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Networking

By Seema Sharma

Seema Sharma is an entrepreneur who runs Certificate and Diploma Programmes in Business Management accredited through the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM), for those looking for an introduction to setting up their own businesses. She has a can do attitude and has set up 5 dental practices, 2 training healthcare academies and a substantial property portfolio. She is currently doing an MBA at Imperial Business School and building a software application for small business management.



As I go to write my first blog, I'm reflecting on why I love joining networks such as Women Empowered, and I stumble across this quote by Abraham – Hicks which sums it up perfectly:

"The most magnificent Creators don't want to get together with people who think just like they do. They're looking for people who have other thoughts, because out of the contradiction, comes ideas that could not be born out of sameness. Your relationships will be ultimately more if you're not identical twins just "yessing, yessing, yessing" to everything that the other one is about."

Abraham-Hicks

You see, I've spent a lot of my life hanging around with dentists – not because I have a pathological love for root canals but because I happened to train as one, at a time when I had my life mapped out as a straight line. I was going to set up a practice, get married, have kids and live happily ever after.

Well most of that had happened by the time I was 32, and I'm somewhere in the middle of "ever after" I guess. Excitingly though, by the age of 30, I had joined several business and social networks and discovered an endless array of other opportunities.

I met a Feng Shui consultant at a drinks evening who shaped the way I designed and decorated our home, a lawyer from a network called "Women in Docklands" who deals with all my commercial transactions, an architect who opened my eyes to grand designs and property renovation and my accountant, who to this day is my most trusted advisor. In fact we had dinner together yesterday.

My life has turned out to be an exciting squiggle, not a linear equation, thanks to the buses of opportunity that have come my way. Yes I'm still actively involved with the profession I started with, but there have been twists and turns which opened new avenues to explore such as being invited to teach small business management to the current undergraduates at my old dental school, setting up a medical education academy with my husband, establishing a charity for underprivileged children in India and most recently embarking on an MBA at Imperial.

Cross professional networks are invaluable for providing opportunities to collide with and learn from those in different walks of life. Women Empowered in particular is fresh, inspirational and full of women who have what I think of as "achievable" stories. These are women who have taken calculated risks, actively prepared for the opportunities that came their way, challenged their own thought processes, stretched out of their comfort zones and still managed to juggle their personal lives with work. Self-belief plays a huge part in in success. So does good advice. The next time you have a question, join the network and you are likely to find someone who has an answer which will go some way towards helping you construct your own success.



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

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Our Speakers:

We are privileged to be addressed by and then have a Q&A discussion with women and men who are pioneers in thier fields.

Our speakers have thought outside the box, pursued big ambitions and have been pioneers in their fields. They share their experiences with us on how they have forged their paths and their experiences along the way.



Gurinder Chadha OBE

Film Director



Rishi Rich Song Writer Music Producer Artist Management



Ahlya Rafique Fateh Editor

Enabling Partner:



Our Stall Holders:





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

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Q & A with Gurinder Chadha OBE

Film Director

Gurinder Chadha was born in Kenya and moved to Britain with her parents in 1961. After studying at the University of East Anglia, she became a broadcast journalist for the BBC, made several documentaries about the British-Asian experience and directed her first feature film, comedy-drama Bhaji On The Beach, in 1993

Why did you become a director?

I had no idea I was going to be a director. I decided to get involved in the media, get behind the camera and try and control images of people like me so that they were a little more realistic and a bit more honest. I went from radio journalism to TV, then fell into filmmaking through a British Film Institute new directors scheme. I had no idea I'd ever be making films so I'm eminently grateful to fate or whatever's brought me here so I can keep doing what I set out to do.

If you weren't a filmmaker, what what you be?

If I wasn't me then I'd like to have the talent to be a singer-songwriter. I love Bruce Springsteen! I wish I had the talent to write poetically and sing [laughs]. That's thrown you hasn't it?

Do you believe in God?

For most of my life I've been saying no to that question. But, call it age or whatever, I do believe in something now. I don't think it's a white man with a big beard, but I do think that there are forces around us that we don't necessarily understand. I do believe in fate. That's a very Indian thing, but I do believe that everything happens for a reason and what goes around comes around. I suppose what I'm saying is that I believe in karma. If you're a good person and you do good things and don't think negative thoughts about other people, you actually lead a much better life.

What's the dumbest question you've ever been asked?

I don't know if it's dumb, but the question I get most irritated by is: "Is it hard working in this industry as an Indian woman?" I've answered that one so many times.

How seriously do you take reviews?

The thing about reviews is very interesting. Most directors read reviews, but it's a little different for me because I trained as a journalist and I still see myself as a kind of bogus film director second and a journalist first. Once you're a journalist, you never stop being a journalist. Even when I do press for my films, I'm always conscious of the situation I'm in from a journalist's point of view. So when I read a review - positive or negative - what's interesting for me is who has written it and why are they saying what they're saying.

