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Vivek Oberoi Philanthropy WE and Me Q&A By Gurinder Chadha

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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

Vivek Oberoi Philanthropy WE and Me with Q&A By Gurinder Chadha



Vivek Oberoi
Bollywood Superstar

Vivek Oberoi, best known for his Bollywood acting career, was awarded the Red and White Bravery Award in 2006 for helping re-build a village which was hit severely by the tsunami. Oberoi, at the age of 28, was in Chennai when disaster struck and assembled six truckloads of relief supplies and also adopted a tsunami-ravaged village in the Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu. Oberoi and his family founded The Yashodhara Oberoi Foundation (YOF). Oberoi serves as the World Health Organization's anti-tobacco spokesperson. He is involved with several charities in Chennai and Mumbai. His work with Project Hope to bring relief to victims of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami earned him a Good Samaritan Award from Rotary International.

He is involved in a variety of philanthropic activities such as Project Devi, Cancer Patients Aid Association and Banyan, which works towards rehabilitating mentally challenged homeless women. In all, Vivek has donated about Rs 3 million (Rs 30 lakh) and helped raise Rs 25 million (Rs 250 lakh).

Vivek will share his journey, experiences and what drives him to do more.

Proceeds from tonight will be donated to Sewa Day - Be the Change - www.sewaday.org



Q&A by
Gurinder Chadha OBE
Film Director

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

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sewa day

change the lives of those around you, donate time

5th
October
2014



In the ancient Indian language of Sanskrit, Sewa means selfless service.

The aim of Sewa Day is to provide people a chance to give back to their communities through volunteering on a single day to make a difference.

Each event organised is based on at least one of the guiding principles below:

- To relieve hardship and poverty
- To bring a little joy
- To help the environment

To make a difference in your communities, join us on Sunday 5th October 2014 to touch the lives of thousands of people in the UK and across the world.

Sewa day provides an opportunity to do something positive that makes a meaningful difference to someone else's quality of life. It really doesn't matter if you're a pensioner or a young child, whether you're physically able or not. All that matters is that you commit to doing a good deed on Sewa Day, which takes place on Sunday, 5th October 2014

We discourage all projects that involve fund-raising; as the purpose is to give your time. Get involved by planning a Sewa Day project with a few friends or check the project finder on the Sewa Day website and join a volunteering group near you.



find out more: www.sewaday.org

Sewa Day is a UK registered charity (No: 1146848)

 www.facebook.com/sewaday

 [@sewaday](https://twitter.com/sewaday) and [@sewadayschools](https://twitter.com/sewadayschools)

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

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“How To Have Your Voice Heard”

Thursday June 5th saw the latest event held by Women Empowered. The theme for the night was on how one could harness the power of the internet and social media and posed the question that in a world on 7 billion people can one person really have their voice heard?

Reena Ranger welcomed the guests and explained the rationale of the evening's event by saying "When we first pictured this event it was through the somewhat naive and narrow lens of how social media has transformed people's ability to start ventures from home or anywhere and how it can be used to differentiate and market those ventures to a wider audience at a relatively low cost and with relative ease. Enterprises can now tap into markets and geographical locations they may have never heard of and reach more people than they could ever have imagined all with the touch of a button

But recent events in India, Pakistan, Syria and Sudan have really shown us what people power and social media can do. It can bring worldwide attention to causes and events that have been taking place for decades but just have been unspoken and or unseen by the world because there was no way to get the message out to so many, so quickly. But social media has now changed that – our eyes and ears can now be opened in real-time"

The speakers for the evening were Rupa Ganatra who is the co-founder of Men's e-commerce site Yes-Sir.com and brandussocial.com, which organises Social Media and Digital conferences for the fashion and beauty industry, Farzana Baduel is the founder and managing director, Curzon PR, a London-based strategic public relations and digital communications agency and Sunny Hundal, author, journalist, blogger and academic. He is best known as the former editor for the UK's most popular centre-left blog 'Liberal Conspiracy'.



Rupa Ganatra talked about the use of social media in the recent electoral campaign of Narendra Modi in India and how he was engaging and having a conversation with millions of people every day through its use. She emphasised how one must engage with their clients and customers; always using relevant interesting content and ensuring 80% of your post was content and 20% a sales pitch. From banker to internet entrepreneur she spoke about how she ensured that content was fun, applicable and interesting on her sites and that people should take advantage of analytical tools available to them and how many are inbuilt into many sites free for consumption.

