

women Empowered

Engage, Encourage, Empower, Enable

Creating and Seizing
Opportunities!

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Women Empowered

What WE Are About

Women Empowered or WE as we feel we are and like to call ourselves, is a wholly social initiative which aims to empower women to make the best of their individual skills and talents and help them to achieve whatever personal and professional goals they have. We work at a grass roots level, trying to ensure we are easily accessible to all who would like to reach us.

WE is open to all, even men. Men are 50% of the population and need to be a part of the discussion so that we can effect change, to our own worlds and the larger one. WE is open to all women although we have a slight South Asian focus, women of the same age can be at very different junctures of their lives.

WE aims to be broad and provide an array of speakers on the same topic at each event so that women can find applicability and can find an affinity with one or more of them to make the difference to their lives.

That difference is not about achieving fame or fortune, it can be overcoming an illness, finding the right way to empower our children or starting our own businesses - whatever that special thing is, it is the thing that makes the difference to our life as we see it.

WE will showcase inspirational speakers who will share their experiences and opinions and through their stories and journeys WE aims to:

ENGAGE more women in discussion;

ENCOURAGE fresh and varied thinking and perspective;

EMPOWER women to find the inner confidence to take the next step;

ENABLE and support them through the journey by putting them in touch with organisations that can nurture their ideas and mentors who can assist in achieving those goals;

To provide a platform to enable women to articulate their issues and concerns; with a chance to meet decision makers and get their views and opinions heard.

To create a powerful and exciting network for women to link up and help each other.

Our events will consist of: Guest speakers to **ENGAGE** and **ENCOURAGE** and a partner organisation that can **EMPOWER** and **ENABLE** women to make that change.

WE aims to provide women a forum, a platform and a network where they could find support, mentoring and inspiration to try and get out of life everything they wanted and to support them through the journey by putting them in touch with organisations that can nurture their ideas and mentors who can assist in achieving those goals.



Reena Ranger
Chairwoman & Founder of WE



Mona Remtulla
Co-Founder of WE

Read more about WE at:

www.womenempowered.co.uk

Women
Empowered

Creating and Seizing Opportunities

Our speakers have identified, created and seized opportunities for themselves, shaping their personal and career paths and in some cases changing an industry forever. They will engage us with their experience, advice and journeys and we hope enable us to identify, create and seize opportunities for ourselves..

Speakers at the Event



Kavita Oberoi OBE Founder
Oberoi Consulting



Valerie Vaz MP
A Member of Parliament
for Walsall South



Dinesh Dhamija
Founder Ebookers.com

Read more about our speakers at:
www.womenempowered.co.uk

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Our Team



Sunita Behl
Editor GRIT

I am delighted to have been asked to be Editor of GRIT and to help support the Women Empowered community. I believe words have the power to change lives. You can change someone's point of view, their aspirations and even their beliefs. If you have a passion, an inspirational story or a cause that's close to your heart then WE want to hear from you. GRIT is your opportunity to have your say and talk about the gritty things that matter in your life. Words have the power to change lives. And WE can't wait to hear yours.



Kajal Patel
Co-ordinator You, Me & WE

I am delighted to be heading the charitable arm of Women Empowered. I have been a supporter of the WE initiative and believe that we are all capable of making a difference and as a collective WE the difference can be huge. We have projects throughout the year and are always looking for people who would be interested in working with us to make a difference. Please get in touch if you could be one of them – any contribution is welcome and what little you can do, can mean a great deal to someone else.



Kulveer S Ranjer FRSA
Chairman - WE Focus

As proud WE Champion, I am delighted to have been asked to chair WEfocus. Discussion is good but sometimes we avoid the elephants in the room for fear of seeming ignorant, insensitive or just not politically correct. WEfocus aims to provide a forum to air our thoughts on some key questions that we may think we understand but really want to discuss in more depth and find out what WE really think! So I hope many of you will engage, embrace and enhance the debate by getting involved and I look forward to hearing your thoughts..



