



SUCCESSFUL WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Edited by Jacqueline Rose

Successful Women in Business

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My voice is often soft but the words I say are strong. After all, women having opinions is a wonderful thing that can only benefit us all.

Junko Kemi - From The Boardroom To The Catwalk

Life is good, not because I'm jet setting around the world but because when I come home, I do so to a loving family. A home of giggles, happy children and a husband that appreciates the life we have together, a real man who loves my children like his own, and in laws that mean the world to me.

Lorena Öberg - From Self-Doubt To Self-Accomplishment

Life is indeed unpredictable and forever changing, but it also offers endless opportunities for those who are ready to embrace them. So make sure you are ready.

Suzi Chen - Curating Your Success

Don't forget to Embrace-Life, Love and Each Other.

Rosie Shalhoub – Embracing Rosie

Stay focused on what you believe in. It sounds obvious, maybe a little cheesy, but I have often repeated this mantra to myself over the years, especially when things get tricky.

Emma Coleman - From Nurse to Holistic Skin Specialist

We have built up a very recognisable brand, and by some referred to as an institution. This has been achieved through dedication, hard work and a passion for educating others and ourselves, not being afraid to fail and being innovative.

Linda Stewart – More Than Just A Salon

My journey has taught me to be flexible with my business and not to become too attached to any expectations. Expectation limits growth.

Melissa Aguirre - Beads, Yoga, & Chai! Oh My!

In order to grow a successful business, you will need to work on the business. If you are only working in the business, then all you have is a JOB.

Stacey Huish - The Why, The What & The How

Whilst it is crucial to work towards a healthy profit margin if a business is to make a change in the world for good, that company must have a healthy perspective on what will benefit its customer, its suppliers and the community at large.

Judith Treanor - Profit Or Purpose And Personal Fulfilment?

Starting a business with not much money is an achievable and rewarding path to success. Anyone that believes in themselves, and believes in their goals, like I did, can find their way into their own exciting venture. Find your own genius and create value for other people and you will find yourself skyrocketing to success.

Catherine Craig -Starting A Business With No Money

Learn To Celebrate Yourself - guess what? You are not perfect. And you know what? You don't have to be. Learn to accept yourself and love yourself. Don't beat yourself up for all your failures and weaknesses instead; celebrate your strengths and successes.

Christine Khor - Create the Life You Want

Word of mouth is another free way to market your business and it adds the benefit of trust. Friends and loyal customers will praise you and your products if you do right by them and give them great value.

Roberta Perry - Building Relationships And Getting Free Press For Your Business

Now I define "success" differently. Success for me is a general level of happiness and contentment in my daily life. Success is sleeping well at night, knowing that tomorrow is a new day filled with new possibilities.

Rebecca Carroll-Bell - Finding Out What Being Successful Really Means

Plan your days, weeks, months, quarters and year. Start with writing your top 5 goals for the year, and then break them down to small steps over the coming months, weeks and days. Believe in yourself, set realistic goals – enjoy the journey, not just the end result.

Kiran Singh - Design the Lifestyle You Desire

Always remember, there is not wrong way to run a business. Seek your opinion and talk to the right people. You only live once so live it without any regrets.

Sandra Yeow - 4 Lessons on How to Increase Success Rates for Any Start-up

I will always be looking for the opportunity. I have a list on my cork board that shows me the companies I want to do business with next to keep me motivated.

April Morse - Hard Times, Creative Thinking

We need to know our worth and that generally it is the woman and mother keeping the family unit together by taking care of the family. Sounds old school but it is generally how a family functions. Which is why we need to be full of love, to take care of ourselves and then others.

Renee Catt - Defining Success



The thought leaders who contributed to this book:

Junko Kemi - From The Boardroom To The Catwalk

Lorena Öberg - From Self-Doubt To Self-Accomplishment

Rosie Shalhoub - Embracing Rosie

Emma Coleman - From Nurse to Holistic Skin Specialist

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Renee Catt - Defining Success



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Curating Your Success

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From Nurse To Holistic Skin Specialist

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4 Lessons On How To Increase Success Rates For Any Start-Up

Hard Times, Creative Thinking

Welcome to Successful Women in Business



Women entrepreneurs are rarely satisfied with the status quo: Instead they strive to build the world in the way it should be rather than abiding by a system that's potentially archaic or outdated. During the course of researching this book we have come to realise that breaking down barriers

for women in the workplace is key to success for companies and for countries.

That's the message we hope you will pick up from this book. When more and more women are seen at the top of organisations and running high growth technology businesses, the more this will be regarded as the standard and a perfectly normal, and logical, path to choose.