“How To Have Your Voice Heard”

Farzana Baduel provided a full and insightful talk into social media and the benefits to the business. She said that often for certain businesses social media may not generate leads or revenue, but it is a medium for communication with your clients. There are other avenues to generate credible sales leads such as Search Engine optimisation and one should not be put off or afraid of utilising them. She went on to say that in her opinion twitter is like having a baby. You cannot have it and leave it, it is a long term relationship with a huge learning curve. She herself had gone full circle from disliking and not understanding the platform to loving it! Farzana specialises in social media for her company as well as for her clients in an interesting, applicable and with a tailored view and each campaign must be seen with fresh eyes and looked at in an imaginative way to maximise effect.



Sunny Hundal talked about social media and his journey. How told the audience how he started as a blogger after feeling constrained by mainstream media. He shared tips on blogging learnt from his own experiences and mentioned that blogs should be short and interesting. He also spoke about ensuring content on social media should be applicable and relevant and went on to advise on what should be avoided when posting on sites. He went on to speak about how the internet and social media can be extremely useful in making a name for yourself or promoting your cause

Special thanks was given to Sriram Sivasankaran for the pictures taken at the event and stall holders Raishma Islam of Raishma Ready to Wear, Preema Verma of Reesa Rocks, Parita of Uniflora and Sukhi Bhogal a Nikken Wellness Consultant.

Mona Remtulla, co-founder of Women Empowered, closed the evenings proceedings by adding, “We hope that today will inspire you to harness your own inner media centre and through the journeys, advice and wisdom of Rupa, Farzana and Sunny, navigate your own way through the world wide web to make your own mark and have a voice that can be heard whether it is for a cause or your business” she went on to add that Women Empowered itself had seen the power of social media in highlighting causes and how one person really can have a voice that can be heard. She referred to a campaign to engage more ethnic minority donors started online which had captured the imagination of the Women Empowered team to take action and organise a drive to register more donors from their guests at their last event.

At each event Women Empowered tie up with an enabling partner to facilitate the change from an idea to bringing it to fruition and at this event again saw them partnering with EquityStake. Equity Stake is an investment company for the entrepreneur in the making. It has one simple aim – to help those with a great business idea but maybe no real entrepreneurial experience or background to grow a business. Hardeep Rai from EquityStake was keen to build on significant success from the last event.

"Think Big"

Women Empowered held their first event of 2014 on Thursday 13th February in Baker St. entitled "Think Big!"

Reena Ranger, chairman and co-founder explained that the premise behind today's event was to discover how the evening's speakers pursued big ambitions and became pioneers in their respective fields; what was the secret to their success and how could we use lessons from them to seize big opportunities and fulfil great ambitions for ourselves and the privilege to have Gurinder Chadha OBE, Ahlya Fateh and Rishi Rich share their journeys and experiences with those present.

Speaking to almost 140 guests, Gurinder Chadha said that the phrase that was her idea of thinking big came from the dialogue of one of her most successful films, Bend it Like Beckham, and the character Jess Bhamra; "anyone can cook aloo gobi, but who can bend it like Beckham?!". She spoke about how whilst growing up she was told what to do and how to behave much like Jess Bhamra had in the film. She went on to say that Jess was always going to have it all, the only question was how she was going to get there. To answer that question you had to think big and look within yourself, remember your younger self and overcome challenges in whichever way you could. It would not always be simple but the answers lay within you. If you want to achieve something and your reasons are correct, you would get there.

She went on to say that she wanted to challenge the perceptions of British Asians in the 70's & 80's and it was the inequality and prejudice that she had seen that propelled her journey. She still has to fight battles and the power to do so comes from wanting to overcome barriers and obstacles. She said that at times she had asked herself why she was the one who always had to push the envelope but now answers that question with the fact that she is Sikh and has stood on the shoulders of the Sikh male and female warriors who fought for justice, their beliefs and equality. So when you want to think big then draw strength from your childhood and your history.



Ahlya Fateh began with the importance of education especially in developing countries and the positive impact it has on the mortality and life lead of a girl along with the positive impact that has on the country as a whole. She went on to say that we all owe it to ourselves too and the chances that we have been given to be grateful for our own empowerment and use it to help other women who may not have felt what we have felt and enjoyed the opportunities that we have had.

She spoke of her strong ethic, her journey and her ambition. She also spoke about how she also grew up with being told what to do. She spoke of the importance of loving what you do but understanding that you must also pay the bills and went on to say that we only like to do the things we are good at but sometime it is a better to battle the things we aren't naturally gifted at. It teaches you humility and respect for others who have skill that you may not possess. She sees that problems are now solutions waiting to be found.