Dipinder Sehgal
Co chair - WE Focus

I am honoured to have been asked to chair WE Focus and support everything that it stands for. WE Focus will provide a platform for those key topics and difficult discussions to be held and allow We voices to be heard by the wider public. I am looking forward to hearing everyone's opinions and contributions to our discussions and hopefully together WE can make a difference and make that first step to bring about change.

Our Champions



Rajesh Agrawal
Chairman, Founder and CEO - RationalFX



Rukhsana Ali
Director, Venus TV Global Ltd



Nina Amin
Diversity Ambassador - KPMG



Sunny and Shay Grewal
Presenters and Broadcasters - BBC London & BBC Asian Network



Cllr Lurline Champagnie OBE
Chairman, Harrow West Conservative Association, Councillor Pinner Ward, London Borough of Harrow, Harrow Mayor (2004/5)



Cllr. Mrs Mimi Harker OBE
Mayor of Amersham, Amersham Town Council, Cabinet Member Responsible for Community, Young People, Communications, Sports & Leisure, Chiltern District Council, Parliamentary Candidate 2005



Dr Kamel K Hothi
Business & Community Director, Lloyds Bank - Group Corporate Affairs



Tasmin Lucia-Khan
News Anchor and TV Host



Kanya King MBE
Entrepreneur, Public Speaker and CEO/Founder of MOBO Organisation



Seema Malhotra MP
Member of Parliament for Feltham and Heston



Natasha Mudhar
CEO & MD of Sterling Media

Our Champions



Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE
Chief Executive - MITIE Group PLC



Anjali Pathak
Chef and food writer



Alpesh Patel
Co-author, 'Our Turn: The ultimate start-up guide for female entrepreneurs'
Former Visiting Fellow in Business, Corpus Christi College, Oxford
Founder Praefinium Partners



Priti Patel
MP, Member of Parliament for Witham



Rishi Rich
Song Writer / Music Producer / Artist Management



Kulveer Singh Ranger
Global City Adviser
Former Adviser to Mayor of London
Former Vice-Chairman of The Conservative Party (Cities)



Kiran Sharma
Managing Director of KIKIT Ltd and Manager to singer Prince

Read our champion's statements at: www.womenempowered.co.uk

Media Partners




To know more about Sonali's Creations,

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All the fun of the fare

Interview with Dinesh Dhamija, chief executive, Ebookers

By Richard Adams

As appeared in The Guardian, Saturday 31 August 2002



Dinesh Dhamija

Founder Ebookers.com

He has founded two high-profile travel agencies: Flightbookers, and then Ebookers, the country's most successful internet travel agency.

Although the bursting of the dotcom bubble has damaged the image of internet-based businesses, Ebookers continues to thrive. Floated on the Nasdaq and German Neuer Markt exchanges in 1999, it has annual sales of £280m and employs more than 900 staff around the globe - including luring Finns to work in India.

The impetus for a travel agency, rather than just travel, came from his wife, Tani. "In those days air hostesses had to resign when they got married. She knew the travel industry, and I did, so we went and did that."

By 1980 the couple had an agency in Earl's Court, which by 1983 had become Flightbookers. Its growth was helped by Dhamija acting as regional sales agent for a collection of airlines, including Royal Air Nepal. That led to establishing a network of agencies across Europe.

In 1996 came a piece of what Dhamija calls "absolute luck" - he was introduced to the internet's possibilities. "A friend of mine in Germany who developed a [software] booking engine called Sabre - I think it was the first in the world - brought it to me and said, why don't you use this?"

Wary at first, he began to see the benefits when the orders rolled in - although not everyone in the company was convinced. "That was when the luddites came out," laughs Dhamija, "saying, 'oh my God, all the jobs are going to go, we'll be replaced by computers'."

To push the new technology required a bold step - especially for a businessman who was approaching 50. "I left as managing director of Flightbookers and became an evangelist for this company [Ebookers]."

Dhamija is not afraid of trying something new. What interests him more is whether it works. That might explain why he is a strong supporter of British entry into the euro.

While many online businesses come and go, Dhamija argues that travel is especially suited to the web. "Gambling is one thing that works, pornography is another, and travel is another. Look at Expedia. At the top of the bubble it had \$1.5bn in market capitalisation. Today Expedia's worth \$3bn. That's why we know it works."

