed, however, when they discovered that their outsourced web developer in London had accidentally switched off an administrative button that was meant to capture users' credit card information.

While the disaster cost *Cheek'd* a sizable fortune in revenues, it bought Lori an equal amount of revenue in wisdom. In the aftermath, she decided to hire a seasoned chief technology officer to oversee that aspect of the business as well as to skyrocket *Cheek'd* into a new orbit with the creation of a new mobile application. In retrospect, she admits that the technological aspect of her business is the one aspect she most wishes she could go back and approach differently from day one. Lori can now embrace the mistake, even making characteristically cheeky pokes about it, telling us: "I joke now that our London-based web developer was lucky he didn't live in America at the time."

Prior to the founding of *Cheek'd*, Lori had a stable career in design and architecture. "After coming up with the idea," she said, "I risked everything I had and knew." She spent her entire savings account to fund *Cheek'd*, surrendering her career of fifteen years in pursuit of a newfound vision. With this in perspective, it is no surprise that she sites the overcoming of doubt as her biggest startup challenge. "I really had no idea what it took to build a business, but I've taken a crash course by building one," she says. Perhaps learning the

hard way truly is the best way to learn. Failure is essential, and when it is embraced, it can lead to a level of success that may never have seemed possible. “I’ve learned to welcome mistakes,” Lori attests, “and I even joke that I’ve learned so much from them that I’m going to keep making more of them on purpose so I keep getting smarter.”

Lori is constantly seeking to improve and innovate *Cheek’d*. She understands that embracing change is the best way to stay ahead of competition and hold the interest of an impatient and unsatisfied modern market. Just in the past month, *Cheek’d* launched their new mobile application, signifying a shift from physical cards to a completely mobile approach. The logo, technology, and concept of *Cheek’d* has shifted radically, and Lori is thrilled about the change: “It’s a very exciting pivot for us that will allow singles all over the world to never miss a potential love connection in the real world.”

Lori Cheek and her business are the perfect exemplification of all four of the secret words. Her moment of realization is crystallized in her memory as the single most important turning point of her life. Her dissatisfaction is expressed in her constant drive to innovate and evolve her business, such as in the recent launch of the newer, more mobile *Cheek’d*.

The specificity of her field is also notable; the purpose of *Cheek’d* is to take the awkward out of dating, and as such, the company targets the rather quirky, sometimes quiet, always interesting base of singles known for their addictions to pizza, Netflix, and BBC. Tellingly, the *Cheek’d* blog is hosted by Tumblr.com, and their reblogged posts feature

such relevant and amusing taglines as “if we meet offline and you look nothing like your pics, you’re buying me drinks until you do,” and “I want someone to look at me the way I look at chocolate cake.” The clever specificity of Lori’s target market is unquestionable.

Perhaps of the four, the secret word that best sums up Lori’s career is *tenacity*. Her tenacious spirit has seen her through all manner of hurtles, against all odds. After fifteen years in a well-paid, stable career, she dropped everything that she had in the pursuit of an idea, and since then she has only kept going. Her closing remarks are a challenge to all women to recognize what matters most to them in life, and pursue it relentlessly to the very end:

“There have been many days where I just didn’t know what to do anymore or how to best focus my efforts. It’s been a major struggle over the past few years, and I’ve just had to look myself in the mirror on numerous occasions and convince myself that I can do this — I can figure it all out. I’ve come this far and there’s going to be no looking back. I’ve given this my all. It may take time, but I’m not going to quit. I’ve embraced this business like it’s my five-year old daughter. I’ve made so many sacrifices to keep this business alive, and I’m fueled to never give up. *Quitting is not an option for me.*”

CASE STUDY: MONIQUE HAYWARD

Monique Hayward’s entrepreneurial journey began with *Lord of the Rings*. For years she had been honing in the back of her mind an dream business, far away from her high-tech career. “I had an idea for a grandiose, all-things-to-all-people, completely insane concept of a combination restaurant, cocktail bar, cigar room, wine cellar, and nightclub in one of the trendiest parts of Portland, Oregon, called the Pearl District.” She entertained this idea so seriously that she had a business proposal all drawn up and began seeking advice from experts and connections in the field. Then came September 11, 2001, and a complete crash in Oregon economy. She gave up the dream for good—she thought.