She went on to say that when faced with an obstacle, you should ask yourself, "What would I do if I wasn't afraid?" the answer may seem ridiculous at first but it will lead you to a solution you may never have found being paralysed with fear. She spoke about her career path and if you don't ask you don't get and not to psych yourself out of trying because you don't think you have a chance.

Image(s) courtesy of Sukhman Grewal - <http://www.sukhmangrewal.com>

“Think Big”

Rishi Rich spoke candidly about his childhood and paid tribute to his mother who raised him single handedly, had made choices that she thought would benefit her son's future and always was supportive of his ambitions. He reflected on his childhood circumstances and how far he had come and that thinking big was instilled in him by his mother. She was his main influence and he was grateful to her for her support.

He always took the approach that he didn't necessarily aim to be the best but always had ambitions to be one of the most respected producers in the world. He stayed focused, "this is what you want to do and this is how you are going to get there" and that ethos took him from his humble beginnings in council accommodation to where he is today.

He spoke of all his childhood heroes and idols and how he had had the privilege to cross paths with a majority of them. He spoke about learning to be resilient and also learning from all your experiences.

He spoke about his dedication to his craft and how success followed, how life is a journey and he is still on his and also venturing into new projects and his journey is not yet complete.

He has always known what he wanted to do and where he wanted to go, mainly because he wanted to always ensure his mother was looked after and that clear focus has always guided him. His mum and now his wife are his main inspirations and that he is lucky to be surrounded by strong inspiring women.



At each event Women Empowered partner with an enabling partner to facilitate the change from an idea to bringing it to fruition and at this event EquityStake was that partner. They are an investment company for the entrepreneur in the making. It has one simple aim – to help those with a great business idea but maybe no real entrepreneurial experience or background to grow a business. Hardeep Rai from EquityStake expressed that a great number of people had approached him with fabulous ideas and he was eager to follow many of them up.

Women Empowered raised awareness for Delete Blood Cancer and offered the opportunity for people to sign up to the donation register, Reena went on to say "When we think of thinking big, what could be better than offering someone the gift of life!"

Mona Remtulla Co-founder said, "tonight has been a great success and we have received positive feedback and are pleased to see a more diverse range of people attending our events and are happy to have welcomed more men here than ever before. This ensures that we have a great balance and have a fruitful dialogue as a collective. Each speaker has been fantastic and I think we can all leave here today taking at least one thing home from each of them that will help us to think big in the future."

Entrepreneurship Event 2013

The perennially relevant topic of entrepreneurship was revisited by Women Empowered at their event sponsored by Deepak Kuntawalla of DVK on Wednesday 2nd October in Baker Street. Mr Kuntawalla an entrepreneur himself shared his journey and expressed his reasons for supporting the initiative as well as how women played a vital role in his organisation. Reena Ranger and Mona Remtulla founders of the social initiative explained that more and more women and men are looking to start their own enterprises for a variety of reasons which may include, child care costs and flexibility, aspiration or a change a change of direction. When women are economically empowered they are catalyst of social change and they build a fairer world for us all.

Speakers for this event were Shashi Gossain - Founder and Managing Director of Pharmaclinx Ltd, Shavata Singh - Founder of Shavata Brow Studios and Hiro Harjani - Chairman of Aftershock London.



Shashi Gossain explained that due to an industry decline in pharmacy she decided to diversify, she needed to be different and her niche was defined by many of the women who came to see her. There was a gap in the market and she decided fill it! She spoke candidly about venturing into new markets, how although there was an economic downturn in the UK and many other countries, her business thrived in Dubai. New markets meant new challenges. Cultural differences between men and women meant that she had to be sensitive and she persevered and it paid off. New markets and new countries also mean new rules, regulations and norms. Research is vital otherwise money and time may be lost. She emphasised the need to be determined and persevere, to set out time specific goals and try to achieve them along with the need to have a 5, 10 and 15 year vision.

Shavata Singh of Shavata Brow Studio, she joked that she had plucked her way to the top! She emphasises her immigrant origin, humble background and the strong work ethic she inherited from her parents. This was part of her story, the other factors of hard work, passion, commitment and luck had led her to where she was today. She urged the women to be brave in business. She took a junior position in a salon he wanted to work in as she knew she wouldn't stay a junior forever. She built a clientele working when others were are lunch or going home. Wherever she saw a gap, she would fill it. She spoke about the power of press and how an article no bigger than an inch each way transformed her business and how she used her life saving to launch a brow pencil her challenge was to find a manufacturer who would manufacture a smaller quantity. She explained that she took any opportunity she could find and emphasised that one should never let an opportunity go. Not being a business women but a therapist she made her mistake early on and learnt from them within a set infrastructure and then set out alone.

