

Rich Thinking

*The tenth global study in the
Rich Thinking series*

Top Tips for Business Success

WHITE PAPER

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About Barbara

Barbara Stewart is a Chartered Financial Analyst with 28 years of investment industry experience; five years as a foreign currency trader and then more than two decades as a portfolio manager investing on behalf of high net worth entrepreneurs. 10 years ago Barbara saw a need to challenge outdated financial industry stereotypes and share positive messages about women and money.

Today, Barbara is recognized worldwide as one of the leading researchers in women and finance. *Rich Thinking*[®] global research papers quote smart women of all ages, professions and countries and are released annually on International Women's Day, March 8.

Barbara is a keynote speaker for CFA Societies, banks, stock exchanges and industry conferences around the world, and conducts interview driven research for financial institutions globally. She is a columnist for CFA Institute, Canadian Money Saver, and Golden Girl Finance and is also on the Advisory Board of Kensington Capital Partners.

For more information about Barbara's research, please visit www.barbarastewart.ca.



Have courage!

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Top Tip #1: Be a lifelong learner

2
Top Tip #2: Speak up

3
Top Tip #3: Form deep relationships

4
Top Tip #4: Always remember your why

5
Top Tip #5: Follow your inner voice

Introduction

Welcome to the 10th annual edition of *Rich Thinking!*

This year's topic is: Top Tips for Business Success. I interviewed 51 fabulous women of diverse ages, professions and cultures around the world and asked them only two questions:

- “What is your #1 tip for business success?”
- “Why is that your top tip?”

The top tips fall into five main categories:

1. Be a lifelong learner
2. Speak up
3. Form deep relationships
4. Always remember your why
5. Follow your inner voice

The power of serendipity:

In early December, I had completed all 50 interviews when a dear friend of mine said “Oh you are going to London? You must interview Emily!”

I can never resist this kind of plea, since my research methodology is largely based on serendipity. My interview with Emily worked out to be a great one but alas, her top tip “Have courage!” didn't quite fit into the five categories that I had already established. But I think it was meant to be: having courage is needed for all of the five main categories. So courage gets its own standalone section at the beginning of this year's paper.

51 Quotes

Throughout the year of interviews, it is a challenge to capture the essence of a one hour in-person conversation and distill it down into a static quote. But I love the process of doing so because this way I have the opportunity to further reflect on the unique person and her unique path.

The stories behind the top tips

The stories behind the top tips are all wildly different...and each is compelling in its own way! We hear about the deeply personal ‘whys’ behind the significance of the top tips.

To give you an example of the importance of the stories behind the top tip, I am sharing in this section an excerpt from Nika Stelman’s quote (the full quote appears in section 2, Speak up). Nika is the Director of Design Strategy at Bridgeable in Toronto.

Speak up

“Speak up and ask for what you want. And move to New York! I really think that all young women should move to New York in their 20s. I was so fortunate to live there at that formative age, and it was such a great time of growth, development, and exploration. I wasn’t a super confident kid growing up and it was radical to be suddenly dropped into a city where I knew no one. This forced me outside of my comfort zone and I met people who opened me up to all kinds of opportunities and ways of life.”

Why speak up?

Nika said that you are more likely to meet the right contact.

“It was when I was doing my undergrad in design in New York that I met Roger Martin, the Dean of Rotman: he was on his book tour for *The Design of Business: Why Design Thinking is the Next Competitive Advantage*. I said to him “I want to do everything you talk about in your book.” He said that would be difficult but when I was ready I should do my MBA at Rotman.”

And...you are more likely to land your dream life!

“It was entirely because of Roger Martin, because of that random conversation, that I came to Toronto. And it was here that I met my life partner – he was one year ahead of me in the same program. Now we live together and we have a dog. New York taught me to be adventurous and to ask for what I want.”

Throughout my travels last year I heard a lot about careers, life and love.

Enjoy reading this year’s *Rich Thinking!*

Have courage!

When opportunities present themselves, even if you are intimidated by what you are being asked to do, you need to just jump right in and know that you will be able to make sense of it.

It won't be the end of the world if it doesn't work out... you will repeatedly surprise yourself by what you can achieve.

Go ahead and take the plunge – be courageous!

Emily Dunbar

Managing Director, Member Value and Society Relations, CFA Institute
London, England



“I grew up in Glasgow, Scotland, in a very musical, artistic family – we went frequently to the theatre, ballet and concerts. Glasgow has a very famous art school and my mother (a talented sculptress and silversmith – and a very good mimic!) studied there, as did my grandmother... at a time when few women went on to further education. My father ran a building business but his lifetime passion is classical music and he is an excellent amateur violinist.

I was a shy but imaginative child. I read a lot and I wrote plays and acted them out. I found that pretending to be other people was easier than being myself and, like my mother, I was a good mimic. I decided I wanted to be an actor and went to drama school in London, but I knew very early on in my heart of hearts that acting was not for me. In my first term we were given an assignment to do over Christmas and I chose to present on a specific aspect from the life of James VI of Scotland and I of England and Ireland (after the death of the childless Elizabeth I). I was extremely nervous about presenting to the class and did a pretty awful job. Being academically inclined, I had loved doing the research but completely missed the point of the exercise – I had focused on the content and it was all about the performance!

On graduating from drama school, I decided to go to university and do an academic degree, but first I needed to be able to support myself financially. Over the next few years I worked in a variety of jobs in different sectors, learning a lot along the way and gaining experience that would come in very useful later in my life. I also kept my creative juices flowing, performing in several bands. This was the 1980s and London had a vibrant music scene. In fact, a young band called The Pogues (remember Fairytale of New York?) got us our first gig when they were double-booked, and later we went on to play at the Glastonbury Festival, which was a real highlight. Meantime, I went to night school, was accepted by a top UK university and went on to complete my Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in French Language and Literature. During that time I also married and had two children.

I think of all of that as my life before my career. I was 39 years old, with a good degree and two children in school. I wanted to go back to work, but I wondered where on earth I should start and who would employ me? I was not too proud to start at the bottom in a junior role, however, and I was extremely lucky in the sector I chose; I had some really good experience behind me and was able to move up the career ladder very quickly. I grabbed every opportunity possible to learn and grow...and here I am today...a member of the leadership team at CFA Institute. I should add that my acting training has come into its own as I've taken on leadership roles – it has been invaluable.

As an example, in my first few months at CFA Institute, I was accompanying a group of speakers in the Middle East and when I got to Dubai I was told I was on the program later that day! I hurriedly prepared something, the moment came and I had a surge of debilitating nerves, so I pretended I was Hilary Clinton addressing an audience having just been briefed by her

researchers. Somehow I got through it. My speaker colleagues thought this was hilarious but they were also quite impressed!

But on a day to day basis it's more about executive presence (including 'executive presence for women'), breath control, storytelling and so on. I've brought theatre to CFA Institute members and societies: we have used RADA (Royal Academy of Dramatic Art) at multiple conferences throughout the world. They've been amongst our highest rated sessions – fantastic soft skills training.

I feel strongly that when opportunities present themselves, even if you are intimidated by what you are being asked to do, you need to just jump right in and know that you will be able to make sense of it. You may feel all eyes are on you and the stakes are high, but it is definitely the best way to learn. My top tip for business success is to have courage! Know that it won't be the end of the world if it doesn't work out - the truth is that you will repeatedly surprise yourself by what you can achieve.

I think back to a time when my tiny daughter was taking swimming lessons. Week after week she refused to get into the pool because she didn't want to change from one teacher to the next. She was painfully shy and extremely stubborn (that stubbornness has become an attribute!). One day, to everyone's horror, I spontaneously picked her up and threw her into the pool! She spluttered around for a bit but was fine – she loved the new teacher and went on to be a great swimmer. She just needed that push to take the plunge - literally. Today, whenever she or I are scared to do something we remind each other of this little story...this is the trigger we use to be courageous.”

Be a lifelong learner

Be fundamentally curious and learn about the world. That might be in an actual classroom or an online course, or it can be by travelling to interesting places, interacting with different types of people, seeking out new experiences, or reading diverse publications.

It doesn't matter which courses you take, or whether they are directly applicable to your profession. Look for ways to keep your mind fresh and expand your knowledge.

Constant learning makes you a more interesting person. Being knowledgeable about a wide range of topics allows you to connect better with people, both professionally and personally.

Learning is a giant step towards improved self-confidence, self-awareness, and self-belief.

Sometimes the best ideas are the result of serendipity: accidentally discovering a great business idea while working on something unrelated.

Don't be afraid to change paths in life. Even if the clear path is not visible at the time, your job changes might lead to something much bigger.





“I grew up in Ireland, where my father ran our farm and my mother owned a small hotel group. It seemed the natural course for me to get a degree in business, with a specialty in hotel and catering management. As it turned out, I found working in hotels to be very difficult work that I couldn’t connect with. My boyfriend at the time suggested that I move to the retail industry because I liked fashion and people. He was so right – I loved it immediately. Retail came easily to me, and I knew that I wanted to make it my long-term career. I decided that it was important for me to work for a firm that would allow me the opportunity to learn how to be the best retailer possible.

I noticed that Louis Vuitton had started doing some very interesting and innovative things, like unexpected collaborations. Their newly appointed womenswear designer Marc Jacobs commissioned friend and graffiti artist Stephen Sprouse to ‘deface’ the classic brown Louis Vuitton bags. It was causing a lot of commotion, and I thought that was quite exciting given that this was a company traditionally viewed as conservative and a bit “dusty”.

I set my sights on Vuitton because it looked to be a good place to learn how to grow and adapt, and at the same time, I realized that to get the best training, I would need to move to a fashion capital like London. I kept calling senior people at their head office until I finally got an interview. Fortunately for me, they had begun looking for backgrounds in the service industry – individuals who were used to hosting and engaging with people – so my hotel background was appreciated. They asked me to meet many different people as part of the initial interview process, and this felt serious and impressive – it was a good indication to me, even in my early 20s, that this was a place that was serious about retail.

I spent a decade based in the U.K., covering mostly Western European countries, and then it was mutually decided that I needed some international experience. Louis Vuitton gave me the choice of Country Manager for either Taiwan, Mexico or Canada. I chose Canada because I felt it would be a good cultural transition: similar enough to the U.K., but with the edge of an established country with a rich history of its own. I’ve now been in Canada for three and a half years and as Country Manager, overseeing all corporate and retail activities for Louis Vuitton within the country, and having direct P&L ownership.

Canada turned out to equally be very personally rewarding. After a long and painful divorce prior to making the move, and several years of being unable to get pregnant, I met my current partner here in Toronto and we have a wonderful five-month-old baby boy.

When I think about my top tip for business success, it has to be: continue to learn. I am constantly researching courses on a wide variety of topics...and I discovered that it doesn’t matter which courses you take, or whether they are directly applicable to your profession. Look for ways to keep your mind fresh and expand your knowledge. At the worst time in my personal life I read an article in Time Out London that resulted in my spontaneously attending a ‘study day’ on pearls at the Victoria & Albert Museum. Regularly taking courses, be it about pearls, fashion design, ballroom decorum or curating a museum experience, takes my mind off my job so that it doesn’t engulf me. I give myself time to recuperate, refresh, and enjoy myself a little bit. Additionally, this constant learning makes me a more interesting person. Being knowledgeable about a wide range of topics makes me better able to connect with people, both professionally and personally.

I think it is especially critical for women to continue to learn because learning is a great step towards improved self-confidence, self-awareness, and self-belief. I feel on top of the world these days, and I’m happily working towards my dream of becoming CEO of a fashion company.”