Starting a company, or managing a company through a period of transition and growth, can be a riveting roller coaster of emotions with tremendous highs and at times, difficult lows. But despite the challenges, many women have risen to become leaders and influential figures in their respective areas. *Successful Women In Business* recognizes and celebrates the outstanding contribution made by individual women to their businesses and, in many cases, their local communities. The business leaders profiled in this book are of various ages, social backgrounds and industries. However, the one common thread which unites them is that they dared to believe. And, in believing, they made the seemingly impossible a reality.

Their individual stories tell of the challenges we all face: uncertainty, fear, discouragement, hope, commitment and yes, that indefinable, illogical and yet all-consuming belief that we will succeed against all odds. These are real-life individual stories of success that I hope will also encourage you to believe - and to make that difference.

Jacqueline

Jacqueline Rose, Lovely Silks Publishing



From The Boardroom To The Catwalk

Humble beginnings

Ever since I was a little girl, I've always wanted to be my own boss, and the responsibility of having my own company excited me. I wanted to lead and inspire others to create new and innovative products that would make people happy and put a smile on their faces; I wanted to create 'new value'.

As a youngster, I didn't have a definitive plan of what my business would look like but looking back I guess it was obvious that I would enter the retail sector. After all, I was following in the footsteps of my beloved grandmother, who had the most influence on me becoming a businesswoman. Growing up, I spent a lot of time with my grandmother in her kimono shop in Osaka. She was kind, never complained, always helped others and achieved anything and everything she put her mind to - in short I thought she was so cool and wanted to be just like her.

As a retailer, customers appreciated her honesty and her flexible style of working for example, convenient opening hours and custom made clothes. With a child's enthusiasm, I would pretend that I was a customer walking around the shop, looking at how she could improve the business, from what suited customers to the colours and design of the fabrics adorning every shelf. Although she always listened to me she did not always take my advice.

Teenage struggles and finding my voice

The teenage years are a struggle for a lot of young people and sadly I was no exception. When I was around 14 or 15 years old, I failed to gain a place into my first choice high school (ages 12-18) and disliked my substitute choice. Whilst I can look back now and see that everything worked out for the best, at the time, this was devastating news for me, especially in the academically competitive environment of Japan. I lost a lot of confidence in

myself, felt I wasn't good enough, didn't believe in my abilities and consequently really withdrew into myself.

I, like many teenage girls, placed a lot of pressure on myself, to succeed at everything I did and to fit in with my peers. The turning point for me came when I was 18 and one of my closest friends passed away from cancer. During our friendship, he provided me with much needed support, gave me confidence, believed in my abilities and told me that I was unique. At his funeral, I suddenly realised that life is far too short and that it passes by very quickly. I knew that I needed to be more confident, and concluded that for me to achieve my goals, the most important thing was to grab every opportunity and work as hard as I possibly could. Armed with this new attitude, my life changed for the better.

Shortly after, I began my degree at Waseda University studying Western History. While I was at university, I began hosting charity fundraisers and awareness events relating to the prevalence of HIV in Japan. This was a very topical and sensitive issue at the time due to a series of high-profile medical accident cases in which a group of young people were infected with HIV. Organising these events helped me to find my own voice, as I felt empowered by playing a part, even if it was a small part, in ensuring that students were better informed and in turn, better protected.

Entering the world of work

Upon graduation, my first job was with as a sales representative with Benesse, an education publishing company, in Osaka. Whilst I had a burning desire to establish my own company, I used this role to develop my basic skills and learn as much as I could in the areas of sales and marketing. By suggesting ideas for schools to tailor products to their students based on feedback from educational professionals, I was able to grow and be very creative in this role.

This experience of acting on customer feedback would prove invaluable in setting up my own companies in the future. My confidence at this time grew considerably and helped me gain real life skills. I went from being a

total City girl to traveling around remote parts of Japan by myself and learning how to progress in a very male-dominated environment.

Aged 25, I decided that I wanted a new challenge, and I made the decision to leave Benesse for a role at the professional services firm, PwC. The nature of PwC meant that I learnt new skills in areas as diverse as accountancy, law and consulting, and my marketing skills came in handy as well! A short turnaround on projects became the norm, meaning I had to become adept at learning, accessing and analysing quickly on the job. The time I was at PwC was certainly an opportunity in which I was able to grow and solidify my experience and skills.

I've always believed that it is important to continually challenge yourself and your capabilities, so I decided to branch out further at Boston Consulting Group (BCG). As one of the biggest consulting firms in the world, BCG was the ideal place for me to learn more about the processes of business and to work alongside individuals from all walks of life, cultures and disciplines.