"Life is a juggle, if you drop a ball, stop; pick it up and start again, you must never punish yourself. Trust your instincts; invest in your staff they reflect you, passion, drive, hard work and ethic".

Entrepreneurship Event 2013

Mona Remtulla took time to explain that Women Empowered was all inclusive and urged men to attend to create a meaningful dialogue, she went on to say that "we always take a male perspective so that we can understand if the challenges faced are the same for men and women and to create a balanced discussion and promote better understanding". The male perspective for the evening was provided by Hiro Harjani of Aftershock London. Arriving in the UK with zero business experience, no contacts and limited money. He started in Petticoat Lane and when an opportunity came up to buy a ladies clothes store, he took it, selling his wife's wedding ring to fund the sale. He asked the previous owner to stay so he could learn from her. He made the decision to move from being a shop owner to wholesaler and wholesaler to branding his own items and open his own store. He had to learn everything, how to build a business from nothing. He always was asking and learning. Mistakes were made because of lack of understanding or research but he again emphasised don't give up, you have a vision and keep on till you achieve it. Its evolution and you have to start somewhere. Find a niche, his was affordable fashion and today's businesses are facing more and more competition. Look at new markets and new opportunities. Keep moving working harder and faster than your competition but if you put your mind to it there is a lot to achieve. Hiro also spoke about giving back and taking care of yourself, invest in yourself and the world around you otherwise making money can be empty.



Three new initiatives were launched for the Women empowered community. An online directory and notice board to facilitate member networking. A WE & ME section to illustrate the impact and effect that Women Empowered has had on people and finally an online blog resource called GRIT! A place to talk about the gritty things in life "Less lifestyle, more life" said Reena Ranger. "A place for people to write about their life experiences and advice, things that aren't often addressed in some cases and should be, for example experiences of being a start-up, demystifying government policy that may affect us, having a child with special needs and the list goes on" all submissions.

Women starting their own enterprises were championed at the event, Taruna Anand of Tanaya Couture, Bhavni Shah of Inaaki Designs, Ravleen Sharma of Spry Candles and Dr. Rabia Malik of SkinW1. All 4 women had opportunity to showcase their products. Amina Malik of Ampixz was championed as the evening's photographer. Women Empowered once again renewed its partnership with TIE at the event, who provide mentoring and advise for entrepreneurs.

Make an Impression

On Thursday 16th May 2013, under the high glass ceiling at Bright Courtyard Club in Baker Street Women Empowered (WE), on their one year birthday, held an event focussed on image, self-confidence and perception with the title "Make an Impression" sponsored by Lloyds Banking Group.

Over 140 guests came to hear the experiences and advice of Nina Wadia, national icon and British Asian television pioneer best known for her roles in Goodness Gracious Me and Eastenders. Sharing the stage was Sadia Siddiqui an entrepreneur, former model and TV Presenter and a male perspective was provided by BBC Asian Network and Radio 1 DJ Nihal Arthanayake.

Reena Ranger, chairman and founder of Women Empowered, explained that the social initiative decided to hold an event on this topic by using the experiences of people in the media eye who are arguably more scrutinised than most. This would allow others to apply their approaches and advice to their circumstances to learn how to make the best impression one can and to keep going when faced with difficult situations. She went on to explain that the perception of her and co-founder Mona Remtulla over the last year was that they were both staunch feminists and the perception of the clichéd image that word conjured up was different from their understanding.



Dr Kamel Hothi of Lloyds Banking Group and the sponsor for the evening, opened the discussion with saying that, "no matter how hard you work, how dedicated you may be unless you give the impression to people around you that you need to be counted, you won't make the right impression". She went on to say that one should not be afraid to ask people around you of the impression that you give. She went on to explain that "As a woman we have a number of faces: at work, as a mother during our family life and each comes with its own impression."

She reminded those present that ensure the impression that you give is the one that you want people to remember you for. As a British Asian woman she had had to project herself properly to show that she was capable in the business world and at home living in an extended family, and ensure she was projecting the right impression in each of these environments as they may not necessarily be one and the same.