“My parents escaped two wars in mainland China – WWII and China’s civil war – and eventually settled in Taiwan where I was born. We lived in Taiwan until I was 10 years old. I worked with Dad and Mom 12 hours a day, 365 days a year, in our “Mom and Pop grocery store.” Today I think about my upbringing as a gift. First generation immigrants gifting the next generation with work ethic, learning opportunities, heritage and cultural diversity.

I look at challenges as a learning opportunity. You can learn from success and you can learn from failure. And you can see the cup as half full or as half empty. My #1 tip for business success is this: always learn to be better. Continuously improve yourself. Never put out that fire. I graduated with my engineering degree from Berkeley at the top of my class.

In the early 1980s I joined Hewlett Packard in Silicon Valley. My job required me to go to Asia on a regular basis and it wasn’t easy being a woman in that business environment. The first time I audited a business supplier, there was a sign “Welcome Hewlett Packard Mister Sheila Wang.” In negotiations the key male contact wouldn’t make eye contact with me. . . instead he kept directing the conversation to my male subordinate. It was then that I decided that I had a choice: I could go home and throw a fit about the situation, or I could make him know who he is dealing with! I realized that I had to figure out how to dictate the situation. When situations like this come at you, you must make your presence and your abilities known. Make it what you think it ought to be.

I have been a life-long learner and this is what has given me the fuel to be a powerful leader. When a situation arises, I can clearly see what needs to be done and I just do it. As an example, I created Singapore’s first experiential learning program for MBAs at the National University of Singapore (NUS) because I knew that although students can learn from case studies and books, there is no better way to develop leadership skills than being placed in front of a Board or the C-Suite of a wide variety of companies in different industries spanning Asia, Europe and the US. Prior to joining academia, I served as the Director of Asia Pacific and later the Worldwide Director of a US\$2 billion operation for Hewlett-Packard and Agilent Technologies. I understood the need to put students into real business situations so they would learn how to operate at a strategic level.

It has been very satisfying to watch the students in the experiential learning program. I recently had a serendipitous moment while boarding a flight to San Francisco bringing my MBA students to work on leading edge FinTech strategies for the third year in Silicon Valley. I received an email from a former student about her fond memories of the program. “Remember when we set foot in Plug N Play and I said “I want to work here!”? Well, after two years of a not-so-successful job search and LinkedIn stalking, I just signed a contract to expand Plug N Play into Italy.”

I think of that email as my reward. Seeing the results of my leadership drives me to continue to always learn to be better!”

Miriam Berger

Business Development, Global Technology Unit, IBM
Tel Aviv, Israel



"I used to be married to a South American, patriarchal type of man who expected me to cook for him and keep the house clean. When we divorced, my two kids were in first grade and third grade and I needed to be at home for them. I had to get creative because I was the sole provider: I worked from home tutoring local high school students in Math and English, and I got paid surprisingly well to bake elaborate cakes for birthday parties and other celebrations.

When I was married and the kids were small I did the tutoring and cakes thing (so that I could stay at home) but after I divorced I started working half time in an office and in the afternoons I continued the tutoring and cakes to have additional income.

I started working as the Legal Counsel PA and Admin at IBM 20 years ago. But I always wanted more. I am an ambitious person and I also needed to best provide for my kids as a single mother. To do this I had to set new challenges for myself, find new inspiration, study all of the time, and constantly improve my skills.

In parallel I always volunteered mainly with kids and today at the Taglit Center of Israeli Innovation where I talk to youth delegations from South America about Innovation and StartUp Nation. I believe that we have to give back and invest in our society and education and I have recently been selected to participate in a global IBM Corporate Service Corps volunteering program and I'm very much looking forward to my deployment next year.

After a few different roles at IBM - today I am CSP's & Ecosystem business development manager - working to build partnerships and enable IBM technologies to Israeli StartUps. I love my job and I am passionate about working with brilliant entrepreneurs.

I am ambitious, I'm curious, I love to connect people and find creative ways to do business.

This is who I am, this is my nature. My tip is to use all parts of yourself, never stay in the same place and keep growing."

Cathy Hwang

Principal, Zumaya Equity
Taipei, Taiwan



"I would say that my top tip for business success is to be curious! Especially if you are in the business of investing. Be fundamentally curious about the world – whether it's about travelling to interesting places, interacting with different types of people, seeking out new experiences, or being disciplined about reading diverse publications. You need to have a wide lens for information flow.

I was born in Taipei but my family moved to Southern California when I was 14. I studied economics and finance at UC Berkeley and I also passed all three levels of the CFA exams. I moved to the East Coast to start my career as an investment banker and over three years I worked in both Boston and New York City. After that I wanted to explore other aspects of capital markets so I joined a technology-focused investment firm in Boston where I invested in both early-stage companies and late-stage businesses. Today I work as a portfolio analyst at a family office.

In the early years of my career I decided to pursue an analyst job with one of the big banks (on a whim!) even though I wasn't as prepared as I should have been for the interview. I recall having an out-of-body experience during the interview and thinking "Oh my God this is going really terribly!" The recruiting team conducting the interviews was seeing 12 candidates a day and they expected everyone to recite all of the standard answers to investment banking interviews. During my interview I somehow ended up talking about the book Freakonomics that had inspired my decision to study economics. For some reason my story resonated with the guy that was interviewing me.

Although I wasn't hired for that particular job, he liked me enough to set me up with someone who could help me prepare for future interviews. I stayed in touch with both of these contacts and our paths have crossed many times over the years. We share information. I have always been generous about sharing because if you think about it what does all of that information actually do for you if you keep it to yourself? I love that Derek Sivers quote "If more information was the answer, then we'd all be billionaires with perfect abs."

My advice is definitely to stay open-minded, share information, and most of all...be curious."



"I was born in Chile, but moved to France as a child. In the French school system, there are "Les Grandes Écoles": top schools that only take a small fraction of the students (the rest go to universities). Areas of study at the Grandes Écoles are engineering, business, research, teaching, and veterinary school, and I decided on the last one! The only way to gain entrance is the very-tough final exam. On average it took successful students 2.9 years to pass, and I made it on the first try. This experience shaped me in a big way – from that day on if anyone told me I couldn't do something I wouldn't believe them.

My mother fought for women's rights in the 1960s and was always going on about the importance of equality, etc. As a teen I thought "give me a break, Mom...of course we are all equal." But as I began to work in a very macho profession I realized why she had fought so hard. I didn't want anyone to tell me what I could or couldn't do and fortunately I knew that my intellectual capacity was equal to any man's. When I was told that a career as an equine vet was not for a woman. I said "Why not? Of course it is."

Having children changed my life: I felt that the long hours and on-call duties of being a vet weren't going to be compatible with motherhood, especially since my husband was travelling for business extensively. But while being a mother is a fascinating and love filled experience, it is also very domestic, repetitive, and sometimes mentally numbing too. I needed something to keep me feeling productive. I started looking for a house in Provence, found a farm which was a complete ruin, but with wonderful spaces and views, and spent a year refurbishing it (we may live there full time one day, but for now we rent it out.) In London, I had taken on the project of refurbishing an upper maisonette, and then the basement of a terraced Victorian house: this was the first time I explored my creative side.

That side of me was really starting to blossom and I began to think seriously about a permanent career change. I had invested so much time and energy into being an equine vet, and also the "serious" status of my first profession contrasted with my second in which I was completely self-taught. Moving to Chile helped me make the final decision. Following the renovation of a property in Santiago, I opened a concept store called Mei Line in Santiago's historical district Barrio Brasil that sold refurbished vintage 50s and 60s furniture and self designed furniture and lighting. We then moved back to France to settle in Marseille where I refurbished a flat near the old port but had to close Mei Line because of the distance.

*I then decided to educate myself further in the new career I had chosen and I took a course in interior design, but was frustrated by the little focus it had on ecological building materials, and the refurbishment of ancient buildings. As an example, at our *Baye des Anges*, the refurbishment we did in the early 2000s was not as efficient as it would have been now, so the upgrading of thermal insulation needs to be done by retrofitting it. I also wanted to recreate a Mediterranean garden with plants needing very little or no watering. They are beautiful, fit the landscape perfectly, and are also aromatic: lavender, rosemary, thyme, sage and their aromas are omnipresent in the garden.*

I feel that my education, with its strong emphasis on science, has been a foundation that can support a variety of subjects. I have a strong need to understand things I work on. My top tip is: learn as much as possible. Try to have a deep understanding of what you are doing...with this comes respect and self confidence. This advice is by no means restricted to science – it can be applied to any field. I also think many women have taken up education and knowledge as a stepping stone to equality, and I trust that this is the way forward."



“Growing up in Ottawa I was always interested in news and politics. I am fascinated by how people work, how people are organized and their issues in general. Starting when I was seven or eight years old, I would sit between my parents and watch serious news programs: shows like the National or the Journal on CBC. The rule was that I wasn’t allowed to interrupt during the show so I would write down all my questions or comments and we would discuss them afterwards.

We are all endlessly interested in world issues in my family: my father was a civil service economist; my mother was a librarian; and my younger sister is a scientist – a PhD researcher at Harvard. But although I would say we are all equally curious people, I’m the one that has acted on that curiosity. It started when I was in grade school and it has carried on throughout my life. It’s all about service. In university I volunteered to work with underprivileged kids in a reading program and got involved in alumni affairs.

When I graduated with an arts degree in 1996 I moved to Toronto. In my mind the difference between Ottawa and Toronto was a) Toronto had fancier cars – I saw a lot more BMWs than Toyotas, and b) Toronto had many more homeless people. I wanted to figure out how to give my time to them. I started volunteering for a tiny food bank (now called The Stop Community Food Centre) and somehow I ended up staying on for 21 years! My first ‘real’ job was in sales for a courier company. I was 22 years old wandering around from the back of one warehouse to another trying to convince people to switch their courier service to mine.

Living a dual path (working and volunteering simultaneously) allowed me to develop a broad skillset at a young age. When it came to my career, I was fortunate to find people with imagination who realized that I could offer them double the benefit and I was able to quickly transition to General Manager roles. Over time I began to realize that if you care about big issues, if you care about truly making a difference, you can only go so far in the corporate or not-for-profit world. To bring about real change you need to work in the public service – either as a bureaucrat or in political life. I am extremely extroverted by nature, I’m informed and fearless about learning, I have excellent communication skills and I genuinely enjoy people. All of this drew me to politics and when I was asked if I was interested in becoming a candidate I said yes! I ran in 2018 and I am very at peace with losing the campaign. I knew that it was possible for me to win...but not probable. The crazy part? The amount of fun I had!

Looking back, I went from a full throttle, very structured career and then flung myself into a political campaign. Both were go go go! In the post-election period, I started getting some very good corporate job offers but my heart just wasn’t in it. I felt like a different person after the campaign and I couldn’t imagine going back into that box anymore. I took some consulting work and ended up realizing that maybe this is my next big thing! I had always operated within structures but now I was creating a structure for myself. I have built my consulting business without even trying – mandates came to me. I get to work on my own timeline for very smart people and I’m making an excellent income.

I am still the Candidate of Record for the PC Party of Ontario in the University-Rosedale riding. Whether I choose to run again or not, the point for me is service. There are a million different ways you can serve and I will always be contributing to my community and volunteering in any way that I can. My top tip for business success? Get on with it. Be curious and never ever ever stop learning...but take action.”



“I’m a little shy about answering this question because I’ve only been working for three years. Having said that, I would like to pass along some important advice to younger women.

Before I started working, I was the Club Leader for two different clubs in college. A lot of people my age didn’t want to take on the responsibility of a leadership role but I’m really glad that I grasped the opportunity – I thought of it as a chance to learn from a new experience and also learn more about myself. In the same way, I am not afraid of taking on responsibility and embracing challenge when it comes to my career.

