

Shattering the Glass Ceiling: What It Means to be a Successful Woman in Business



By Sarah Hodgson

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2018 is a momentous year for women. It marks a century since women in England were granted the right to vote, a legislative act that would send the women's suffrage movement tumbling into all corners of the world. We've come a long, laborious way since then, but change doesn't happen overnight (or over 100 years for that matter). Remnants of gender inequality still exist.

For instance, in 2017, women held only 6.4% of the CEO positions on the [Fortune 500](#) list. To give you a better idea of what those numbers look like, that's 32 female CEOs and 468 male CEOs.

Corporate women climb a long, winding ladder, marked with obstacles, naysayers and antiquated, gender-related adversities. So, when female leaders have finally beaten the odds and reached that last rung, their definitions of 'success' have evolved into something more substantial, more meaningful.

In celebration of International Women's Day, we asked 18 female founders, CEOs, and entrepreneurs about what it means to be a successful woman in a primarily male-dominated business world. From these bits of wisdom are messages of persistence and empowerment that all women should carry in their pursuit of success.



Lori Cheek, Founder and CEO of [Cheekd](#)

My definition of success has changed drastically since I started my business in 2010. I've gone from 15 years of helping build someone else's dream to a life dedicated to building my own—[Success to me is to be able to spend your life in your own way.](#) I no longer have a job, I have a lifestyle and am miraculously always working but I've never been happier because I love what I do.



Delanie West, Chief Creative Director at **Be Super Creative Consultancy**

Success specific to being a woman in business means being confident where you stand. To not have to second guess yourself, to be positive and unafraid to speak your opinion. Most of all, to be a successful woman in business, you MUST MUST MUST be engaged in helping other women and colleagues new to your business environment. If you aren't leading and helping others, I don't believe you're accomplishing much.



Catie Hogan, President & Founder of **Hogan Financial Planning**

Being a successful woman in business means truly understanding that you can have it all, because the definition of all is whatever you want it to be. Being a successful woman in business means you are carving your own path with total confidence, accountability, and uninhibited ambition. Being a successful woman in business means you know how to reframe the bad, appreciate the good, and always look for the lesson.



Tara Langdale-Schmidt, Co-founder of [VuVatech](#)

For me, being a successful woman in business means bringing relief to women who are in pain. I have seen many entrepreneurs that define success by how much money they have in the bank, the car they drive and the house they own. I think differently. [I define success by how many women I can help.](#) My main goal is to help women overcome pain and resume normal, healthy lives; anything monetary will only be a bonus.



Ezina LeBlanc, [Business Owner, Musician, and Radio Show Host](#)

[Being a successful woman in business means being confident enough to trust my intuition and to go for what I want with strength, passion and conviction.](#) Being confident enough to bring all of my talents to the table without fear or reservation. Being confident enough to take care of my mind, body and soul without apology. Having a deep understanding that my creations will live on longer than I. Honoring and cherishing my responsibility to share my gifts with the world. Being able to share my wins, losses, laughter, tears and contacts with no fear. Setting strong boundaries and taking responsibility for my actions. Being able to truly love, honor and respect myself. Being able to be, authentically me.



Natalie Athanasiadis, Owner and Head of Digital at Digital Visibility Group

Being a successful woman in business means I can define my own evolving goals and benchmarks for success.

I have found the most satisfying role as the owner and head of digital at Digital Visibility Group Melbourne, where I get to help people grow their business online. It's incredible to be able to influence other women to pursue their business dreams.



Arnaecia Alridge, Managing Partner of Stunning Empires LLC

Being a successful woman in business means being confident, yet comfortable with sometimes being uncomfortable.

It means being able to praise yourself through your strengths and being unafraid to seek help and support in your areas of weaknesses. It is being true to your vision to best serve the world through your talents, ideas, and integrity.



Deborah Sweeney, CEO of [MyCorporation.com](https://www.mycorporation.com)

[Being a successful woman in business is all about having the right mindset.](#) Even on 'off' days or during your slow season, you have to be committed to giving it your all and approaching every aspect of business with a great, can-do attitude. Be creative, surround yourself with a positive tribe of like-minded family and friends, and don't be afraid to be 'you' either. Being unique plays a big role in your success and allows you to keep growing, learning, and moving ahead in all aspects of life.



Lesley Notton, Founder of [Notton House Academy](https://www.nottonhouseacademy.com)

Being a successful woman in business means being able to follow your true path, regardless of the obstacles that stand in your way.

It means being proud of what you have accomplished so far and what you will accomplish in the future. Being strong, having faith in yourself and understanding your core beliefs and value to the world are all elements that business owners have to learn.