Nina Wadia explained that for her the best way to make a first impression was her sense of humour. She said, "When you walk into a room you need to have something that people remember you for and for me that was slapstick". She captivated listeners with a humorous account of her journey into the world of theatre, TV and radio. She emphasised she is always learning. She advised to learn from who ever is around you and that is one of her life lessons. Learning leads to a level of confidence. She talked about taking things and making them your own by adding your own qualities as she had done with her character in Eastenders.

Nina spoke about a documentary she is making called Changing Faces about women in India, to try to empower those women to know that they are supported by women in the UK to have the same rights as they do and as men do.

Nina also raised awareness for the NHS Organ Donation campaign, something that had touched her personally and urged all present to sign up to the register.

Make an Impression

Sadia Siddiqui opened with the words of her father, "if you can dream it you can do it" and said during her time as a model she was scrutinised and fell foul of many of the stereotypes associated with models. She explained that it was not the prejudices of men that she had to overcome, it was the prejudices of other women and we must learn to nurture young women and help them to realise their full potential. She said that one must persist, charge ahead no matter the odds, overcome fear and believe in yourself. "Without belief it is very easy to give up" she went on to emphasise "where there is no opportunity, we must create the opportunity! Look good, stand tall and make eye contact, and be sure about the message you want to deliver" She went on to say that even if a first impression goes belly up, get up, shake it off and carry on. She said of her journey, "in the end my father was right".



DJ Nihal spoke of embracing new situations and being strong and confident. He feels as a British Asian that he can go anywhere, do anything and achieve anything now as he has every right to be where he wants to be. He spoke of how his childhood of being one of very few Asians growing up and he learnt from a very early age how to "work it". He learnt that he had to stand up for himself and be quick to learn to judge the character of others which meant when he was older he was a confident individual in an industry which was tough and had many people who lacked confidence. He stressed the importance of not having a chip on his shoulder and showing others empathy and if you need to be ruthless then that is what you have to do. His father had always warned him that he may have to work twice as hard to get where he wanted to but this was not necessarily a negative thing and one can not always use race as an excuse for not achieving things.

Mona Remtulla, co-founder, said of the event, "today marks one year of WE and we are also seeing what impression Women Empowered has made on those who have attended our events or followed our progress. Both Reena and I are proud of what we have achieved and we are receiving positive feedback and hearing some wonderful stories from people who WE has touched. It seems that WE and we are making the right impression!"

WE tries to support individuals by putting them in touch with organisations that can nurture their ideas and mentors who can assist in achieving those goals. It is a place to meet like minded people and create alliances for the future. At this event the Art of Living Foundation and Lisa Akesson were enabling partners who hold courses in self confidence and personal development. Cynthia Nolan of Shoot Me Studios was championed as the evening's photographer.

Image(s) courtesy of Cynthia Nolan of Shoot Me Studios - www.shootmestudios.co.uk

Women Get It Right Roadshow

On Thursday November 22nd in Haveli Restaurant in Slough, Women Empowered, in conjunction with Jeena International, and as part of a Sewa Day initiative, held a free "Women Get it Right" Road Show.

The drop in event attracted 120 diverse women. Here, those who needed could find legal advice, talk with counsellors, get career advice or hear about the local amenities available to them.

The event sought to raise awareness for issues that many who need assistance would normally feel uncomfortable asking for.

The busy open day had free initial advice on legal issues and solicitors available to offer guidance on family, criminal and immigration law in the UK and representatives from the UK Border Agency were present along with solicitors from law firm Cameron Clark.



Financial benefit advice was available from Destiny Support, a community based organisation in Slough. Slough Volunteer Centre were particularly targeting women who wanted to increase their skills to update their CVs or for those who have never worked.

Representatives from the Forced Marriage Unit and UKBA attended amongst others to raise awareness about ones rights in the UK and to offer advice in how to become involved in the democratic process along with what protection is available under UK and EU law to those affected by this issue.

The British Army offered advice on job opportunities within the Army.

The event, which included a free lunch, gave women a place to meet, talk and learn more about their rights in the UK as well as raise awareness on issues that still remain taboo in certain communities.

Jeena International is dedicated to working with communities to challenge social norms that discriminate against the most vulnerable in society and is hoping to launch a 24 hour helpline in the new year. Women Empowered presented Jeena International with a cheque for £1080 which it had raised during a fundraiser lunch earlier this month which was held at Indigo Restaurant in Gerrards Cross. The money will be doubled to £2160 through a local "Just Giving" initiative. <http://localgiving.com/charity/berkshirecf>

The Women Get it Right Road Show is hoped to be repeated in 2013 in Southall and Kenton. More information can be found at www.womenempowered.co.uk or www.jeenainternational.org. The next free open day event, "The Health Road Show", will be held on 7th March at Haveli in Slough which will include information and advice on mental and sexual health.