After I graduated with a degree in Business Administration, I decided to interview for a job as a Data Analyst. I didn’t have the right qualifications – in fact there was quite a big gap between my skillset and what would be needed to work with computer scientists and data scientists. I wasn’t even sure I wanted a job in the data field, since I wasn’t even that interested in it...but I believed it would be a great way of opening up my future career path! To get the job, I stressed the fact that as a business person I would be in a strong position to communicate effectively with all of the various departments involved in the data analysis projects. I got the job and from there I spent time doing my research, finding my resources and learning every step along the way. I have a great aptitude to pick up technical skills and I learned coding, python and machine learning very quickly!

A new boss arrived on the scene and he decided to change our department’s growth path – we now needed to build an internal platform for experimental design. This was totally different from what I had trained for in school or knowledge I had learned from previous projects. To become a really good data scientist you need to understand business, analytics, and data engineering. He told everyone that we would need to upgrade our skills so once again I had the opportunity to figure out what I needed to learn so that I could add value to the project.

I now feel that one of best qualities is my ability to understand the bigger scope of any opportunity. I don’t think about whether I personally like a project or not. I think about how I can help the team achieve our objective. I don’t choose a job after I have become fully aware that it is my passion: instead I choose a job I think it will give me a great start for life after school.

My top tip for business success? Take on leadership roles at a young age.”

Sylvia Dwiyani Gunawan Finance Controller, British American Tobacco Indonesia (BAT)
Jakarta, Indonesia



“I was born in Semarang — a city in Central Java – about eight hours east of Jakarta – and I grew up with a Mom who was a great role model. Every day I saw her opening up the family furniture store at 7 am and closing at 7 pm. I did odd jobs at the store throughout my childhood: I learned all about sales, handling money, multi-tasking and negotiating. It seemed like a natural transition for me to study financial management at University.

I have had so many incredible and diverse experiences working for British American Tobacco (BAT) – the company really believes in developing talents as much as generating profits. The role I was most proud of was when my boss trusted me to be the project manager on a fourteen trillion Indonesia Rupiah (USD\$1 billion) Rights Issue. I got to work with world class bankers, lawyers and amazingly smart people across the business. It was a demanding project with tight deadlines and rigid regulations to comply with that often involved staying up until 3am making sure the whole process was done in an excellent manner. But it was extremely rewarding, I couldn't wait to get to work every morning!

It isn't easy to be a woman leader: you have to be exceptional, otherwise people won't take you seriously. Being resilient is a must and I would say that my #1 tip is: work on feedback. Positive feedback feels good but the 'what to improve' feedback is much more valuable. If for example you are told “I think you are good at this part of your job however...” that can hurt! My rule is that you get to cry if you want to cry but you only get one sleepless night only: you have to come back fresh the next day.

In the early days of my career my boss told me that I was transaction-oriented, diligent and great with my deliverables but he wanted me to focus more on networking. He suggested for my career development that I initiate informal chats with people in the office to get to know them and form relationships. When I started this felt so strange and not at all me! At the time we had a smoking room and even though I didn't smoke I would go in there with my cup of tea and try and socialize. Although it felt weird it got easier every time. I focused on being 60% good at networking rather than being 0% good at it like I was before. A side benefit was that people were getting to know me and they would help me in my job from time to time.

Although you probably won't like negative feedback you need to appreciate that whoever gives you the feedback is in fact showing you that they care. They spent time and effort thinking about you and what would help you in your career progression. This 'what to improve' feedback is a valuable gift.”

Tara Neray



Jeweller
Toronto, Canada

*"I studied jewellery and silversmithing in university and my twin sister studied industrial design. Courtney is more of a problem-solver: she likes to streamline things using computer design and efficient production techniques, and I am all about coming up with an idea and then designing a piece to fit the concept. Although I came at it from the craft side of jewellery-making and she was all about product design we had a similar vision and 10 years ago, we combined our skillsets and set up *Slashpile Designs*.*

Courtney has since moved on from the business and for the last three years it has been just me on my own. I have a studio in my basement that is complete with two work benches, a blowtorch, a polisher, tumbler and hammering station. My day varies a lot: sometimes I'm in the studio all day filling orders, some days I'm taking photos and listing products online, and other days I am running errands and rushing off to casting houses, engravers or shippers. Business has grown quite steadily since we started but I have always kept my little dog-walking job on the side. It has been great to have this added bit of income and I am a huge animal lover.

A few years ago we did a wholesale show in New York called NY NOW and a woman came into our booth to have a look at the jewellery. It turned out that she owned a pet store and she said "If you ever design anything pet-related let me know." This sparked a big idea! My biggest success by far has been a best friend necklace set for humans and their pets. My greyhound Lemmy wears a collar tag with a bone shape cut out of it and I wear a necklace with the bone. I put photos of this on my online shop and Etsy store and it got picked up by several international magazines and went viral. The timing couldn't have been better – it was right before Mother's Day – and I have been overrun with orders. I was pretty much in a panic for about two weeks but overall it has been such a positive feeling. I have loved animals so much my whole life and it is very special to share and celebrate this love with other dog lovers via a piece of jewellery. I am so happy to be spreading positivity with people who love their dogs and cats.

When I think about what we did really well from Day One of our business, we didn't wait until it was perfect to get started. Business takes time. You need to get your name out there and build a reputation. We started right out of school and looking back I think it is quite crazy that we were selling stuff back then. But...we have come such a long way! Things improve a little bit at a time. We have moved along in ways that we couldn't have predicted. My top tip for business success is never stop acquiring knowledge...but get started right away. Don't wait for things to be perfect."

Christina Peng

**President, Paradigm Asset Management Co., Ltd
Taipei, Taiwan**



“My top tip is to focus! Put yourself forward wholeheartedly, with full strength, so that you can achieve whatever it is you want to achieve. I learned how to focus by observing my father when I was growing up. He was a junior high school teacher and he took his job more seriously than other people. He would take care of underprivileged students and students from poor families. Even after he retired some of these students would come back and visit. My father set an example for me. He always tried to be the very very best at his work.

I’ve done many jobs in building my career and I’ve always focused on attaining the absolute best results in each and every job. When I was Director of the Office of the Secretary-General Executive Yuan (the executive branch of the government of the Republic of China in Taiwan), I had to think proactively, I had to be thorough in my research and analysis, and I had to put myself in my boss’ shoes to make sure that he was as prepared as possible for any situation.

At age 40 I transitioned from government to the financial industry and I started at ground zero. I knew that I would need to equip myself with the highest level of knowledge so that I would be credible. I focused on becoming a CFA Charterholder. After 14 years of hard work, perseverance and relentless focus, I was able to transform myself from an outsider to the top salesperson, and then the general manager. It is my focus on delivering the best results that allows me to be successful.

To better handle the demands and stress of working in the financial industry, I’ve started focusing on endurance training and building physical strength. I’ve run more than 10 marathons including the Tokyo Marathon and raced more than 10 triathlons including Challenge Championship. I am also the Captain of the Taiwan CFA cycling team. Through these experiences I was not only able to maintain good health and mental sharpness, but also to build amazing friendships with other athletes. These experiences in turn prepare me to better handle the constant challenges at work.”

Speak up

Take the front seat: be assertive, confident, and never let gender bias, age bias or any type of bias keep you from speaking your mind.

Have confidence in your own voice. The moment that you become willing to speak, things will shift in a positive way.

Words have power. Speaking up makes things come to life.

If you don't open your mouth there is no possible way to have your own business. Sometimes it hurts to be so vocal but in the long run it pays off. You have tough times but everyone has tough times.

Everyone has their own ideas and they have to believe in themselves. Put yourself out there. Speak up and take action. Make change happen.

2

Kirsi Larkiala

Board member & Co-Founder Fintech Finland Association,
Global TOP 100 Fintech Influencer & Women in Tech Influencer
Helsinki, **Finland**



“My best tip for business success is...be brave but don't be silent!

Many people claim that I open my mouth too much but I strongly feel that (particularly in the financial industry) if you don't open your mouth there is no possible way to have your own business. If I wasn't willing to speak out I wouldn't have been able to establish and now build my company and I certainly wouldn't be known as one of the top global FinTech influencers. Sometimes it hurts to be so vocal but in the long run it pays off. You have tough times but everyone has tough times.”

Joelle Pang

General Manager Malaysia, FastJobs
Kuala Lumpur, **Malaysia**



“Women often are passionate in supporting others but less comfortable speaking up for themselves and their ideas. But we lose out on so many great ideas if we don't take a stand and fight for them! My top tip is to have confidence in your own voice. The moment that you become willing to speak words of light and life to your thoughts, things will shift in a positive way.

When I decided at age 24 to quit my job as a management associate at a bank to focus on my start-up, I faced so many detractors. I felt strongly that if I didn't speak up for myself and my dreams, no one else would do that for me. When I thought about my core nature when I was a very young girl of maybe four or five years old I remembered being the kid who would stand up against bullies in the playground and when asked to make a decision between using my allowance to get treats for myself or support the elderly peddling their wares, I'd often choose the latter.

Today, I feel that my calling is to be a voice for the voiceless - people living on the fringes in society. My biggest regret would be not using my experience and talents in this way. Words have power. Speaking up makes things come to life.”

Angelica Lips Da Cruz Founder and CEO, ALDC Partnership
Stockholm, **Sweden**



“My top tip is to always speak from the heart. I tell people to have the courage to say what they believe is right: this is the best way to develop human and business growth for the benefit of all and our society.

An example of this? I predicted the financial crisis back in 2005 when I was heading CEEMEA (Central & Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa) at Citi. This wasn't something that my bosses or colleagues wanted to hear about but by 2008 I received a phone call acknowledging that I was ahead of my time. I sometimes get strange looks, but then people realize that I lead the way forward. The status quo for me is never the goal - I have helped large corporates out of bankruptcy and I've done partnership deals that others would imagine impossible. Nothing is impossible. It is a matter of aligning the right targets and the right people and having the will to make it happen. This includes breaking silos and hierarchies. My focus is always on the customer, the output, and the final impact of a business solution. If trust and purpose is in the equation, there are no limits for business success.

I have lived in four countries, I have three beautiful kids, and I'm driving a huge shift in the financial mechanisms with INNORBIS (a digital tool to enable investment in sustainable and responsible companies) by ALDC Partnership. This isn't easy...but who said leadership is easy? Leadership is not about being held back by old structures and greedy thoughts. The important things are: having integrity, sympathy, knowing you are part of a whole, and knowing that you can make a difference.

After so many years in capital markets, I have become immune to money, and I rethink everyday what are my best resources. The answer is never the money. You can have that currency and accomplish nothing, and certainly not happiness. The best resources are the people, the natural capital, the social capital and the love of all the beautiful things we have on this planet. Life is a gift! To achieve success we need to speak – and act – from the heart.”

Blair duQuesnay

**Investment Advisor and Financial Planner, Ritholtz Wealth Management
New Orleans, USA**



"I grew up in Montgomery, Alabama. My Mom was a kindergarten teacher and my Dad was the proprietor of a ready-mix concrete delivery business that had been in his family since 1898. I started classical ballet at a very young age and it was my main extracurricular activity in high school. I was also involved in summer intensive ballet courses and when it came time to choose a course of study for college I chose dance. Somewhere along the way in my first year I realized that a dance degree wasn't going to be so practical so I started doing a second degree in business. Eventually I dropped the dance degree completely. I still love dance and I attend and support local ballets. Dance really instilled in me the need for full body discipline and today I have a yoga practice.

Business turned out to be a great fit for me from the time that I started. My first job was sales assistant at a brokerage firm in New York. I felt frustrated trying to get ahead and sometimes wondered if a man would have had the same experience. I was looking for ways to improve myself and prove myself and as a result I decided to a) take the CFA designation and b) try hard to find a better opportunity for myself within the investment industry. Along the way I also became a blogger and this opened up a wonderful network.

