

Are You a Woman Launching a Business or Book?

Written by Ginny Grimsley
Friday, 25 January 2013 15:28

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Your Competitive Advantage May Surprise You!
By: Marsha Friedman

What's your best advice for women in business?

It's a question I hear frequently as more and more women strike out on their own, whether it's to start their own company, write a book, turn their great idea into a product, or otherwise monetize their talents. The number of women-owned businesses in this country is growing 1.5 times faster than the national average. From 1997 to 2011, they increased by 50 percent.

I love seeing this surge of confidence! Putting yourself out there is risky, but it's better to try and fail then to spend a lifetime wondering, "What if?"

Yes, I do have a favorite piece of advice for women in business but first, a word about self-employed women.

Did you know that our businesses added 500,000 jobs over 10 years while other privately held firms lost jobs?

That in 2007, we accounted for \$1.2 trillion in sales receipts?

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Unfortunately, we're also less likely than men to borrow money to expand, so our businesses are smaller. They're also more likely to fail and, despite that huge number of sales receipts, we ring up disproportionately less than our male counterparts.

That information, by the way, comes from an interesting report produced by the U.S. Department of Commerce -- "Women-Owned Businesses in the 21st Century."

It details the progress we've made and some of the hurdles we still must overcome. The latter include the legacy of a long history of discrimination; our tendency to be risk-adverse; and even some of the ventures that we choose. The report says we can help ourselves by creating more supportive networks, having access to more information, and finding mentors.

That last point gave me pause. When I launched my first business, there were comparatively few female CEOs, and certainly no internet to foster communication among them. I learned how to run a business mostly through good old trial and error. That's also how I figured out how to balance that work with my roles as mother, wife and daughter, and how to fit in time volunteering for the community organizations I valued.

But women don't have to go it alone anymore, and nor should we. Which is why I welcome questions like, "What's your best advice for women in business?" I'd like to see the new generations of self-employed females blow through the hurdles that still remain before us and create even more opportunities for the generations to come.

So what's my best advice? That's impossible to say, but here's one for starters.

Know your audience.

And guess what? It's you!

Women account for 73 percent to 85 percent of all consumer decisions (according to Boston

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Consulting Group, Competitive Edge Magazine, and TrendSight Group founder Marti Barletta),. From the grocery store to the automobile dealership to the tech industry, women drive purchasing.

You need to communicate with that audience in mind. No, you don't want to exclude men, but you also need to be sure your message appeals to women.

When I'm writing anything, whether it's an email or a media pitch, I make a point to read over what I've written from the perspective of my audience. If I'm writing for industry peers, technical language is probably fine. If my audience is the media, concise and direct is best. If it's clients, I want to be sure whatever I write also reflects my appreciation of them.

And then there's the feminine factor.

As a woman, I'm a sucker for honesty and sincerity. I'm turned off by condescension. Unless the writer is somebody I already know and respect, I have little tolerance for preaching, judgment, or demands.

Any message that takes those things into account will work for men, too.

Whether you're writing marketing copy, posting on social media, or working on an article or newsletter, if your goal is to turn your readers into buyers, you need to write with your audience in mind.

That's not so hard – if you're a woman.

About Marsha Friedman

Marsha Friedman is a 22-year veteran of the public relations industry. She is the CEO of EMSI Public Relations (www.emsincorporated.com), a national firm that provides PR strategy

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and publicity services to corporations, entertainers, authors and professional firms. Marsha is the author of *Celebritize Yourself: The 3-Step Method to Increase Your Visibility and Explode Your Business* and she can also be heard weekly on her Blog Talk Radio Show, EMSI's PR Insider every Thursday at 3:00 PM EST.