A Women's Guide to "Having it All Now!"

The eternal puzzle, "how to have it all", is rarely away from our minds for long; juggling work, family and the frequently forgotten "ourselves" is ironically one many of us just don't have time to put together!

In the hope of coming someway closer to finding the answer to this perennial dilemma and fittingly during International Women's Week, Women Empowered launched "A Woman's Guide to Having it All Now" By Ritu Sethi at Bright Courtyard Club in Baker Street on Wednesday 6th March 2013.

The launch was attended by nearly 200 people including Seema Malhotra Member of Parliament for Feltham and Heston who is also a Champion of Women Empowered, heard the journey of Ritu Sethi, a woman, daughter, sister, wife, mother, successful career women, solicitor and partner in her own law firm and public speaker, who has found time to balance her working and family life and at the same time not neglected her personal ambitions and goals.



Ritu Sethi, who has won many awards and accolades for Law and Business, shared her personal real life experiences, from overcoming professional hardships by remaining resolute and determined and not accepting failure to what she believed were the secrets to a healthy marriage. Ritu has based her book on a "Wheel of Life" that helps one to put perspective, focus and balance to various key aspects of life. Ritu stressed that if more women became leaders in their chosen fields and thought leaders, then more women would benefit from getting the balance right and staying longer in the workforce. She went on to say that it is for our generation to make the difference and change the power dynamics to reflect equality.

Through listening to Ritu's story the women and men present found affinity and applicability to the concepts she extolled and through her words and vision maybe they too could learn to find what having it all really means to them and how to achieve it for themselves. Sadly there isn't a simple cookie cutter solution for us all but learning from the experiences of others opens doors and a new level of possibilities and ideas for us to build upon.



Images courtesy of Sonny Sehgal and Raj Bakrania

Is it a Man's World?

On Thursday 24th January Women Empowered, the social initiative aimed at championing issues for women, held its latest event titled, "Is it a Man's World?". The event was to focus on women who have made great strides in politics, which has been regarded as a male dominated arena. The sold out event was sponsored by KPMG and featured Priti Patel MP, Cllr Lurline Champagnie OBE and Cllr Mimi Harker OBE. Seema Malhotra MP, who was due to attend was unfortunately delayed abroad.

The speakers shared their life experiences, obstacles faced and how they had overcome them along with the experiences what had led them into the political world.

Kulveer Ranger, former advisor to The Mayor of London, gave the key note address offering a male perspective to the issues raised.

Marianne Fallon, Partner, Executive Board Member, UK Head of Corporate Affairs & UK Head of Charities at KPMG shared her views on diversity and the need for women in the corporate world. She said that sadly the figures of women in the Parliamentary world were faring better than those in the corporate world at board level and spoke on what KPMG are doing to tackle some of the issues raised on the evening.



Reena Ranger, Chairwoman, and Mona Remtulla, co-founder of Women Empowered, welcomed the guests and spoke about how the event had been meant to be about experiences in the political world but recent news & events had raised issues as to why we needed more female representation throughout the civic processes. Getting involved did not necessarily mean becoming a member of parliament but getting involved at any level, from residents associations to boards of governors in schools, from charitable trusts to local government and beyond.

Priti Patel, MP for Witham and the first female Asian MP for the Tory party, who had worked in both the political and corporate world said there were not enough in either. She stated that she was against positive discrimination and quotas particularly since there was a limitless pool of talented women which needed to be tapped into. She also added that women should also help other women. We should not be frightened to challenge social norms, push boundaries and pick ourselves up from failures and move onwards and learn from every challenge and setback.

Cllr. Lurline Champagnie OBE, the first British Caribbean Councillor of Harrow Council, Mayor of Harrow in 2004/2005 and Chairman of Harrow West Conservative Association, gave a passionate speech in which she said that whatever you want you should go for it; one has to be strong and believe in themselves and not consider themselves the weaker sex. She added that there are obstacles in all paths of life and that she had entered politics at a time when there were very few women or people of colour, let alone women of colour. She emphasised that there is more than one way to get round your obstacles; you can go under them, over them and around them. As a woman she recounted a number of personal anecdotes which illustrated her sheer determination to succeed and be the best at what she was doing, always giving more than 100%.