I have had some amazing career opportunities and one of the things I'm most proud of is when 40 under 40 Investment News included me on their second inaugural national list in 2015. The other people on that list are so distinguished...it was a real honour just to be part of that group. When I walked into the '40 under 40' event, Josh Brown (the CEO of the firm I'm with today) was holding court and he stopped his talk and introduced me to the audience. This certainly helped to further raise my profile and fast forward to today...I'm happy to be working with him at Ritholtz.

I was laid off from my first job due to the financial crisis but this ended up being the best thing for me as it prompted me to pursue greater things for myself. I didn't start out confident in negotiating until five or six years into my career. I'll never forget the first time I asked for a higher salary when I was given a job offer. I said "Can you do better?" and guess what happened? They did! I also asked if I could be evaluated after six months rather than the normal one year. This worked well because I got more money at the six month point as well. This experience was empowering and I haven't looked back. I now have the confidence to expect more and to ask for more. I tell younger people that your first job is so important: if you start out in a lower position it can affect you for years – it can really have an impact on your lifetime earnings. My top tip for business success is: always ask for more."

Maria Theresa Marcial

**EVP, CFO and Head of Strategy & Finance, Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI)
Manila, Philippines**



"It is a tough question. I would have to say my top tip to any professional is to always take the front seat: be assertive, confident, and never let gender bias, age bias or any type of bias keep one from speaking her mind."



“I grew up on Long Island in New York and I went to an all-girls Catholic school. My parents were immigrants and they saved all of their money for my education. My early interests include putting things together and taking things apart like creating a 5-story apartment complex from Legos and even building a tree house from scrap wood. I like to figure out how things work - how things fit together – this gives me a sense of satisfaction. When my husband and I bought our first apartment together I retiled and grouted the bathroom, I sealed the slate floors, and I set up the Ikea furniture. Oh, and I love Excel spreadsheets!”

When I was deciding on a direction for my studies, I knew that I wanted to do something that would allow me to provide for my parents later in life. I became a CPA and I was one of the only women in derivatives valuation in New York at Ernst & Young. I then joined the Global Valuations team at Citigroup, where all my managers were fantastic role models and leaders. They also happen to be female. In 2014 my husband and I moved to Asia where we lived for nearly six years. There I initially joined Credit Suisse for a more interesting challenge. At that time, all IT infrastructure was still in the UK entity and they used Asia as a pass through. But then the UK instituted a new policy to dissuade remote booked trades to the UK. All banks suddenly had to build up and create their own local IT infrastructure and keep their trades in Asia. This was fascinating work for me. Unfortunately around the same time I was diagnosed with depression and I had to take a leave of absence.

My next phase was moving into venture capital...another field with relatively few women. Over the past 3-4 years I've travelled and spoken all over the world: at last count I've invested in 78 startups across 25 countries. Coming from a risk averse childhood, this risky career is quite counter to my upbringing. My parents definitely don't get it – they wonder where they went wrong. They understand it is a new economy but they don't understand, for example, why I dyed my hair purple after leaving Credit Suisse. It's been purple for five or six years now...I think this helps with my branding...you definitely stand out more at conferences!

I have never been afraid to speak out and stand up for myself and I think this might come from the fact that I went to an all-girls school. None of us were shy to speak up in class or to advocate for ourselves and our ideas. We all spoke our minds...there was no self-censorship whatsoever. This confidence helped me a lot when I was working for global banks. I strongly believe that everyone has their own ideas and they have to believe in themselves. My top tip for business success is to speak up and take action. Make change happen.”



“I grew up in Manitoba and I am definitely my parents’ daughter! My Dad designed houses and my Mom was Director of Community Services for the City of Winnipeg. I started my undergrad degree in business, but my parents encouraged me to do ‘business plus something else.’ I moved to New York to study Strategic Design and Management at the Parsons School of Design (a private art and design college) and after five years working as a food systems consultant I decided to do my MBA in Innovation & Sustainability at the Rotman School of Management in Toronto. The result? In my job today at Bridgeable I combine my design/art skills with the practical world of business. My clients are interested in doing things differently. We have a huge focus on people now when we are designing new experiences. It used to be all about ‘the customers rule everything’ but now we need to design amazing employee experiences as well. We need both.

My top tip for business success? Speak up and ask for what you want. And move to New York! I really think that all young women should move to New York in their 20s. I was so fortunate to live there at that formative age, and it was such a great time of growth, development, and exploration. I wasn’t a super confident kid growing up and it was radical to be suddenly dropped into a city where I knew no one. I didn’t have an American bank account and I didn’t even know the names of the grocery stores (we didn’t have Trader Joe’s or The Food Emporium in Winnipeg) - let alone where to find them. This forced me outside of my comfort zone and I met people who opened me up to all kinds of opportunities and ways of life. I found out that in New York if you don’t take up your own space someone will take it up for you.

*It was when I was doing my undergrad in design in New York that I met Roger Martin, the Dean of Rotman: he was on his book tour for *The Design of Business: Why Design Thinking is the Next Competitive Advantage*. I said to him “I want to do everything you talk about in your book.” He said that would be difficult but when I was ready I should do my MBA at Rotman. It was entirely because of him, because of that random conversation, that I came to Toronto. And it was here that I met my life partner – he was one year ahead of me in the same program. Now we live together and we have a dog. New York taught me to be adventurous and to ask for what I want.”*

Form deep relationships

Make genuine human connections.

Talk to people. It doesn't matter if they are high in the organization, or low. Everyone has a bit of knowledge to share and you never know where your next insight, tip or contact might come from.

Nurture high quality relationships with the people on your team. Be as transparent as possible and people will feel comfortable with your decisions. Good relationships lead to trust. When your team trusts you, this leads to superior performance.

Everything in business is just a chance to meet new people and find out the "why" behind them and how they are - and then help them achieve it.

People first. People are your most important asset and if you attract good people the business takes care of itself.

3

Anne Beale



Founder, AbsoluteJOI
Washington DC, USA

“My #1 tip for business success is: Talk to people. It doesn’t matter if they are high in the organization, or low. Everyone has a bit of knowledge to share and you never know where your next insight, tip or contact might come from. This was a piece of advice I received from the CEO of a Fortune 500 company who had a personal goal of having lunch with a new person every week. He said it helped him over the course of his career in ways he had never anticipated.”

When I started my skincare line, I talked with 4-5 manufacturers and could not find one who was the right fit. I was discussing this with my neighbor one evening, and it turned out she had a former colleague who left his job to lead a cosmetics manufacturing company. After introductions, meetings and a couple of site visits, I found my manufacturer! Problem solved, and it happened as a result of an evening conversation over a bottle of wine.”

Jazzmine Raine



Social Entrepreneur and Co-Founder of Hara House
Bikaner, India

“For my whole career I’ve been described as a sponge: I absorb everything I learn and then I apply it to what I do. But I would say the real key to my success is my ability to form and keep relationships. I put myself out there and I network in a focused way. I make sure that I am always providing value.”

One of my key learnings was when I was in 11th grade when I watched a documentary called “Flow” by Irina Salina. The film opened my eyes to the craziness of the water industry and inspired me to get up and do something. My journey with social and environmental impact began at age 18 when I started my own non-profit, Raine for Water. I went on to travel the world to learn the ins and outs of grassroots development and social innovation in Ghana, India, and Canada. In the fall of 2017, my business partner, Manoj, and I developed the full concept of Hara House - a zero waste guesthouse and social enterprise. We invest 20% of the profits into environmental action and education projects in North India. Our social enterprise includes facilitating programming and providing resources to young people to develop their own environmental projects, and equip them with the tools they need to be leaders for social good and business for good.

Throughout my travels I have fostered so many important relationships and these relationships can be very powerful! One of the biggest investors in my business today is someone I met quite randomly while volunteering at a non-profit organization three or four years ago.”

Marni Mandell

COO & Co-Founder, Konnecto

Tel Aviv, Israel



“My top tip? Well when I think about it...if you have survived as a woman in this world, perhaps you have already succeeded!”

Every day as a woman so much time and energy is spent on things that have ZERO relevance to whether you are a great leader. Choosing clothing that conveys the ‘right’ image/message to whomever you might be meeting or making sure our nails and hair are perfect are hurdles that we go through as women ‘to be seen’ and it has nothing to do with who we actually are.

As my business role models, I had the good fortune to have two incredible grandfathers who were entrepreneurs and both were instrumental in my upbringing and self-actualization. One defined his success in financial terms and the other in how many people he helped to manifest the most success in themselves. However, both defined their ultimate success by their families. As my communal role models, my grandmothers worked tirelessly to help build up the communities they lived in to provide for the communal institutions and organizations that would offer a social safety net to those less fortunate. All of them were leaders because of who they were and what they believed about the world. Their definitions of success I carry with me - and work every day to achieve, at least in some part.

The main thing I learned from all of them? I learned how to be with people. Success is about the connection you make with other people. My business mantra today is all about people doing business with other people:

“Everything in business is just a chance to meet new people and find out the “why” behind them and how they are - and then help them achieve it.””

Shruti Shekar

Reporter, MobileSyrup
Toronto, **Canada**



"I was born in India, an only child, and by the time I was one my family had moved to Singapore. We kept moving around a lot – my Dad was CEO of Commerzbank in India – and I've lived in so many different parts of the world. Today though, the only place I like to call home is Canada. A place that has welcomed me with open arms.

I've been into journalism in one way or another since grade nine. The best part of my job now is that I'm constantly challenged to learn about new things and every day is different. I love to tackle a really difficult technical concept and break it down for a reader – it is so gratifying when someone actually understands what I've written. There aren't a lot of tech reporters that are women, and the few women who are in this space are exceptionally smart. I can say for a fact that I am so grateful I get to be in the same space as they are.

Trying to break into the journalism industry is really hard. I have been around so many people who have discouraged me, or led me down the wrong path for no other reason than to just derail me.

Fortunately I've also received some very useful advice from people who have truly guided me because they believed in me. If there is one thing I can say is to try and surround yourself with people who believe in you even when you've lost faith in yourself. I still have quite a few mentors in my life and they offer constructive criticism: they want to see me succeed. And while I have listened to my mentors, at the end of the day, I always ask myself 'will the decision I make affect my future and if so in what way?' I always try to make my own decisions.

A few years ago when I was first starting out as a political reporter in Ottawa, a very famous journalist reached out to me and suggested that I apply for a specific job in their company. I didn't end up getting the job but we stayed in touch over the years and from time to time I would consult him about a career move.

Once he said "I can't tell you whether you should take the job or not but if you think it will make you a better reporter then take it." You know for the most part, I think I have become a better reporter. I've grown to be stronger and I have learned a lot from the people around me.

My top tip for business success is to find mentors who believe in you. It always comes back to the type of people you have around you and how they make you feel."

Aline Gustafsson

Editor in Chief, NordSIP.com
Stockholm, Sweden



“Every day I focus on creating ‘business karma.’ Often, I meet someone interesting and highly competent, but we don’t see any immediate and concrete opportunity to collaborate. These ‘unusable’ contacts still make it onto my mental match-making list, because I don’t want our interaction to go to waste.

Why do I care about this? First, I (selfishly) enjoy being the source of successful introductions. Second, I am paying forward those past introductions that have benefitted me throughout my career. Last, but not least, I know that the more I help people, the stronger our relationship will be. They will remember me, talk about me and generate a positive buzz around me and my business.

A great way to accelerate karmic situations? My #1 tip for business success: pay attention to the power of social media.