Though not ones to keep up with the latest flicks, one night in 2003, Monique and her husband made an exception for the sake of friends when *Return of the King* first hit theaters. With pre-purchased tickets, they headed to the movie theater with plenty of time to spare and were pleased to find themselves near the head of the line, less than fifteen people ahead. However, upon entering, they discovered that those fifteen-odd people before them had taken the initiative to save whole rows of the best seats for their friends and family who had not yet arrived. Hunting for seats, time and again, Monique would hear someone murmuring excitedly into their phone, “Hey, we got the seats! All you need to do is get your tickets!” only to then turn and address Monique with, “Sorry, someone’s sitting here.”

Left with the neck-craning seats at the far front of the theater, the Haywards ducked out of the movie with righteous indignance to find the manager. He gave them a rain check for their inconvenience, and they found themselves left with an unused evening to do with as they pleased. Reluctant to go straight home, they decided that dessert and drinks were in order after the drama at the theater. Monique shares:

Since we were out in the suburbs close to our house, we didn't want to venture twenty miles into downtown Portland. As we considered our choices, not a single place came to mind. We wound up at a Starbucks Coffee close to our house, and as I sat there, I recalled my business plan from years before and exclaimed to Tom, "Honey, this is an idea!" I am convinced that if it were not for that night at the theater, I never would have launched Dessert Noir Café & Bar.

After that ground-breaking moment of realization, it didn't take long for Monique to get the ball rolling. Less than a year later, in 2004, Nouveau Connoisseurs Corporation was founded, and Dessert Noir Café & Bar was launched.

The specificity of Monique's business could not be more apparent. When asked about specificity as it relates to choosing a target market, she readily agreed with us: "An entrepreneur has to be clear about who the customer is for the company's product or service. You want to describe that customer as if you know him/her, which means that you have to be specific about his/her background, motivations, desires, needs, challenges, and other factors that will

influence his/her decision to do business with you.” In this respect, Monique has taken her own advice quite seriously. In her business plan, she described her target market with marked specificity. She has kindly agreed to share with us this important clause of the business plan for Dessert Noir Café & Bar:

Dessert Noir Café & Bar will target upper-middle and upper-income men and women in the 25-44 age range who live in Beaverton and the surrounding area. Within this target audience, the venue will appeal to two primary market segments:

- 1. Young Professionals: The venue’s location, approachable ambiance, and chic atmosphere will appeal strongly to young professionals who will find the venue perfect for casual yet sophisticated evening entertainment. Whether groups of friends or couples out on dates, this target desires convenient, happening dining establishments that deliver great food and excellent service.*
- 2. Suburban DINKs – Dual-Income/No Kids: Upper-income, suburban couples and partners (married or not) without children who are time constrained will want a place without a lot of hassles that’s close to home and will pay for convenience and superior customer service.*

Monique’s motivations in her business are many. She described to us the five *M*’s in her life, the five most important factors that she strives to protect, and which she has pledged never to let her business encroach upon. Her five *M*’s are:

1. Money
2. Marriage and/or Motherhood

3. Mortgage
4. Mercedes (her motor vehicle)
5. (Peace of) Mind

Running a business means that your professional life will try to encroach upon every aspect of your personal life—and it will, if you let it. Entrepreneurs have learned to draw their own boundaries, and refuse to compromise them for the sake of their business. As Monique says, “What I have to do is determine my priorities, negotiate them with my loved ones, and draw the boundaries I don’t want to ever cross.” Entrepreneurship doesn’t just mean running your own business; it means running your own life.

Monique’s tenacity has seen her through many risks, fears, and trying experiences as a business owner. Tellingly, the biggest “failure” of her career, the closing of Dessert Noir Café & Bar, turned out to be what she considers one of the biggest successes of her career. Looking back, she says:

Despite closing my restaurant, my entrepreneurial career has taken off in new directions that I never would have imagined nor experienced had Dessert Noir Care & Bar remained in business. I’ve published two books, I’ve been getting more exposure as a small business expert and sharing my experiences, and I’ve been repositioning my company to take advantage of my new entrepreneurial expertise and skills. The lesson here is that failure of your business does not mean your failure as an individual.

Nevertheless, Monique has experienced her fair share of fears to conquer—especially the daunting fear of failure that has clutched the heart of so many before her. However, like the dozens of other successful entrepreneurs that stand alongside her, Monique has learned that exploiting the fear of failure can become one of the most powerful motivators for success. In a telling comment, she says:

I'm more in the camp of exploiting my fear of failure, I think, than I am with trying to expel it altogether. I'm motivated and energized at the prospect of success, and I work hard to achieve my goals. But now instead of working so hard to execute perfectly, I allow myself the space for the inevitable setbacks and give myself the opportunity to learn from those mistakes.