Initially, I found the role a challenge as I was working primarily in the medical and IT industries – a real departure from the education sector. However, I was ready for the challenge and excited at the opportunities to grow both professionally and personally. BCG's mantra is how to get maximum results in the shortest amount of time, which is crucial when you are working under tight deadlines and to high expectations. This was a useful learning point when I established my first business as I suddenly realised I would have to multi-task like I had never multi-tasked before.

Becoming my own boss

My boss at BCG was a very smart man, and he had observed and met many professionals in his time. He explained to me that my strengths were in marketing. Coming from someone with so much experience and high standards, these words were very powerful for me and helped me to formulate my future plan. Another former colleague encouraged me to take steps to find new clients, stating that once I had found three, I should

resign from BCG. I took her advice and began to identify potential clients through my networks and social media. Soon, I had three clients, in IT, insurance and energy. After a lifetime of imagining and preparing, I started my own marketing consultancy business in 2008, five years after I joined BCG.

Starting again

I loved owning my own business – yes, it was incredibly hard work with lots of travelling and even more late nights but, seeing my business thrive and grow was the most rewarding feeling in the world. The company was called ‘Maojian Works,’ which is Chinese for my family name ‘Kemi’. The reason I chose a Chinese name was because I had identified areas of growth for my business being outside of Japan, with China being a future key region.

On Friday 11th March 2011, my life completely changed. That day, I was in Nagoya, in the middle of a presentation to a client. The day was the day of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. The Tohoku earthquake once again made me realise how short life is, and after running my marketing consulting business for five years, I began reflecting on a piece of advice my grandmother gave me, “life is not about how much you make; it’s about what you leave behind.”

With this in mind, I thought of ways in which I could improve the lives of other women while also tapping into my interests and passions. An idea took hold based around the fact that I would often struggle to find clothes that worked with my busy professional life. You may not think it would be difficult to find practical and comfortable yet also elegant clothing in a city as large as Tokyo, I would spend my precious free time walking around malls and department stores for suitable work attire, only to return home empty handed. I wondered why the larger clothes companies were not catering to the professional female demographic and it was this moment that kay me, a fashion brand for businesswomen by a businesswoman was born.

Buoyed by excitement and a newfound energy, I began in earnest to answer two key questions - how do I produce a dress? And how do I ensure

that women buy kay me dresses? My friends, who have been incredibly supportive, recommended a tailor and his advice was to collaborate with an excellent pattern cutter. Through the power of social media, I was introduced to a wonderful pattern cutter who not only creates beautiful garment templates but also has connected me to a wide range of industry professionals, suppliers and trading companies. She has and continues to be imperative to the kay me journey and I am proud to say she is now a partner in kay me.

During this time, I liaised with my network to hold focus groups, where I interviewed future kay me customers and showed them samples of potential products. This included an event at my former employer, Benesse where I presented the first collection to my fellow professional women and received some very useful and honest feedback. Feedback on areas including price and design was extremely valuable and helped me to shape and refine the collection, ensuring that the samples met all their requirements.

In my opinion, focus groups are extremely important and a valuable way of gaining insights from your core audience. However, if you are asking for advice it is important that you listen to any feedback given whether it is positive or not. It is never easy to listen to criticism; it does usually help the business in the long run.

By May 2011, just eight weeks after I had initially contacted the tailor, I had 40 samples and was fortunate enough to hold a launch party at a luxury hotel in Tokyo. Using my marketing skills, I was able to attract a large crowd with all of my dresses selling out on that first day. As you can imagine, I was delighted – a real highlight of the kay me journey so far.

In July 2011, I opened a showroom and invited customers to book appointments to view the collection. The showroom was located in an area close to Tokyo's financial district, making it easy for professional women to come and view the clothes at a convenient time for them. The showroom was so successful that after two months, I created an ecommerce platform and delivery service.

In 2012, kay me took a significant step forward when I opened my first bricks and mortar retail store in Ginza, Tokyo. Ginza is one of the most exclusive areas in Tokyo, equivalent to London's Mayfair or Fifth Avenue in New York and as a result, it was risky to launch in such a high profile and expensive area. However, it was vital that kay me launched in an area, which reflected our target audience, and I was so proud when the shop opened in September. Since then we have gone from strength to strength in Japan, and now have five bricks and mortar outlets. In addition to our flagship store in Ginza, we now have one in downtown Osaka, another at Haneda international airport and concessions in two Tokyo department stores.

Going International

2016 has been the year that we have really started to focus on expanding our horizons internationally. London was first on our agenda due to its talent pool, multiculturalism and the access it gives to other global cities including New York and Singapore (both of which are also on our hit list).