Over the years I had often heard how important it is to take care of your social media profile and following. I can’t say that I went straight into posting updates and growing my contact list. I knew I was supposed to do it, but I didn’t understand how crucial it was until I discovered the power of social media, much later. As I ventured into the world of media, I started reaching out to people on social media more and more frequently, and posting updates and articles I wrote to generate traffic. Nowadays, I find that my reputation precedes me when I introduce myself to someone I just met: ‘I know about your business, I’ve been following your posts!’ they may say. Potential clients even reach out to me, whereas it would have taken me ages to get through to them otherwise. The results are worth multiples of what I spend taking care of my feed! Why didn’t anyone tell me before?, I asked myself. Well, of course they did, but not at the right time.”

Mateja Treven

Founder & CEO, Blockhapp
Ljubljana, Slovenia



“Prior to realizing my dream and establishing my own company, I had worked in the corporate world for a long time. I held a variety of senior positions in the financial industry – the last two were very demanding strategic roles at the Board level. I have learned that to be effective you need to do your own job well and you also need to get along and cooperate with other people. My focus has always been on the project in front of me...what do I and my team need to achieve?”

I think the most important business advice I can offer others is to work hard to be a great team player. What does this mean? It means working with your heart and being truly present and wanting to make a contribution; it means doing your absolute best and staying positive; and it means thinking of yourself as an equal partner no matter the seniority or status of your fellow team members: forget the titles and keep your eye on the achievement.”



“With a partner, I started a PR and event agency in Hong Kong called Prism in 1989, which was sold twice and became Octagon Asia. We had a strong reputation in sporting events working with major sporting associations in football, rugby, triathlons, golf, tennis, and others. I’ve worked in predominantly male-dominated environments throughout my career. For example, I was part of the monthly organising committee meetings of the Rugby Sevens in Hong Kong: I always assumed they would treat me well and as an equal, and they did.

The only time I had an issue in this regard was when I was the first female President of an International Chamber in Hong Kong. We were sitting around a board room table of 20 male Presidents and myself and I raised my hand to ask a question when the Chairman of the meeting turned to me and said “Yes dear...what would you like to say?” It’s a minor point but I don’t think he would have called anyone else around the table ‘dear’. I have learned that it is all about how you approach, and react, to situations – it is up to you whether or not you buy into a certain way of being treated, and since I know that I am equal to anyone around the table, male or female, I am totally confident in my professional intelligence and style.

I think a lot these days about my top tips for business success because both of my daughters will be graduating this spring and I think about how they can achieve their career goals. My top tip is to always assess and review the business issues and needs from a client’s perspective. Leave your own thoughts and opinions behind. My ability to acquire and retain clients was because I sought to see things from their viewpoint. Sometimes what a client wants isn’t actually what they need and you have to find a nice way to tell them while offering solid alternative solutions.

One of the most challenging times in my career was during the SARS outbreak in Hong Kong. At that time, the Rugby Sevens were scheduled to play at a stadium sold out to 40,000 people: there would be 24 teams from all over the world, officials and global media. I had to step into the shoes of my client and write a crisis strategy paper and recommend what the organisers should do under the circumstances. My recommendations were accepted, with minimal financial impact to the event, and the event continued and no one caught SARS.

At the same time, we also had a well known makeup/cosmetics company as our client and as with all retailers during the SARS outbreak they were in crisis mode. No one knew the cause of SARS, how it was transmitted or how long it would last. And people weren’t shopping because they were fearful of being in crowds. Cosmetics was particularly hard hit as no one wanted to try products as they were afraid of catching the disease. One day as I was walking into my office our male receptionist said “Have you noticed that the people wearing masks look so much more beautiful because you can really see their eyes?” He was right – the mask showed off their eyes. I thought hard about how our client could benefit from this situation and proposed a promotions campaign around models wearing face masks over their mouths showing the beauty of their eyes with our clients’ cosmetics. We also proposed a more clinical approach to the sales process to allay client concerns of cleanliness – all of the salesgirls wore white jackets so they looked more like medical practitioners. Hand sanitizers were available everywhere. Sales returned!

Always look at the business issues from your client’s perspective.”

Sue Lemon



CEO, Toronto CFA Society
Toronto, **Canada**

“My #1 tip for business success is to focus on your client’s client. What is your client’s main strategic objective when it comes to their stakeholders? Take a serious interest in satisfying both the shorter term goals of your client as well as their longer term strategic objectives.

During my years working in fixed income sales I spent many afternoons on the phone with portfolio managers that were directly responsible for their fund’s performance. We would discuss their challenges – I wanted to figure out how their business worked. From there I was able to work with my team of traders and originators to design products that would benefit the objectives of my institutional investment clients. For example, one of my clients was a North American insurance company and they had a view that interest rates were in a secular decline. We designed a series of bespoke products that would work well for the insurance company, their stakeholders, and the clients of the stakeholders.

Get a clear understanding of the needs of your client’s clients and stay focused on that.”

Maria Nova Veluz



Owner and COO Buddy's
Manila, **Philippines**

“I met Buddy in 1985 in our hometown of Lucban when he was starting out with his “Buddy burger” and I was studying nursing at Lucban University. We got married in 1991 and after working in the US for one year as a nurse I came back home to help Buddy. The business was very challenging and I got involved in absolutely everything from being a cashier to customer service. The store did so well that we started expanding and today Buddy’s is in 17 different locations!

I’ve now been in this business for 27 years and although I have never had any formal training from a business school I will tell you that my top tip for success is: people first. I love my employees – we train them well and we treat them like family. People are your most important asset and if you attract good people the business takes care of itself. We hire locals from our hometown Lucban for all 17 of our locations and we provide them with a salary, food and lodging. We also rate everyone on attitude and we offer incentive trips abroad.

I also love my customers. Our most popular dish is the Lucban noodle – it is our original local noodle, so it is a comfort food and our customers eat it by mouth off a banana leaf. We strive for consistency but once in a while a customer will say that the Lucban noodle is better at one location than another. Maybe they are imagining this but either way I want to please our customers. I joke with them and say it could be the mood of the chef that day but I always offer to exchange it for a new one. People first!”



"I was born in Costa Rica but only lived there for three years before moving to Santiago. My parents are Chilean but they left due to my father's job.

I have spent most of my career as a Finance Manager in the mining industry. It is very rare for a woman to work in that field here (or most other countries too, I guess) and at times it has been extremely difficult. Despite my being very different from my male colleagues, I was able to demonstrate that I can be in charge of teams, that I was able to work with a variety of personalities, take on new challenges, and create a strong team environment. I found it most difficult having to fire people but I learned that it isn't fair to the rest of the team if you keep people that aren't performing as well.

Just over a year ago a head-hunter contacted me about a senior finance position with Las Salinas - we have only one project but it is a very exciting one! We are working on the regeneration of Las Salinas land in Vina del Mar (approximately 1.5 hours drive west from Santiago, and on the ocean.) The site is polluted: it has a long history of industrial activities and four petroleum companies occupied the space towards the end. This is considered to be an environmental project and in order to clean the site up we need approval from the environmental authorities. With this approval we'll be able to remediate the land and start working on a 'neighbourhood' of buildings for residence, offices, commerce, hotel and rent. We want to achieve this by carrying out a collaborative process between the company and different actors in the city and the region.

The common link between my roles in the mining industry and today in the business of planning is that I am the management and finance expert. But I am also an expert in relating with people on my team. My top tip for business success is to nurture high quality relationships with the people on your team. I always tried hard to be as transparent as possible and people feel comfortable with my decisions. Good relationships lead to trust. When your team trusts you, this leads to superior performance."



"I used to be married and for ten years I co-owned and ran a pet store with my then-husband. I am a huge animal lover and that was the most fun job I've ever had! When we divorced in 2004 I knew I would have to change careers but I didn't know what I wanted to do next. I just knew that I wasn't going to be able to keep up the working 10 hours or more daily, six days a week and hauling around 40 pound bags of dog food on my own.

Newspapers were still a big thing and every Saturday I would look forward to reading through the thick section of the Toronto Star that contained all the real estate ads. For years my hobby had been going to open houses. One day it occurred to me that I loved real estate and maybe this was something I could do! I took three courses followed by a two-year articling period, then I became fully licensed. Fast forward to today and real estate is the longest career I've ever had – I've been at this for 16 years now.

When I first started out, I would wake up every morning feeling unemployed. I knew that there would be no calls from staff and no boss to say... where were you? I was working on 100% commission and my time was my own. I felt free! On the other hand, I was very aware that I needed to figure out how to make money. But here's the thing: in the real estate industry, if you are exclusively focused on, or even a bit too focused on the payout, this spells trouble. For example, if you are going out to meet a potential client and you know they have a million dollars to spend on a house... whatever you do don't think "I can earn \$25,000 on this" – they can smell it on you! Being self-employed and earning straight commission it is hard to avoid thinking in this way but in my experience, I learned that if I do my absolute best for my customer, if I put them first, it will all work out.

I have also learned not to work with just any customers. One day in my early years a guy showed up at an open house I was hosting and he said "I will be the easiest client you've ever had." He had no agent and his condo was too small for him. We went out together looking at places every week for eight months. He put in three offers but didn't get them – we've been in a multiple offer market ever since I've been in the business. He finally found a condo that was a great fit for him, he put in a conditional offer, and then got cold feet. His lawyer was able to get him out of the contract. To say the least, this customer was wringing me out emotionally... I was so frustrated! I went back to my office, sat down with my broker (the owner of the real estate brokerage) and completely broke down. I will always be grateful to him for the advice he gave me that day: "You don't have to work with every client who comes across your path – you are allowed to fire them."

That experience gave me such a useful lesson. Spending all of your energy on an unsuitable person is a bad idea. I knew from the start that we didn't have the right chemistry to work together but I had been worried about money. It can take many years to figure out who the right people are for you to work with but this is so important. Everyone in business has their ups and downs and like anyone, I can get down on myself from time to time. When I am going through a rough patch, I always bring myself back to this belief that I have: put the customer first and the money will follow. But... make sure they are the right customer first."

Claudia Stanghellini Head of External Management, AP3
Stockholm, Sweden



"I was brought up in the small and beautiful city of Siena (Italy), running wild in the Tuscan countryside. I graduated in Statistics and Economics at the local university and did not have a clear idea of what to do after university. I decided to have an experience abroad and see a bit of the world before coming back to Italy and settling down in my home town. Well ... at least that was my original plan. I liked mathematics and so I decided to head to London where I took a MSc in Actuarial Science at City University. London was quite a change from the small, quiet reality of Siena: I absolutely loved the city and spent two wonderful years there. I then accepted a position at Sun Life Financial (Boston) in the actuarial department and worked there for five years. Working in the US and Boston provided me with more international experience and a solid quant background, with the job involving lots of programming and pricing of different insurance products. However, during my years in the actuarial field I felt I needed a more dynamic, challenging environment that would better fit my personality and interests. The idea of working in asset management started to materialize, I wanted to move back to Europe and so when an opportunity presented itself, I moved to Stockholm to work for AP3, Third Swedish National Pension Fund.

I joined in 2002 and I am still working here, after having covered different roles within the organization. Currently I am heading the External Management Team. AP3 has been a perfect match for me: an incredibly interesting global portfolio combined with an important pension mandate and a small, flat organization. The choice of my career path has been more a combination of interest, hard work and luck rather than planning. My original plan in fact never happened... but all turned out well for me as I tried to stay flexible and look through my different options.

I have learned so much over the years but there is one incident that really stands out. I was at an event listening to a high-profile woman talking about her career in finance. During her talk she mentioned something that really got to me. She said "Be there for your co-workers and be nice to people. And be helpful! You will make a lot of friends without even realizing it and down the line, when you will need it, people will be there for you."