Is it a Man's World?

Cllr. Mimi Harker OBE, the first Asian Mayor of Amersham, spoke how she had entered politics in an unexpected way when she opposed a new property development in her local area. She spoke candidly of the challenges she had faced and sometimes of having to exert herself in what is a male dominated environment. She urged those present that they should show a dogged determination to succeed and achieve their objectives regardless of opposition faced. Mimi addressed the importance of getting involved and how it could benefit the local area and the country as a whole. Nationally, Cllr Harker, is responsible for the 12A cinema classification and founded the national 'Save Our Post Office' Campaign. She has worked on the Cross Party Task Force encouraging women to participate in public life.

Mr Kulveer Singh Ranger spoke about how he too has worked in both political and commercial worlds and also had noticed the lack of women in both at a certain level. He also commented on the unfortunate fact that when some women achieve senior positions they are labelled as alpha females and somehow this implies that they have to become like men to succeed. He acknowledged that women brought many qualities including compassion and intuition to the table, but were often told to exclude these from their work to the loss of the organisation they were engaged with.

Women Empowered had collaborated with Conservative Women's Network and Fabian Women's Network, who offered advice & courses which can be used in many walks of life. Women Empowered championed and thanked Sabiha Hudda-Khakhru of ISHK Photography for the pictures the world would see.



Entrepreneurship Event

On Wednesday September 26 over 150 men and women gathered under the clear glass dome of The Bright Courtyard Club in Baker Street for the Women Empowered (WE) Entrepreneurship event.

The Panellists, Sally Overhead of Mojomums, Kiran Sharma Managing Director of KIKIT Ltd and Manager to singer Prince, Anjali Pathak, Brand Ambassador Culinary Development Patak's Foods, Chef & Food Writer and Rupinder Virdee Director of Revolution Creative Agency shared their journeys on how they started and grew successful businesses.

Alpesh Patel Co-author, 'Our Turn: The ultimate start-up guide for female entrepreneurs' and founder of Praefinium Partners spoke passionately about the need for more women entrepreneurs saying that they were needed to save the world. He stressed that they were needed to be key decision makers and influencers so that they not only contributed to the world economically but could then make strides in ensuring social justice was carried out.

Reena Ranger, chairwoman and co-founder of WE said that the organization thought that the traditional definition of entrepreneur had evolved and now with the boom of mumpreneurs (that mother who starts a business so that she can combine working with looking after her children or just a mum in business) the entrepreneurial landscape had changed. Finding a work and family balance is not easy and with the holidays children are given off school combined with the state of the economy many women are finding the best way to solve their employment needs is to start their own enterprises and create employment for themselves and others. Women are turning their hobbies into income streams or are taking their formal job training one step further and starting up their own businesses. It is said that women are natural born entrepreneurs, naturally tuned to communicate, build relationships, are arguably more creative and multi tasking is the norm and this event was to showcase and highlight these attributes and encourage women who wanted to take that next step.



Mona Remtulla, co-founder of WE, introduced the panel as diverse and was sure that those present who had wanted to find their special something would, with the words and wisdom of the panellists, be encouraged and empowered to take that next step. She also thanked two entrepreneurs for their contribution to the event; Reshma of CRR Photography for the pictures the world would see and Sophia Wasu of the Egg Free Cake Box and praised the sponsor for the event, Hassanain Remtulla of Desynz for their generosity which enabled the event to take place and proliferated WE's message of empowerment.

She went on to introduce each panel member highlighting the inspiration each provided. Anjali Pathak, a third generation female entrepreneur from the famous high quality authentic Indian "Patak" food family encouraged the audience to "discover" that a skill that one perhaps took for granted could actually be the key to your next step as Anjali's grandmother did when she came to the UK in the late 1950's. Sally Overhead, a mother of five children, all under seven years old, and an entrepreneur with two companies one of which is dedicated to helping mothers back into work. She explained that she had tried to get the right work/family balance and had managed to achieve success in both family and business life while at the same time approached the discussion of social entrepreneurship. She spoke of Kiran Sharma whose story started with posters on her walls of the greatest music legends and she now manages one of them, Prince. The final panellist was Rupinder Virdee, a working mother who found a complimentary niche to call her own and set up a PR and marketing agency.

Image(s) courtesy of CRR Photography

Entrepreneurship Event

Sally Overhead urged those thinking of doing something to "just go for it" waiting for the right time or right thing might mean that you would always be waiting.