Ebookers has a head start over its local rivals, argues Dhamija, because of its origins in a bricks and mortar travel agency. That gives it crucial leverage: the agreements it holds with the airlines that sell seats on planes.

Most travel agents do not deal with airlines directly to get seats - they go through middlemen contracted by the airlines. To get the best fares, travel companies need to convince individual airlines to let them have contracts.

"It's priceless. People don't understand how important that relationship is. You have to buy companies to get it.

"It took me four years to get my first contract, in 1984 [with Malaysian airlines]. You just have

to keep knocking on doors - keep going back. It took me 15 years to get a contract with British Airways."

Ebookers' target customers are the "cash rich, time poor" clients, who want to travel further afield and can afford to pay more. As a result, 70% of Ebookers' sales are mid-to long-haul flights.

"I see travel as a dream of everyone, because they want to get somewhere else. You're selling something to people that lets them go across the world - they book it so far in advance, they read up about their destination, it's something they look forward to and dream about."

Ebookers' internationalism has brought problems. How does a call centre in India deal with calls from customers in Finland - speaking in Suomi, one of the world's rarer languages? Dhamija offered young Finnish graduates trips to India, with free flights and accommodation, and work for local rates of pay at the call centre.

The prospect of an Indian working holiday drew 200 applications for six places. "They get to travel around in the weekends. And, if they are good, we can offer them a job back in Europe."

A gap year in India that pays for itself - surely that would be popular with British students? "Yes, that's an excellent idea. I'll be exporting British workers to India," he laughs.



Q&A With

Kavita Oberoi OBE Founder
Oberoi Consulting

What made you take the plunge and set up Oberoi Consulting?

After missing out on a promotion with a Blue Chip Pharmaceutical company, I made the decision to go it alone. Realization of your destiny in someone else's hands struck after attending job interviews with a number of companies. After making that decision failure was never going to be an option and there was no going back.

What would you say to women who have both obstacles and fears in regards to starting their businesses?

If you are passionate about something and believe something strongly then you should follow your heart. Never do something for money that is merely a by-product of your success. Once you have taken the plunge, failure is never an option as you end up thinking and working smarter to ensure success. Women often have to juggle many roles but the best way is not to think too hard about how you are going to do it - it will all work out. My advice is to JDFI. A woman is incredibly resourceful when needs to be and somehow many women manage to juggle many many roles.

There are obviously a lot of risks involved in leaving your day job to start your own business - why should you not panic?

If you have experience and an education no one can ever take that away. What's the worst that can happen? you can always go back and get a job. There is always work for those who want to work and are good at what they do.



“Creating and Seizing Opportunity”

Valerie Vaz MP

A Member of Parliament
for Walsall South

For many, British politics is represented by the weekly duel between the Prime Minister, David Cameron and the Leader of the Opposition, Ed Miliband at Prime Ministers Questions. But there is much more to politics than this weekly exchange. As a Member of Parliament I have found there are many way to effect change.

One example is the use of 10 Minute Rule Bills. These are opportunities for backbench MPs to introduce legislation to Parliament. They are used as a means to make a statement to the Government of the need to change the law. In 2010 I presented the Epilepsy and Related Conditions (Education and Health Services) Bill, and in 2011, the Adoption (Leave, pay and Allowance Arrangements) Bill.

When the Government announced similar legislation I seized my opportunity. Having met with Ministers, I managed to persuade the Government to include elements from my 10 Minute Rule Bills into the Children’s and Families Act 2014.

The clauses from my 10 Minute Rule Bills that became law included provisions to equalise leave, pay and allowance arrangements for adoptive parents with those whose children are born to them. Also included was a local authority requirement to secure for a child an educational, health and care plans.

At the time of my election to Parliament in 2010, 22% of MPs were women, compared to 51% of the population. For various reasons women are not given the same opportunities as men. Whether this is because of the ‘Old Boy’s Network’ or a bias against women in the work place.