When I heard this, I thought, "she is absolutely right!" From that day on, even when I am having a bad day, I try to be nice to the people around me. It creates a good environment, positive energy and I believe it is very much appreciated. My top tip for business success? Be nice and be helpful to others!"



“I was born in Marseille. From the time I was a little girl I loved makeup, nails, fashion...everything feminine. I studied esthetics for two years and I’ve been working in the beauty industry for 30 years now. The most intense period of my career was the 19 years I spent working in Paris – that is where I learned that it is the human side that matters most in this business. So often in a major city customers are treated like numbers. In France we have an expression “le sourire commercial” – when you walk into a place of commerce the proprietor will instantly switch on their best business smile. But how does that make you feel?

I thought I would always be a classic esthetician, working for others. I would never have dreamed that at age 42 I would start my own Institute. It has really been a result of meeting so many women, my long-time customers, who have encouraged me to get ahead. Over the years I’ve worked for small and large firms with customers from all generations (ages 15 to 90) with diverse careers including many tough business women! My customers have consistently told me that I am different. When they walk in the door they don’t feel that I am the boss and they are the patron...they feel that we are friends. They tell me “You always have a genuine smile! You are so natural!” I can only be like this because I love what I do. It isn’t so much that I am the best at the technical aspects of my job, it is much more about the connection that I have with my clients. The relationship a woman has with her esthetician can be profound at times – we are together in a small room and people will often tell me things that they won’t tell their family or doctor. There is no judgement during the hour or two they spend with me. I can sense from the way they look if there is something that is bothering them.

For the last nine years I’ve lived and worked in this lovely medieval village in Provence and five years ago I started my Institute here. I didn’t base my decision to start a business on money – the most important thing to me is the human side. I feel that I am making a difference in people’s lives...I can provide comfort and sometimes solutions.

The first couple of years were difficult as this is a small seasonal village with lots of competition. I had to keep my costs low and I didn’t take a salary. It was tough to acquire a regular clientele as this beautiful area attracts a lot of tourists. On the positive side, I have had the opportunity to enjoy many cultural exchanges and as many visitors from across France and other countries return every summer I have friends from all over the world now. Sometimes they will bring me a special wine that isn’t available in France and sometimes they will invite me to join them for dinner.

My job allows me to reflect on life in general and it has made me more open to others. For me, this is not so much about making a living, it is a way of living. My top tip for business success is: make genuine human connections.”

Always remember your why

Try to have a deep understanding of why you are doing what you are doing...with this comes respect and self confidence.

Discover the real meaning in what you are doing. What means a lot will differ from person to person but the key is to figure this out because this is what will drive your passion.

Make a list of what is important to you in your life and your work.

Know where and how you will contribute. This is about living bravely. What can you do today that is significant? This entails deep reflection.

Find your gift. We are all wired differently. You need to find your sweet spot so you will be able to give something extra even if the money is not yet coming!

4



“As my daughter told me... I now have a portfolio career. One part of my portfolio is running executive coaching and leadership development programs and the other part of my portfolio is painting. Sometimes I combine the two types of jobs. Painting includes doing commission work, teaching beginner watercolour classes and using painting as a tool for reflective exercises in career and leadership training.

When I was growing up I always loved drawing and painting. My Mom dissuaded me from choosing art as a vocation. She actually told me off and said “Don’t be an artist – you will die before you make it.” I did my Masters in Applied Finance and worked for most of my career in HR and Organizational Development– for the last 12 years in the financial industry. About 25 years ago I had a big urge to paint. I was a single parent at the time and I enrolled in an oil painting night class. It was fun but then I met a new guy and I abandoned painting. About seven years ago when I was done with major family obligations and could carve out a space for myself I picked up painting again and from then on I have spent every single hour of my spare time painting. I’ve attended workshops by Master Artists all over the world... US, France, England, Spain, Australia and China.

My top tip for business success is: Know where and how you will contribute. This is about living bravely. I’m really into understanding how I can be significant and help others understand how they can live a life that is significant on their terms. What can you do today that is significant? This entails deep reflection. What do you really care about? What are you doing when you lose track of yourself and time? Look back on the past week. What energized you? What were you doing? How did it make you feel?

When I reflected in this way for myself I realized that week after week after week I answered these questions in the same way. I enjoy helping people feel okay again about themselves. Whether this is through coaching, talking to staff members or just having ad-hoc conversations with people.

Decide in which space you will contribute and then nurture yourself in that direction. At the same time remember to sustain yourself responsibly through whatever day job you take on. With diligent practice and learning, when the time is right you will feel confident enough to move to your desired vocation and live your truest and fullest life.”



“My top tip is the importance of independent thinking, which I believe could be applicable beyond one’s work life. Professionally, thinking independently helps me take calculated risks in investment deliberations and decision-making. While I greatly admire people who are successful in following through a single career track, it also made sense to me to explore additional opportunities to enrich and build a multi-dimensional career path with public and private disciplines to strengthen my way of being. This ‘horizontal’ expansion of experiences also serves me well in becoming a more effective decision maker along the way.”

I am fortunate to have parents who believe girls are not lesser than boys. I was very thankful when I was given the opportunity and a one-way ticket to study abroad in the US. As an Asian teenage girl in a foreign country for the first time who had to fit in quickly and deal with various influences, it was a powerful character-building crash course for me.

After completing my dual Masters degrees at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government and Columbia Business School, I followed many of my peers and worked as an investment banker at J.P. Morgan Chase and other financier positions. While successfully serving clients was fruitful work, I decided that it was time to recharge by taking on a fellowship at Brookings Institution, a premier think tank in Washington, D.C. Not only was I able to share my professional views with the Beltway elites, I had a unique opportunity to present economic policy recommendations in a hearing testimony before the US Congress during my tenure.

It could be said that money success is simply icing on the cake of life. People who strive for excellence would also search for ways to make a meaningful difference, albeit just a footprint. But you don’t need to wait for a mid-life crisis to find meaning! Think independently, explore along the way, and find out what is truly meaningful to you.”



“The FBI Academy in Quantico is the premier law enforcement training academy and research center. The FBI Academy provides training programs for new Special Agents, senior Special Agents and Executive Law Enforcement Professionals from around the world in various areas. Over 1,000 police leaders from around the world vie to attend the FBI National Academy annually to receive instruction in furtherance of their career development.

Only about 3% of the instructors within the FBI are women. I am the only female Firearms Instructor presently instructing at the FBI Academy. Over the past 21 years of Government Service I have served the mission in many different roles in many different countries, from working drugs in El Paso to Eurasian Organized Crime in Miami. And yes, there are things I cannot talk about.

When people ask me what we do at the FBI, I tell them we put bad guys in jail. That’s how we uphold the Constitution and protect the American people.

People sometimes ask me...don’t you feel afraid? Going into an arrest or an operation, I am always afraid, or at least anxious, but I do it anyway. If you say you aren’t afraid, you’re arrogant or naive. Don’t take anything for granted. However, based on our training and team work, I know that the odds are in our favor because of our training, our thorough investigation procedures, and our team work.

When am I most afraid? I’ve had a lot of loss in my life. But, the two most sobering moments were watching my sister die before my very eyes and seeing my own brother in that black and white jumpsuit (jail uniform). My sister struggled with addiction most of her life, as did my brother who also turned to selling contraband. I am definitely fearful of the pain caused by addiction – how it affects the addict, how it affects loved ones, and how it affects our future.

I am finishing my career where I started it—at the Academy, where I now help prepare the next generation of FBI professionals. I pass on these three points of advice:

- 1. Do not forget your why – that why that brought you to the FBI.*
- 2. Let the mission drive what you do – the actions you take, the decisions you make, and the words that come out of your mouth.*
- 3. Develop your leadership and remember that leadership is about supporting your people, not controlling them.*

My #1 tip for success? Be good at your job. Don’t let the first thing anyone says about you professionally be anything other than a version of “She’s good at her job”. What do I mean by being good at your job? It isn’t about just performing tasks. Make your unit, your organization, yourself better than the day you arrived. Do more than is just delineated in your job description. To use our Oath of Office, “Well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which you are about to enter.”

Now, go change the world, young people!”



“The #1 tip that I can pass along is to have passion for what you are doing. Passion is really the power that has kept me going through all periods of my career, including periods of difficulty. And perhaps more importantly, my passion has helped me to enjoy the process of doing everything that I do.

When I was 39 I started to learn Buddhist philosophy and it had a big influence on me. This was a huge turning point in my life. I stopped thinking only about myself and lo and behold my perspective on the world became totally different! The things I used to pursue... money, position, etc. I realized they are all temporary. I started to redefine success and now I can truly enjoy the present moment.

This philosophy is with me always now even when I'm at work. I'll give you an example of what I'm talking about. Taiwan is a mature market so it isn't easy as a consultant to grow fee revenue but we are under pressure to have our fees reach a certain level. If you are always staring at the fees you have earned, that makes for a very stressful kind of life. A few years into my career I changed my perspective and I started to look at my work differently. I decided to think only about what I'm doing for others – whether those others are my clients, my team members, or the tax authorities. I can clearly see they all have challenges and I focus on doing my best to help them get their issues resolved. When I look at my work from this angle it becomes very meaningful to me because I am actually helping people.

If you want to find your passion the first step is to discover the real meaning in what you are doing. This involves deep thinking – this is what motivated me to move forward. What means a lot to you will differ from person to person but the key is to figure this out because this is what will drive your passion!”

Kathryn Bennett,

Senior Estate Planning Advisor, Desjardins Financial Security
Toronto, **Canada**



"I am one of 16 first cousins and five of us have law degrees. The odds were high that I would have a career in law: one in three to be exact!"

Law is still a very conservative profession and there are ongoing struggles with the inclusion and advancement of women. Law school doesn't really prepare you for any type of non-traditional practice. Women leave traditional law firms in droves for so many reasons but largely it centres around personal satisfaction. From the very beginning of your studies, it is important to start to look around and consider the possibilities of working outside traditional private practice. Think about corporate law departments, government agencies, non-profit organizations and international NGOs. Think about what classes you might want to take to give you a broader, deeper perspective. Dive into different courses, follow your own interests and explore possibilities such as doing a joint Law/MBA or a joint Masters of Environmental Studies/Law program.

There are robust, satisfying career opportunities that school doesn't prepare you for. You have to take charge and consider all of the alternatives to a traditional career stream. My top tip for business success in any industry is to forge your own path."

Rose Fres Fausto

FQMom.com
Manila, **Philippines**



"In 1994 I made a big decision to leave my job as Assistant Vice President for Corporate Finance at one of the top investment houses in the country. I realized that in order to raise my children to be the best individuals they could be, I had to be meaningfully involved in their day-to-day activities, something that was not possible if I kept my job. So I left my promising investment banking career together with half of the family income. Fortunately, before my third son was born I was able to do some contract work from home and during that time I also journaled about my parenting experiences. One day it occurred to me that there was a wealth of information in my journal and this included lessons that I taught my sons about finance.

*I was in my mid-life period and I was drawn to a quote by philosopher Frederick Buechner: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." I was so struck by these words that I came up with my own version: "God's will is the intersection of my greatest passion and the world's greatest need." From there, I was motivated to write my first book *Raising Pinoy Boys* and later on a few more books that focused on FQ (Financial Intelligence Quotient).*

Today I help parents raise their children to have high FQ and companies to help their employees save and invest.

My top tip for business success is: find your gift. We are all wired differently. You need to find your sweet spot so you will be able to give something extra even if the money is not yet coming!"



“You know those people who don’t know what they want to be when they grow up? Well I was never one of them! I have always loved storytelling, video, and writing and I’m at my best when I combine them. Studying journalism was so important to me... I wanted to be classically trained. I was fortunate to have great teachers and mentors when I started working as a student reporter at CJOH (now CTV Ottawa). They gave me the tools I needed to go out and do what needed to be done.