Beyond merely exploiting failure, her dialogue also reveals that she knows the power of past failures and shortcomings, knows how to learn from her own mistakes and move forward with wisdom gained. Exploiting herself, even the worst of seemingly detrimental pitfalls, has taken Monique far in her career. She also knows the limits of her own knowledge and her own strength, and she recognizes that she would never have made it as far as she has without the support of those most important to her. “Entrepreneurs don’t do it alone,” she says. “It’s critical for them to surround themselves with people who have something going for themselves and have their best interests at heart. If they don’t, it won’t be long before they’re [being taken] down.”

Arguably the most profound of the four secret words, *dissatisfaction* is inherently evident in Monique's never-ending search for success. When asked to define success in her own terms, she began:

My journey as an entrepreneur over the past 10 years has at times been long and difficult, and I often have asked myself, "Exactly why did I do this?" At the same time, it has been rewarding and gratifying in ways that I could never have imagined as I've "reinvented" myself over the years as the owner of a restaurant, a partner in a software company, and an author and speaker. Now I'm considering independent film production. I'm now serving on the board of a local nonprofit organization. I've done all of this while maintaining a very successful career in Corporate America. Some days I wake up and cannot believe what I've accomplished so far in my life at age 44.

Success has many dimensions for me, and I wouldn't be telling you the truth if I didn't say that I'm very motivated by the opportunity to make money and secure financial freedom. Ultimately, it comes down to my own personal happiness and whether or not I still believe I'm serving the purpose for why I decided to start my company in the first place: To bring unique ideas and concepts to market that will make a difference in people's lives and serve as my legacy for those who will follow in my footsteps. I'm not there yet as I have a lot more life to live, so many more business ideas I want to launch, and more people I want to help.

Despite the laudable heights of success she has already reached, Monique is not satisfied enough to rest. She is constantly re-inventing herself and her business, changing with the times and before the times, discovering new highs and new lows, new ideas and new markets and new truths—she is constantly dissatisfied with the status quo, constantly determined to keep moving. The entrepreneur is not content to sit still and watch the world wander by. Instead of letting circumstances change her business and her life, Monique uses her business and her life to change her circumstances and, to a degree, the world. This is the entrepreneur’s life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

You have read the book. You have caught a glimpse into the lives of 25 female entrepreneurs who have found their success in the business world. You know something of what it takes. But the question still snagged in your mind is: do *you* have what it takes? We have designed this final appendix to help you answer that question for yourself. Below, we have provided you with a series of our own questions designed to get you thinking about whether or not this lifestyle is meant for you. There are four categories of discussion questions, one for each of the four secret words. Consider these questions one final push to get you thinking like an entrepreneur. Do you have what it takes?

Realization

- *Have you ever had an “a-ha” moment like Lori Cheek’s, in which a business idea struck you seemingly from out of nowhere?*
- *What are you genuinely passionate about?*

- *When it comes to business, are you someone with a strong commitment to tradition and convention, or does the prospect of change and innovation excite you?*
- *Do you enjoy being in control and calling the shots?*
- *Do you consider yourself an introvert or an extrovert? If you are an introvert, do you have a passion for people, or do you prefer working alone? If you are an extrovert, do you consider yourself empathetic enough to perceive others' needs and desires, and do you feel that you have the concentration necessary to sit down and tackle stressful, linear tasks?*

Specificity

- *Are you genuinely concerned with the needs of others?*
- *Is there a cause or an issue that you feel strongly about, regardless of how big or small it is?*
- *Is there a perceived need that you have discovered, perhaps through personal experience, that you want to fill?*
- *Do you consider the idea more important, or the carrying out of it?*
- *Are you a detail-oriented person, or an idea generator?*

Tenacity

- *Would your friends and family describe you as driven or complacent?*

- *When you are passionate about something, do you tend to pursue it regardless of adversity, or do you find yourself working in erratic bursts of productivity?*
- *Is productivity important to you?*
- *How do you respond to failure?*
- *How do you respond to self-doubt?*
- *Are you one to embrace risks or avoid them?*

Dissatisfaction

- *Are you satisfied with your present job?*
- *When faced with an opportunity for personal advancement or betterment, which involves relatively high stakes, do you tend to leap at the opportunity or linger back and weigh all possible outcomes?*
- *Does the prospect of overcoming fear and growing in confidence and capability excite you?*
- *Does change excite or frighten you?*
- *Does technology excite or overwhelm you?*
- *Are you constantly looking for ways to improve yourself, your life, and your business?*