Anjali reassured those listening that a fear of failure was acceptable and it was okay to fail sometimes and that one should look at failure as a dress rehearsal for success.

Kiran urged people to do one thing everyday towards your goal and in a month that would become 30 things have been done and that would be progress towards success.

Rupinder advised the attendees to take an idea, plan it and then really go for it.

Women empowered had collaborated with TIE UK, a forum for entrepreneurs, as their mentoring partners and Deepali Nangia the mumpreneur of Empower who provided career and business support to working mums.

The evening ended with those who attended browsing through the stalls that were being championed by WE all of which were started up by women entrepreneurs.



Image(s) courtesy of CRR Photography

Our Launch Event

On Thursday, 24th May 2012; under the high glass ceiling of the sunny Atrium at the Bright Courtyard Club in Baker Street, 120 attendees came together for the Women Empowered Launch Event. The high profile Launch was attended by many high profile guests, many of who are WE's Champions, including Mayor of Amersham Cllr Mimi Harker OBE, Seema Malhotra MP, MOBO Awards Founder Kanya King MBE, Dr Kamel Hothi; Business & Community Director at Lloyds Bank Group, brand ambassador of Patak's food; Anjali Pathak, Mrs Nina Amin; Diversity Ambassador KPMG, Author; Alpesh B Patel, TV Presenter; Tasmin Lucia-Khan and London Mayor Boris Johnson's former Director of Environment and Digital London; Kulveer Ranger. WE's other champions include Pritti Patel MP, Kiran Sharma; Manager to PRINCE and managing director of KIKIT Ltd, Cllr Lurline Champagnie OBE and Ruby Mc Gregor-Smith CBE; Chief Executive MITIE Group PLC. Other notable guests included Baroness Shreela Flather, music producer Rishi Rich and Ch4 "The Family's" stars and radio presenters; Sunny & Shay Grewal.



The Key note speaker was Baroness Sandip Verma, Minister for Women and Equalities and Whip for the Cabinet Office. The other speakers were Ms Tasmin Lucia-Khan, (TV Presenter and News Anchor) and Entrepreneur Geeta Sidhu-Robb (CEO and Founder of Nosh Detox).

Baroness Verma said the launch of WE shows that work still needs to be done to get a fair deal for women in society. No society can move forward whilst treating more than half of its population as unequal. She pledged her support to inspire those women who do not have easy access to professional networks.

Ms Tasmin Lucia-Khan narrated her own story and how she overheard her father talking of how he had wished she, his first child, had been born a boy. To date she felt this in her heart and tried her best to act as if she was a boy for her father. She was appalled by the violence against women in society and that it must be addressed in earnest. She was heartbroken to see young girls in Bangladesh selling their bodies for food and she would like to do her best to alleviate the plight of such girls and is a supporter of the charity Restless Beings for which she raised awareness. .

Ms Geeta Sidhu-Robb, an entrepreneur, described how both her marriages left her in despair and how she decided to take charge of her life when one day she found herself on the road penniless. As a result of her courage she went on to become a success and found fulfilment in life.

Chairwomen and Co-founder, Reena Ranger, spoke about how women are multi talented, hardworking and committed and how as British Asians she was privileged to have so many examples to learn from. From the Queen who has been serving her people for 60 years with dignity and grace whilst being a wife, a mother, grandmother and great grandmother. It just goes to prove women can do extraordinary things when given the opportunity.

Image(s) courtesy of CRR Photography

Our Launch Event

Reena continued "We many not all agree with their politics but you can not doubt the strength and capability of women such as, Baroness Thatcher who turned Briton from a sick man of Europe to the most prosperous economy in just 10 years, as Prime Minister of our country, and changed the fortunes of millions of people. We have the late Indira Gandhi, the late Benazir Bhutto, the incumbent president of India, her Excellency Pratibha Patil, Sheikh Hasina, the prime minister of Bangladesh, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, 3 time prime minster of Sri Lanka, and of course Aung San Suu Kyi and so many others."

Co-Founder Mona Remtulla said the aims of WE are to provide women with a forum, a platform and a network where they can find support, mentoring and inspiration to try and get out of life everything they want 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. 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.

A vote of thanks was given by Mr Rajesh Agrawal CEO of RationalFX. He said he was happy to sponsor the launch as he felt WE is a worthy cause and should be supported.

Thanks was also given to Bea's of Bloomsbury for their cupcakes and to CRR Photography.



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