Although I don’t have a degree in finance, I did spend a semester in Paris studying economics at the Sorbonne. It was later, when I was reporting on the financial crisis for Canada’s business channel (BNN Bloomberg) that my eyes were opened to the clique-y nature of the world of money. I thought to myself ‘we can do better.’ Why do we collectively accept a financial system that is run by a club of powerful men who behave badly? And with no real repercussions. Wall Street was bailed out and, other than a few scapegoats, none of the titans in finance paid for it. Again, there was that question of ‘how can we do better?’

I thought I might find the answer in cryptocurrency. Maybe it was FOMO, but when Bitcoin and other digital currencies were hitting record highs, I decided to take a hiatus from journalism and I joined a cryptocurrency/blockchain firm. I love to learn and I was excited to learn completely new skills as well as soak up everything I could about an emerging and potentially very disruptive industry and technology.

My stay at the crypto firm was short-lived, and so was the collective cryptocurrency frenzy that drove up prices and interest. I have since leaned into the role I have now, as the Economics and Money Editor with VICE Canada. This experience taught me that even though I might stray for a while to learn a new thing or two, I’ll always come back to journalism.

My top tip for business success is to make a list of what is important to you in your life and your work. That might sound a bit boring but it has absolutely worked for me. Some of the important things on my personal list are: it’s okay to make a sideways career move if it means getting ahead in your next career move; figure out what you are worth in the marketplace —do the research and negotiate; understand and harness your peak productivity periods; embrace speaking in public; and don’t burn bridges. Be clear about what is truly important to you and make a list.”

April Tan



Vice President, COL Financial Group
Manila, **Philippines**

"I've been with the same firm since 1996. We are the largest online stock broker and Philippine based stock broker on the Philippine Stock Exchange with 70% of the retail clients in this country. We try hard to engage our clients by teaching them about the importance of investing in stocks and sharing stories about the companies rather than only talking about financial ratios. We treat our clients well and I have learned that opportunities come when your clients trust you. Trust matters.

My top tip for business success is: have the right values. The reason I've stayed with the same firm for 20+ years is that I share the same values as the principals. We don't cheat people and we deal with any product or service issues right away.

Good values bring good karma. For example, the media likes to deal with us because we treat them in a very professional manner and we always do our best to try and help them. If we have stories that we want to pitch they always pick up our call and it was because of my reputation that the newspaper asked me to write a column for them. My most popular column was "A letter to my children – on financial freedom". Personal stories resonate with readers and this was a way to share my values."

Cristina Arceo



Vice President, China Banking Corporation Treasury Group
Manila, **Philippines**

"I started my career at a local bank branch doing mostly clerical work. I had to stay close to my support system, since I was a young mother with a newborn child. Having gone to a prestigious state university, it was not something that I initially planned to do but I endured my stay in the local branch while figuring out how to change my circumstances. I have always believed that God has something wonderful in store for me and all I needed was to do my job the best I could.

My top tip for success in life and business is: have a positive mindset.

This has certainly worked for me. In dealing with my personal situation, I said a lot of prayers – I wanted to be free of feelings of bitterness, jealousy and regret. I knew this would give me more power to go on and live my life. In terms of my career, from my start as a lowly clerk I went on to get a scholarship and took my Master's degree and I directed myself to a great career in trading.

I think trading is a perfect job for me because although there is lots of stress it doesn't weigh on me. Just like life, markets have their ups and downs – I don't let it get to me. Last year was a bad market for fixed income because interest rates increased by 300 bps. This required me to have the discipline to assess the current situation and cut my losses if necessary and move forward. I don't stay in a bad situation in trading...or in life."



"I grew up in Gothenburg, Sweden, and did my PhD in Medicine at the University of Gothenburg. Since I graduated I have worked in cancer research at three different labs: one in Sweden and two in Denmark. My job is essentially about gathering clinical data, finding the right drugs for individual patients, and trying to learn how to prevent relapses. It is important for me to feel that I am making a difference in people's lives. The difficult part with the field of cancer research is that you need to be patient and trust in the process...it takes a very long time to see the results of your work.

I started investing in 2015 and I found it to be a very confusing exercise. I got a lot of help from some local women and this made it much easier for me. The best thing I ever did was join an online Facebook investment community for women in Sweden. Early on I became a Co-Administrator (along with Anna Svahn and Anna Brännhult) and we now have 130,000 subscribers. This is a network that promotes communication about all facets of investing and we encourage everyone to do their own study and analysis. Women love to discuss as a herd: "what are you investing in and why?"

When I moved to Denmark in 2016 for my research work, I couldn't find a similar type of community so I decided to start one! I wanted to share what I had experienced, inspire other women and really help them change their lives for the better. The community, Money Penny, has 10,000 subscribers – we have both a Facebook group and a website. Earlier this year we started the same platform in Norway. We also offer physical events that are educational and/or thematic (e.g. about sustainability or crowdlending.).

My hope is to eventually make this work my fulltime job. Cancer research is important, but so is getting women to start investing, and (unlike medical research) I can see the results of my efforts and have an impact immediately.

Whether it is working as a cancer researcher or acting as a role model for female investors, I know that I must always remember why I am doing what I am doing. These days it is nice to get media attention and I feel that people have started to see me as an investment expert...but the real reason I am doing this is that I want to inspire other women and introduce them to the world of investing. My top tip for business success is to always hold on to your primary passion for why you are doing what you are doing: always remember your WHY."

Follow your inner voice

The importance of relying (at least in part) on intuition applies to all professions. Intuition fosters creativity and creativity is what leads to innovation — which is critical to the world we live in.

Intuition is powerful. Often it surprises us and leads us in unexpected ways – whereas rational thinking would have closed some doors long before those ideas could have arrived.

In today's world we are immersed in data and automated thinking...we need to maintain our intuition to stay innovative and to forge new paths.

Pay close attention to what you feel and what you think. These are the only two factors that you are solely and completely responsible for. You can't outsource how you feel or how you think.

Let your intuition flow! It is needed more than ever in today's business environment. Trust your intuition. Don't shut it out. You have it at your disposal.

5

Susanne Strandänger Artist
Marrakech, **Morocco**



"I was recently interviewed for a podcast in Sweden called "I am Brave" which is about women who have made radical and vital changes in their lives and jumped into the unknown without any guarantees or seat belts, financially, socially or in other ways. I had to deeply reflect on my own life story and I came to the conclusion that my life journey over the past 30 years has consisted of radical changes, one after the other.

In the early part of my career I lived a bourgeois life as a well-paid business lawyer, specializing in marketing and intellectual property law. I was married with two daughters, Filippa and Isabella, living in a posh suburb outside Stockholm. All the time, working as a business lawyer, I always felt something was missing inside, even though I found my work intellectually stimulating and interesting.

Since my early childhood I found my greatest pleasure in drawing, painting and writing poems and I have always been inspired by nature - especially our beautiful archipelago outside Stockholm where our family has a summer house with a beautiful view of the Baltic. When my best friend since childhood, Carola, suddenly died from a heart attack in their house in London, leaving her husband and three small children (one a newly born baby daughter) I realized that life can end in an instant without warning. At that moment, I decided to start changing my path in life and I let my inner voice guide me on this journey. It kept telling me not to postpone my dreams and to follow my heart in this process.

My inner voice guided me to advance, to navigate and pass the numerous obstacles on the way. I became braver and braver over time, and I grew mentally stronger and more focused. I have found my real Dharma working and living as an international artist between Morocco and Sweden, with a human profile and global network. My top tip for business success is to follow your heart and live your dream.

If you live your dream, you are passionate and positive and it will be reflected in all your activities and way of life. You are in the flow and as a consequence the money will come."

Kerstin Cooley

Managing Partner, Brightly Ventures
Stockholm, Sweden



“My top tip for business success is three-fold.

First, I work with what I call a serendipity strategy. This is about working very diligently, being highly focused on my commitments but at the same time always staying open to new ideas and adventures. This strategy has served me well so far. Instead of having a set plan, opportunities have emerged and I have had the courage to jump on them. Now, in my role as a VC, I am very aware that sometimes the best ideas are the result of serendipity, meaning the ability to accidentally discover a great business idea while working on something unrelated. Nothing replaces hard work, structure and planning ahead but sometimes organizations need to take chances to find the right way.

Second, I never stay in an environment that isn't fulfilling or meeting my needs. I have learned over the years that you usually have limited capability to change a set structure, especially if it comes from above you, so you are better off taking your skills to a place where you can have a positive impact. This is not to say you should flee rather than fight, it is more about focusing on building something really great in your own way.

Last, I encourage people to learn something new every day.

I haven't received much bad advice in my career but I once was told by a big boss that you don't know something really well until you have done it solidly for 15 years. Clearly, we had differing opinions about how to build a career. My advice is to never stay with a bad boss however always leave a relationship on a good note. You never know when you will come across that person again and in what context. I believe in karma and I think you are hurting yourself if you carry around negative emotions about others so it is better to make up and move on.”

Hanna Pri-Zan

Chairman of the Board, Peilim Portfolio Management
Tel Aviv, Israel



“My top tip is to learn how to budget time. Time is a limited commodity and it pays to make the most of it. There are essentially five categories in our lives (in no particular order): family, work, sport, fun/leisure, and investing in our future. You need to put pen to paper and decide how much time to allocate to each of these activities every single day.

It is also important to pay close attention to the budget of what you feel and what you think. These are the only two factors that you are solely and completely responsible for. You can't outsource how you feel or how you think. It is up to you to budget them appropriately.”



"I grew up in Portugal, and even when I was very young there was a certain expectation that I would eventually become a doctor or a lawyer but I never felt that either of these professions would be my vocation. So because I really didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up, I decided to study something practical: I just wanted to be able to find a job at the end of my degree. This plan has worked well and in my eight years of work since graduating with my MSc in Enterprise Information Systems I've had three different jobs that allowed me to travel and live in three different continents. Now I'm living in Bangkok and here I'm the sole representative of a Barcelona-based technology company.

My top tip for success in business and in life is to 'be mindful.' At some of my jobs in the last eight years I was working on auto pilot. Those were definitely my worst phases. You are just not there. It is so important to be there and mindful of what you are doing. You don't have to know whether or not it will work out...just be present. Things will just happen. The more I practice this the better my life gets. See how you feel in the moment and try to go in the direction that makes you happy. Being mindful has helped me to understand that my next step will be to set up my own small business.

*When I was 13 years old I loved crocheting and I have recently rekindled this passion! I have started a blog called *Fluffy Stitches* - I'm writing for a specific audience that is interested in crochet and knitting patterns and want to make them themselves. I've been exploring ways to turn this blog into a viable source of income and in doing this research I have found a lot of female bloggers that are very creative entrepreneurs. I never thought I would find such tech-savvy, business-y types of women in the maker world. Another thing that I found is that we love to share our experiences and help each other. One of the mottos I have seen recurrently is "Community over Competition" and that is a cornerstone in the maker blogging world. And it doesn't matter the specific craft...the commonality is that they share their own stories about how they made their passion into a business. This is so intriguing for women. We want to know "How did you set up your business? What were your struggles along the way? How do you juggle the financing? How do you manage with children? etc." And it is wonderful to see that we are not afraid to share how we found our way to be successful and happy.*

Being mindful has taught me that the more present you are, the easier it is to find what really moves you. As a solopreneur, you may doubt yourself at some point. Don't forget that there is a strong and supportive community that you can reach out to whenever you need."



