6 Common Challenges All Women Entrepreneurs Face (and How to Overcome Them)

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Millions of new businesses are started by women every year, though they still hold the minority percentage compared to men. One report found only 39.9% of new businesses were created by women in 2022 compared to 60% created by men.

Although the opportunities and expectations are starting to shift in favor of women, they still face challenges that affect their entrepreneurial goals. But with any hope, the future percentage will be more equitably distributed. Each entrepreneur faces their own hurdles. Here are a few common ones women experience most.

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1. Surpassing social expectations

Female entrepreneurs often face scrutiny regarding how they dress, speak, and interact with others. Especially in a professional setting, society has them toe the line between being too conservative and too casual and scaling back from appearing too aggressive versus the male-given adjective of assertive.

However, being controlled by this see-saw way of thinking, for women to commandeer the spaces they're in, it's best to take the age-old advice to: be yourself. Listening with empathy and

collaborating with others are often viewed as feminine traits, which can be combined with speaking up in meetings and leading presentations, which are automatically assumed by males.

There doesn’t have to be an either/or approach to try to fit the idea of how women should feel they ought to dress and act. It comes down to personal comfort and confidence, both of which will outshine any stereotypes that are placed upon them.

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2. Creating professional connections

The “boys club” excludes women entrepreneurs from important conversations and opportunities. Moreover, some women may feel the need to raise their competitiveness against other women, feeling a sense of scarcity from a lack of options. The truth is that there is room for everyone to succeed. This mentality can help female leaders form meaningful connections and future partnerships to support their business growth.

Though women should welcome all networking opportunities, there are female-oriented spaces geared toward the specific challenges women entrepreneurs face. These can create a safe place to share similar concerns and welcome new solutions from others facing the same situations.

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3. Finding a work-life balance

Work-life balance has been a hot topic of conversation, fueled by the changes brought on by the pandemic in 2020. Entrepreneurs across all industries have shifted their

priorities to make more room for “life” activities and moments.

However, for women, in particular, caregiving falls squarely on their shoulders, with an estimated 62% of women providing more than 20 hours of weekly care compared to 38% of men. This imbalance contributes to other problems in maintaining work-life balance, including job and financial security and physical and mental health and well-being. Therefore, managing schedule flexibility to support self-care and/or familiar caregiving responsibilities has become a priority for women entrepreneurs, evolving past the previous “hustle culture” of the past.

4. Celebrating their accomplishments

Unknowingly, women often downplay their accomplishments rather than celebrate their wins. For many, sharing a win can feel like bragging or superficial. Others may know it’ll spark jealousy in others, which can lead to catty responses. However, women should be as proud as men for their accomplishments and not be afraid to speak up about them.

This fade-into-the-background approach also aligns with how men and women differ regarding their resumes or applying for new opportunities. Men are confident, sometimes overly so, in talking about their qualifications. At the same time, women aren’t as likely to be forthcoming with their accolades forthright, even if they are factual and not inflated.

5. Handling a fear of failure

Insecurities are a big challenge holding women entrepreneurs back from taking the next big step. Having the courage to make and learn from mistakes is something every entrepreneur must have. The road isn’t always linear and full of plenty of

setbacks, but failure often leads to bigger, better things.

However, when women are given opportunities, they know there's a lot of weight on them to not fail. It's underserved pressure and unrealistic expectations as not every idea is going to be a winning one. Not every strategy or client is going to be the right fit. Understanding how to cope with the fear of failure and getting back up and trying again is a lesson every woman entrepreneur will learn time and time again and become stronger for.

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6. Asking for help

Whether it's asking for virtual administrative assistance or capital funding from investors, women face the challenge of asking for help and delegating responsibilities. The perception of being able to handle everything alone is usually ingrained. But as business grows, it's only practical to call on help when needed.

Asking for help leaves space and energy to streamline efficiency to maximize efforts. A good way to identify areas where help is most impactful is to look at the list of to-dos and see which tasks can be delegated to someone else. This applies to both business and personal life. Social media, scheduling, onboarding, cooking, all of these types of tasks can be assigned as needed to free up time to concentrate on business goals.

Building a business is hard enough without the additional challenges women entrepreneurs face that men don't. As the workforce continues to shift and glass ceilings are broken, women can show up in professional spaces and receive the same opportunities and advantages. Until then, maintaining strong support through community and staying resilient are two attributes females have become all too much of an expert in.

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