So in Parliament I have continued to raise the representation of women. One of the issues, is the number of women on company boards. In the top 100 FTSE companies, there are only five who are led by women. At the start of 2014 there were two companies who had male-only boards. Both these companies have now appointed a female member to their boards. But across all FTSE 100 companies, women make up only 20.7% of directors on the boards.

In the UK only 13% of employees in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) jobs are women. Amazingly, in the Royal Society of Chemistry’s 170 year history, Professor Lesley Yellowlees was the first woman appointed as President in 2012.

At an event I hosted in the House, a 42-strong group from academia, the private sector, learned societies and NGOs, came up with a series of action points in education, employment and including up to date statistics on how to encourage women in science. But the action points could apply across all disciplines. People should be able to have career breaks and be welcomed back at the same level in their career as when they left. Perhaps women returners should be provided with grants to return. It is clear that there needs to be a change of rhetoric around part-time and flexible working across all disciplines and this should be seen as a benefit not a burden. We need a change in the national culture, especially around men and childcare which is improving.

As a Member of Parliament it is important to create and seize opportunities. It was a great privilege to be elected to serve as an MP in 2010, especially as there had never been an Asian women elected before. With all these issues it is important to be persistent. Change will happen, but in my view it is not happening fast enough.

you, me & **We**

together we can make a change

**women
Empowered**



sewa day

change the lives of those around you, donate time

In support of



Women Empowered or WE as it prefers to be called, is a wholly social initiative which aims to empower women (and men) to make the best of their individual skills and talents and help them to achieve whatever personal and professional goals. It has launched a new charitable arm, You, Me & WE.

The initiative headed up by Kajal Patel took part in a number of projects this year culminating with its continued support for Sewa Day, a day dedicated to selfless service. Food Collections were arranged at VB & Sons in three locations, Greenford, Wembley and North Harrow. The bulk of the donations were for the Trussell Trust with some bulky food stuffs being donated to the Gurdwara Sri Singh Sabha, Park Lane, Southall. Volunteers of all ages from the Women Empowered community took part in the collections and at the end of the day had over 50 boxes for donation.



Kajal Patel explained "I am overwhelmed by the generosity of the shoppers here today. What we have collected has exceeded our expectations. We have gained vast interest from people over the course of the You, Me & WE projects with many people signing up to get involved in future initiatives"

Food Collections were also taken at the Sattavis Patidar Centre and members of the WE Community visited the residents at the Seva Home in Harrow. "The residents were visibly pleased to see us on the day and we entertained them with a little Garba in which they happily took part, some even dressed up especially for the occasion"

The final project was cake baking and decorating for the Haven Support Centre. Little hands decorated little cakes to bring a little joy.

Reena Ranger, Founder and Chairman of Women Empowered, went on to add "I am utterly delighted and filled with pride as to what has flourished from Women Empowered. We now have varied charitable projects under the You, Me and WE banner arranged throughout the year for the WE Community to involve themselves in. It is true, together we can and are making a change!"

Join us throughout the year for our charitable projects - email us at we@womenempowered.co.uk and Be The Change! - A massive thank you to all that joined us this year - thank you WE Community. Together we can make a change!



Vivek Oberoi talks Philanthropy Me and We



All images courtesy count photography www.countphotography.com

Some people talk the talk and others walk the walk. Vivek Oberoi, described as a Bollywood actor, social worker, adventure sports enthusiast, poet, pilot and dreamer, inspired over 120 guests to walk the walk as he does so gallantly at the Women Empowered event in Support of Sewa Day on Tuesday July 1st.

The event, all organized in just 10 days, and sponsored by Sun Mark Ltd in association with Sterling Media, was sold out and those present were almost transfixed by the depth of Vivek's thoughts and left wanting to hear more. The event was to raise awareness for Sewa Day, an initiative to remind us that charitable giving is not always about donating money, it was, many a times about donating time - the concept of selfless service that generations of Indians (and many others under a variety of names) have known as 'sewa' was being revived to a mass audience.

Each year since, on one day in the year people come together to "do sewa" for others . Last year, four years from inception Sewa Day projects were being held in 25 countries with over 250 projects and a staggering 75000 people taking part.