“As a former national athlete and Ironman champion, I am usually described as highly competitive. When it came to my studies I did my best so that I could be the most qualified person and in the workplace my race has always been to keep up with the men. I’m not blaming my work colleagues for this – they have been supportive but it is the system at work. It’s all about ego. Fortunately, over time, I have learned that when it comes to succeeding in business the ability to harness my innate feminine energy is my most powerful weapon.

I saw a major emphasis put on equality between the sexes when the feminist movement in business started to boom when I was growing up in the 1980s. We saw women striving to find their position of power by abandoning their feminine energy. To be taken seriously by the patriarchal society, I initially believed that in order to succeed in business, women must conform to a more masculine version of themselves. The messaging was, ‘Yes, women and men can be equals, but only if women act more like men.’

I was certainly way out of my comfort zone when we decided to start a family. I was worried about the idea of becoming a mother since it would involve losing control. I was getting depressed because I knew this would involve giving up a lot that I’ve worked so hard for. But in fact being a Mom has helped! Once I ‘let go’ and embraced my femininity, my nurturing qualities, my intuition... things started to flow. And this has carried over into my professional life.

My top tip for business success is to balance your highly developed, ambitious masculine side, with the softness and receptive energy of femininity.

Last week we had a large government client in our boardroom and I was the only woman among the eight professionals at the table. In the background circling around the table there were 10 other women doing all of the administrative work (the housekeeping) that was needed to make things happen. It occurred to me that I had to work three times as hard as the men to get the best possible qualifications and even then I was just able to get that seat at the table. I recall my earlier days when I was told that I was too pushy and argumentative. I would get so frustrated.

Today I don’t let it get to me. I don’t need to be the loudest voice in the room. In client meetings I am quiet and introspective, I smile, and I wait for my turn to speak. It takes a few meetings but then I eventually become the favorite. The other day when I was giving a seminar about multi-asset management the client said “I want my money with her.” I changed my business style after becoming a mother. Now I consciously practice letting my feminine energy shine through and carry me through day-to-day challenges in a still male-dominated professional arena.

What does this mean? It means that yes it is a competition but there can still be camaraderie. Instead of a hostile counterpoint it is more of “I hear what you are saying but let me help you change your perspective.” It’s a pull instead of a push. Being a woman is very powerful. Let your intuition flow. Don’t shut it out. You have it at your disposal.”

Christine Bjerke

Architect
Copenhagen, **Denmark**



“In my work as an architect I am trained to use my intuition as one of my main tools. Not just when designing a project but also when understanding the brief for the project. There are certain parameters which are often pre-set. In the case of architecture, it can be the necessary dimensions for doors, windows, ceiling heights, etc. But...how is the atmosphere? The feeling of walking into and being in that space? In order to design for these conditions we need to use our intuition. What that process of intuition brings will always be different and more specific to a place. I think the importance of thinking with intuition applies to all professions. Intuition fosters creativity and creativity is what leads to innovation — which is critical to the world we live in.

To me intuition is one of the essential components for success. Every day we surround ourselves with a reality that is heavily valued from conscious reasoning and what is ‘the right thing to do’. There are certain expectations and ideas of how to reach success depending on who and where we are. But first of all, what is success if we get lost on the way? If we don’t allow for our own personal and more organic intuition to guide us – we might be basing our success on what others think and external reasoning, rather than our own personal investment in what we are working on.

Intuition is powerful. It opens up our creativity. Often it surprises us and leads us in unexpected ways – whereas rational thinking would have closed some doors long before those ideas could have arrived. Immersed in data and automated thinking we need to maintain our intuition to stay innovative and to walk new ways.”

Vera Futorjanski

Innovation Director at 500Startups
Abu Dhabi, **United Arab Emirates**



“I have been fortunate to have enjoyed a wildly interesting life path. In my early career I was a professional Argentine tango dancer, I’ve lived in 10 countries, and I’m fluent in five languages. Today, in addition to my role at 500 Startups, I serve as a global ambassador and mentor for Vital Voices, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) led by Hillary Clinton and Madeleine Albright that works with women leaders.

My top tip for business success? Don’t be afraid to change paths in life. Even if the clear path is not visible at the time, your job changes might lead to something much bigger. My own career is a perfect example. I started as a political consultant in the European Union. After three years, I jumped to a fast-paced environment at Rocket Internet leading their global communications during the largest tech IPO in Germany, and then I moved to Dubai to build a startup that I launched and ran for a year.

From there, the Dubai Government headhunted me to be part of their founding team to build the Dubai Future Accelerators. That opportunity was possible only because of my three previous very diverse experiences [that gave me an] understanding of politics, communications expertise, and entrepreneurship experience.

As Steve Jobs said, “You cannot connect dots looking forward, but you can connect dots looking backwards.””



“When I started working in the investment industry I was surrounded by the ‘Bro Culture’ – there were a lot of conversations that revolved around hockey, golf and cars. Value was defined solely in dollar terms. Although I loved helping clients meet their financial goals, and was intrigued by the excitement of the stock market, I didn’t feel connected to the culture and wished that I could do something more meaningful. Sustainability (ESG) was a topic of great interest to me and after talking on and off for two years with a major ESG research firm they accepted my idea to create a global ESG research sales role for me. This was a positive transition, although my job was now more peripheral to the industry since I would be in research and I would no longer be directly involved in managing money.

After 14 years working with asset owners and investment managers to incorporate ESG into their investment process, I was intrigued to see if I could bring my own insights from a research and data perspective back into asset management. I knew there were ways to enhance active portfolio management performance with a more comprehensive and data inclusive strategy. At this time, I met my future business partner Liz. It was a huge risk to take the leap and become entrepreneurs building investment products but we knew that the timing was right. By far this has been the boldest career move I’ve ever made in my life.

When I reflect on my personal qualities I am an adventurous type of person. Over the years I’ve experienced lots of different relationships, jobs and travel. I think this helped me achieve a good sense of myself. I think about how I make decisions and I have grown increasingly to trust myself. I’ve realized the value of listening to my own voice and taking more of a leadership role. If something doesn’t feel right, speak up. When things feel right, act on it - in business and in life. When I met my husband I knew on the most substantive level that he was ‘it’ – I knew we would be able to grow together in substantial ways throughout our lives. I was so right and I feel very appreciative of what I have. I trusted myself and it paid off.

My top tip for success is: listen to yourself more. Yes, take risks but also take the time to listen to yourself more.”

Marguerita (Rita) Cheng CEO Blue Ocean Global Wealth
Washington D.C., USA



“My Dad immigrated from Taiwan to the US in the 1960s: he arrived with \$17 in his pocket. I was born in upstate New York (the eldest of three daughters) and lived there until I was 10 years old. My Dad taught me how to read Value Line reports and use a financial calculator. He even showed me how to read insurance contracts that he purchased to protect his family. Importantly, he saved money for my college tuition through the Employee Stock Purchase Plan (ESPP) at IBM. I was the first person in our family to attend college. In a very basic way I learned the value of planning and I experienced firsthand the great things that can happen if people take control of what they save, what they invest, and how they react to situations.

I studied East Asian literature and finance at University of Maryland. I also attended Keio University in Tokyo, Japan as a Monbukagakusho scholar (a scholarship program from the Japanese government for foreign students to study in Japan.) I worked incredibly hard all through school and somewhere along the way I decided to become the person that I thought a role model should be. I knew this would be a challenge because by nature I’m an introvert – sometimes I’m reserved, and I don’t speak up. I am more thoughtful in how I observe and process information. By 2004, I had passed the CFP (Certified Financial Professional) exams, I had worked in the finance industry for five years, and I had my third baby. Shortly thereafter, My Dad was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease and it was around that time that I started contributing to articles and blogging about my life and work. (Of course, I informed my compliance department of these activities.) My clients started to get a better understanding of what I do and why.

In early 2013, I made the decision to take a step back to move forward and I started my own firm. I realized that if you are working in a large firm the only way to measure your productivity is by your sales numbers. My blog taught me a lot about alternative ways to approach business. As a woman, I know myself and I know that I am risk aware, not risk averse. I’m extremely perceptive. I feel things. And maybe because of my multi-racial, multi-cultural background I don’t judge quickly...I take time to process things.

My #1 tip for business success is: trust your intuition. This also applies to your personal life. When my Dad was sick and taking new medication for Parkinson’s disease, he told me that he often felt dizzy. He felt this was probably a normal side effect, but I was very worried because he wasn’t one to complain...ever. I insisted that we should go to the Doctor and I’m so glad I listened to myself because it turned out that his complaint was valid, and his medication was too strong.

Women are very intuitive and this is needed more than ever in today’s business environment. Trust your intuition.”

Elize Shirdel



Founder & CEO, Datenight Babysitting
Toronto, **Canada**

“At HELM.life we build technology for families. Just after I got my PhD and was pregnant with my second child, I went to work at a start-up in the marketing tech space. The environment was terrible and I didn't stay long, but it really opened my eyes to what the start-up world looked like, and I thought - they're building the future - and I wanted to be part of that. So I thought to myself...what am I going to build? What do I really need that isn't available? Answer: Our family needs a babysitter.

Out of that experience Datenight Babysitting was born, which has since grown into a larger platform: HELM.life that helps families connect to the tools and services that they need to run family life. Famtech (family tech) has been so overlooked that it isn't even discussed as a sector. Yet moms control \$2.4 trillion in North American spending! There is a massive hole in this space.

We've been growing our platform for a few years now and we are filling a huge need. We've helped so many different types of families with their childcare requirements: from giving mom entrepreneurs time to grow their businesses, to parents being able to go back to school to connecting people to emergency childcare so that they can be with ill loved ones at crucial moments. It's important work.

My top tip for business success is: don't listen. Maybe I don't mean that the way that it sounds! I was recently speaking with a VC who said "I would never presume to tell founders what to do," and it was such a breath of fresh air. Saying "Don't Listen" might sound a bit radical but I have found that so many people with so much less information than you have about your business will confidently give you advice. We are constantly looking at and analyzing our data so I wonder... how do they know what the best course of action is when they don't have access to it? It is important to hear lots of perspectives and ideas and to weigh and consider them. People are always offering advice - and you don't have to act on it all.”

Caroline Miller



Managing Editor and Global Strategist at BCA Research
Montreal, **Canada**

“I have always tried to remain versatile by remaining thoughtful about how I can repurpose my skillset in different environments. Adaptability has been a key success factor for me. I have been open to re-invention, which has allowed me to accept the non-linear nature of opportunity in life.”

Conclusion

*What can we learn from this research? Why are these five top tips so important?
What are the implications of these findings?*

At one level, there not much new in these findings of top tips. Lifelong learning, speaking up, forming deep relationships, understanding your why, following your inner voice and being courageous: these tips (or variants of them) can be found in many other reports and articles.

But at a deeper level, there are two important insights from this year's research:

- 1) Telling someone dying of thirst in the desert to find a spring and drink some water is not very helpful. Showing them where the spring actually is will save their lives. In the same way, “top tips” – in isolation – are not much more than platitudes. It is only with the stories behind these tips, with concrete examples and real life applications, that women (and men) will be able to learn from these tips and put them into action.
- 2) It isn't just individuals that need to be courageous: financial institutions need to read the stories behind the top tips to better understand, communicate and inspire their customers.

Methodology

Throughout 2019, the author conducted 51 interviews with accomplished women around the world. The selection criteria for this research is not scientific but is more based on serendipity in terms of the manner that the introductions come about. Interviewees vary by age, cultural background and geographic location, although all are relatively successful in their lives, careers, or both.

Two questions were asked: “*What is your #1 tip for business success?*” and “*Why is that your top tip?*”

These open-ended questions elicited diverse stories and five key themes emerged. Quotes were prepared by the author and permission to publish each quote was granted by the interviewees.

Research findings are based on the 51 one hour long (on average) qualitative interviews.

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