Unfortunately, even in the 21st century, women are still under-valued both financially and sometimes emotionally. We face the constant fear of rejection, imposter syndrome, a lack of confidence in ourselves and feel the need to prove ourselves to our families, friends and even coworkers or old bosses.

Some people measure success in terms of money or assets, but true success comes from within. To be truly successful in business, a woman needs to start from within. She needs to understand that every day she is working towards her goal, that she has grown every day and that every time she puts something out into the world and gives value to another person, she is successful.



Frances Reimers, Principal of Firestarter

Being a successful woman in business means learning not to get sucked into the faux reality of social media.

There will always be someone who appears to have it all together. Sometimes it's real, but more often than not it's aspirational. It's almost impossible to completely unplug from the virtual world. Save your sanity by staying focused on developing your brand and working towards the goals you've established for yourself.



Heidi Foster, CFP(r), Vice President and Wealth Advisor at [American Wealth Management](#)

Being a successful woman in business means figuring out how to balance caring for your clients, your family and friends, your community, and yourself. Time is finite. Figuring how to prioritize and manage your resources leads to success.



Dr. Carey Yazeed, [Business Strategist](#)

Being a successful woman in business means: Having the ability to write my own playbook and win by my own rules, knowing my worth and being able to ask for it vs waiting for an employer on a 9 to 5 to devalue me at \$20 an hour, and not having to dim my shine because it makes others (coworkers and management) uncomfortable.



Sara Schaer, Founder and CEO of **Kango**

Being a successful woman in business means that there will be hard times but you must never give up.

Take the plunge and persist. The prerequisite is having something you're passionate about to get you through the dark times – that mission is what will sustain you.



Paige Arnof-Fenn, Founder & CEO of **Mavens & Moguls**

Being a successful woman in business means that you are sharing your talent and helping others achieve their goals while leading a fulfilling life on your terms.

Everyone's definition of success will be different and for me it includes growing a profitable business while having time for family, friends and my community. Your definition will change over time so you may have to adjust accordingly as you age and gain new experience.



Whitney Heins, Public Relations Director at **Weaving Influence** and Partner at **Elm Creative**

For me, being a successful woman in business means making a valuable contribution in three spheres—family, community, and self.

For my family, I seek to contribute financially and show my children the opportunities in the world that await them—all while being able to be present in their lives. In the community, I seek to make a positive impact on those around me through my skills, talents, and experiences. For myself, I seek to continue to grow, challenge, and become better. When I am able to do all these things, I feel like I have succeeded.



Stacy Caprio, Founder of **Growth Marketing**

Being a successful woman in business means following your deepest inner desire over the social conventions or boxes others try to put you in

, and being brave enough to live the life you envision in your mind.



Liza Tullidge, Founder of [Maven + Co](#) & Co-Founder at [Fin.Connect](#)

Being a successful woman in business means being balanced. We are so often told that there are glass ceilings, that you have to go all in or work twice as hard to cover the same distance, or that women don't play nice with other women professionally. It makes us believe we have to pour everything in to what we do, become one with that goal, isolate ourselves and to be anything else makes us less. It's not true.

[Women have an amazing ability to achieve whatever we put our minds to.](#) We build relationships and communities, smash barriers, lead incredible companies, achieve the greatest heights, yet so often forget how multifaceted we are.

To be truly successful, women in business must embrace a balance life between work, personal, and indulging our other passions. Because we've earned it and because all of those things make us more empowered to achieve. On that topic, I'm going to close two new clients today, announce the launch of my new platform, grab lunch with another boss babe, and do some yoga, and go to bed knowing I'm ready to take on the world all over again tomorrow.



Ayat Shukairy, Co-Founder of Invesp

I've come to the conclusion that something has got to give. Being perfect and great at everything in life is nearly impossible. But being successful is about having a great career and business, but also prioritizing what's most important and making sure that those needs are met.

Being a successful woman in business means not listening to the chatter and noise that tries to drag you down. It means being powerful and strong, yet compassionate and fair. [Being a successful woman means you won't always be able to put all the pieces of the puzzle of life together the way you want, but being okay with that.](#)

Being a successful woman means not always being super mom. It means giving yourself time for you – in order to present the best you at work and at home.

Thank you to these incredible women, and ALL of the business women across the world making major strides in the workforce. Do you know a successful woman in business changing the face of their field? Leave a shoutout in the comments!



Have You Started Planning Your Holiday Marketing Campaign?

Ensuring a successful holiday season is a massive undertaking. While it may be too soon for you to go decking the halls in your house, it's the perfect time to start planning your holiday marketing campaign for your business.

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