Best known as an award winning actor Vivek's philanthropic work is understated but overwhelming. He has been awarded the Red & White Bravery Award in 2006 for helping rebuild a village which was severely hit by the tsunami. He delivered 6 truck loads of relief to villages and adopted a Tsunami damaged village; he runs a school near project Devi offering education to underprivileged girls who have been abandoned by their families; he supports the Cancer Patients Aid Association and Banyan which rehabilitates homeless women with mental illnesses and many more. He has been recognised by FORBES Asia for his charity work. He is one of only 4 Indians on the list and the only Bollywood star and also the youngest. He has donated over \$3m, helped raise over \$25m but has also given something just as valuable if not more and that is his time.

Reena Ranger, Chairwoman & Founder of Women Empowered (WE) welcomed the guests and went on to say "The satisfaction and humility of doing good is reward enough with the added benefit of benefiting others -we make a living by what we get but a life by what we give. We must encourage philanthropy amongst ourselves; the world is a large place and it may seem like we cannot change it but if we each strive to make a change for one person then together we would have made a great difference. People such as Mr Oberoi, who have dedicated so much of their time towards helping those less fortunate, are a source of great inspiration to all of us." She said she was delighted to have had the honour of introducing Sewa Day's newest ambassador and that Mr Oberoi was able to use Women Empowered as the platform to share his experi-



ence with others. She added that on a personal level she was inspired by taking part in a concept that was ingrained in her by her faith, upbringing and that having taken part personally in Sewa day projects and last October Women Empowered, at a small charity lunch, raised £1111 for Sewa Day towards its operating costs. She told us that Sewa day is a wholly transparent initiative and the money raised went towards its operating cost and all the time that volunteers give goes to helping mankind. On behalf of WE a cheque was presented the trustees of Sewa

Day for £5,000 to help them to continue their work. Another £2000 was raised on the night bringing the total to £7000 raised by the WE community.



Manoj Ladwa, Founder and CEO of the MLS Chase Group and Sewa Day trustee addressed the audience and said: "Sewa is that special thing that will never come back to us once given. Vivek Oberoi, by pledging to be an ambassador further enforced his mission to support the cause. Sewa Day does not choose social activities, it is your choice and could be as simple as speaking for a little time with someone who was lonely.

Arup Ganguly, Chairman of Sewa Day said: "We are honoured and delighted to announce that Vivek Oberoi is going to serve as an Ambassador to Sewa Day. Through his public profile and activism, we hope that many others join hands with us on Sewa Day this year on 5th October, all over the world.

Vivek Oberoi touched the audience with heartfelt stories of his mother who he described as the epitome of Sewa, as she selflessly dedicated her efforts to caring for cancer patients and terminally ill patients daily. He reflected and endorsed the notion of women empowerment, attributing his own empowerment to his mother. Speaking of his own experiences and what awakened him to selflessly engage in sewa, he said: "I was going through a difficult point in my life, then one day my mum said I should come with her to the memorial hospital and I saw children dealing with cancer and my problems seemed ridiculous and so small in comparison. That kick-started my journey and I realised there was so much to do in life."



An integral part of the event involved a question-and-answer session hosted by the celebrated film-maker Gurinder Chadha OBE.

Sponsor of the event Harmeet Ahuja, CEO of Sun Mark Ltd said "At the core of our philanthropic values is the belief that we should do all that we can to help those who are less privileged in order to change lives and lift communities out of poverty. This is something we are constantly striving to achieve, and so as a result of this we are honoured to have partnered with the organisers of today's event." This was echoed by Natasha Mudhar, CEO & MD of Sterling Media The work of these two organisations is inspiration for all."

Reena Ranger ended by acknowledging the guests on the night giving special mention to Mutiah Muralitharan, the cricket legend and world record holding bowler. She thanked all those involved with making the event a success and added, "This entire event shows you what Sewa can do. Everyone here today is volunteering or giving their time". She thanked Amit Patel of Count Photography, Dhru Garvi of Zee TV, Gurinder Chadha OBE and various print media partners for their Sewa



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