The first thing I have learned about how to launch in a new territory is to get the input and advice of people who are native to the country you are planning to launch in, because they will be able to provide insights into the local culture that you might miss. The second is to get feedback from your customer base – via everything from pop up shops to business pitching events - and don't assume that what worked for your brand at home will work in another country.

The third is that where English is a common language, the power of social media and an e-commerce platform enables you to tap into new territories without any 'boots on the ground' in the early stages. This being said, I don't think there is anything better than immersing yourself into the location and lives of your target audience.

This year I have spent a lot of time in London, and this has really opened my eyes to a different way of doing business and living life. By attending professional networking events and observing my target audience as they

go through their working days – from pre-work work-outs to drinks with their team on a Thursday evening – I have learned a huge amount.

I will use this to adapt and improve our strategy for kay me in the UK, as well as cherry picking some of the areas that I most admire - efficient communications, prioritising team bonding time and regarding even leisure time as an opportunity to network - and see if they can be incorporated into the DNA of kay me's company culture back in Japan.

My top tips to anyone looking to launch their business into a new territory are: use your common sense; listen to everything and everybody's opinions, but also work with local experts; see the reality for yourself; be humble – you cannot know everything about a country you have only visited on holiday a few times; learn to localise your brand.

Lessons Learnt

Since launching kay me, one of my biggest challenges has been the transition from a business-to-business (b2b) to a business-to-consumer (b2c) organisation. In particular, I have found communicating, promoting and positioning my brand to a consumer rather than business audience to be a key learning.

For example, during kay me's first two years, stylists for newsreaders would often buy kay me to be worn on-screen. Soon after, we were approached by many stylists requesting dresses for TV drama roles.

The roles were varied, with some being a good fit for the brand, however, most did not reflect kay me customers who are hardworking businesswomen, often juggling multiple demands simultaneously. Upon reflection, we decided to be much more selective when working with TV production companies as their characters and viewers were not always representative of the kay me customer.

From this I learnt the importance of consistently reflecting your brand's message across all platforms and to ensure everybody at kay me understands the core messages at the heart of the brand. This continues to

be an area for further growth for kay me, but I see this as an exciting challenge, rather than a daunting prospect.

It is also imperative that you have a financial safety net in place. Often people ask me how I was able to get kay me up and running in such a short space of time and without any major financial backing. The answer is that throughout my career I was always mindful of having reserve funds for when I finally branched out on my own.

Between 2008 and 2011, I managed to save most of my earnings from consulting for future investment. I knew that the consulting role was just a platform for something bigger, something greater, so it made sense to put something aside for the day when that came. The moment kay me launched, however, the bills started to come in thick and fast!

Another important lesson I've learnt during my career is that anything really is possible and a positive learning can come out of difficult life experiences. All experiences, good or bad shape us and I would like to think looking back, my teenage friend would be proud of all my achievements and how much I've grown in confidence since we were 18.

Networking is also incredibly important. Without established on and off line networks in place, I would have really struggled to establish kay me as quickly and as successfully as I did. I have been lucky in that I've always admired my bosses and colleagues as they were very smart and always focused, and it has been a pleasure for me to keep in contact with them.

As a team leader now myself, I strive to inspire other young people in a similar way and as a result have established complementary English-for-business classes for all employees. Not only does this help them engage with customers traveling from overseas, but it also enables them to develop both professionally and personally, as language skills will be useful for the rest of their lives.

A piece of advice I would give particularly to younger readers is to travel. See the world. Have adventures. I really regret not traveling more when I was younger, as when I did start traveling abroad, I realised that I learnt so

much about myself by meeting others who culturally were so different from me.

As I have expanded my life internationally, I've also encountered a big learning curve in communicating with people in different languages.

Finally, I created my business for businesswomen so that they could look and feel great and with this in mind, my final piece of advice is that as women, we should be strong, proud and not be fearful to share our opinions with others. My voice is often soft but the words I say are strong.

After all, women having opinions is a wonderful thing and can only benefit us all.

Junko Kemi



About The Author



Junko Kemi began her career as a salesperson for one of Japan's leading educational service providers, Benesse. From there, she worked as a marketing consultant for PwC and Boston Consulting Group.

In these roles, she developed a passion for sales and providing cost effective solutions for corporate institutions.

It was during this time that the foundations for the concept of kay me were born as she began to feel the need for a better mix of professional attire that could also be appropriate for after-work wear, entertaining clients or eating out with colleagues.

After launching in 2011, kay me now has five Japanese locations (a flagship store in Ginza, a store in downtown Osaka, another at Haneda international airport and concessions in two Tokyo department stores). Junko also launched kay me in London in the Summer 2016.

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