Reviews, for me, are much more about the person writing them than they are about me and my work. A lot of my work is about race, and everything I do is about informing people how similar and how different we all are to one another. When I read reviews I'm interested in whether or not the reviewer puts my work in the context of race and racism or not. Even a light and frothy, commercial hit like Bend It Like Beckham is actually a black film. It's about an Indian girl and her family in a suburb of west London. And for that to be the most commercially successful British-financed film ever... that is a huge cross against whatever the BNP might try to say they have in terms of electoral power. The fact that British people went out and voted with their feet and bought the DVD in droves shows me culturally a lot more about the British psyche and race than reports about the BNP. What I look for in reviews is whether or not people understand what my bigger idea is.

What's your biggest regret?

When I worked at Pebble Mill in Birmingham, I discovered the delights of the BBC's subsidised bar. I used to go in after my news shift. Back then a pint was something like 25p - it was a long time ago. So I used to make myself sick with all these other journos by drinking seven or eight pints of beer and then we'd all get in a taxi and go for a curry. I'd eat curry at about eleven o'clock at night, wake up the next morning, eat nothing all day because I was on the road and do the same thing all over again. I did that for nearly a year and I put on so much weight that I've never been able to shift it!

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

Only ever do things that make you happy and bring you pleasure.

And the worst?

"I think you're too ambitious. Don't aim too high, don't try and get into university, you might not make it. Have you ever thought about going for a secretarial course?" A school careers adviser told me that.

Extracts take from : Interview by Jamie Russell at http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/callingtheshots/gurinder_chadha.shtml

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Q & A with Ablya Rafique Fateb

What was the thought process that took you from your day job to your dream job?

There was never a plan to go from day job to dream job for me in as much as the job I was doing was always my dream job. I wanted to work for Price Waterhouse when I left University and was happy to be there and learn, however my time there showed me how much I was passionate about media and publishing as those were the companies that I worked on during my audit years. So If you look at every job as your "dream job" that way you can identify which parts of your position that you wish to build on in your next job. So every job is an opportunity to push you on your climb up the ladder!

How did you juggle your work life balance when you are launched Vogue in Russia?

Work/Life balance is a new concept I think that seems to obsess people to the point of ruining their present day lives. When I started my career working 12 hour days was common place as were weekends and my time at Vogue Russia was no different. It was easier in some ways as I was living in a foreign country and I had no family

commitments so I socialised in the evenings and on weekends but I worked very hard during my time in Moscow. However, I was doing a job that was thrilling and that I loved so it didn't feel like work so that was a bonus. However, I still made time for friends and enjoying the cultural aspects of Russian life. I would say now as a married woman, working full time with two small children – there is no such thing as a Work/Life balance sometimes one outweighs the other and searching for it can make you dissatisfied with what you have.

Launching a product in a completely new territory must come with a lot of mixed emotion, excitement of a new challenge but also one would expect much trepidation. What was it like for you and how did you balance it all up? Where did you find the self belief and determination to go ahead and do it all?

Working in Moscow was one of the most exciting times of my life and yes you have nerves but most of the time the adrenalin that is pumping through you cancels it out. I am not a big fan of "self" anything – I believe you make your choices and then follow them through to the best of your ability. If you were not capable then you wouldn't be in the situation in the first place so yes, faith is important but you have to work hard at all the angles to make sure that the project is as well prepared as it can be. Then even if the worst happens, which it did when we launched VOGUE the entire Russian economy collapsed, you can view the situation dispassionately and then try and find the opportunities within the chaos. It isn't easy but then nothing worth having ever is!

Was everybody around you supportive?

Yes thank God! My parents and my co-workers were all very supportive and our head office was always asking if we were ok and if we needed anything to help us while we were living in Russia.

What's the best piece of advice anybody gave you?

If I do not raise myself to higher things, who will do it and if not now, when?

What is the worst piece of advice anyone gave you?

That which does not kill you makes you stronger - thanks but no thanks!

What would you say to those who are forging out on their own today by way of advice or warning?

Work hard, have a goal or at least a set of goals to work towards and take pleasure in the things that you do achieve. Make your decisions and own them and don't expect immediate success if you know you haven't done the ground work.

What are some of the greatest challenges you faced? How did you overcome it?

I have faced many challenges without knowing them – only when I have overcome them have I had the chance to look back and think, well that was close! That is why I try to be thankful at the end of the day that whatever happened I got through it. Now that I am a parent I realise that all the other stuff is window-dressing, what is important is that my kids and family are healthy and safe.

Do you measure your success in different way the Industry or public would do so and if so what is it to you ?

I don't think I would make any radical changes but yes I would like to tweak a few things – the perfectionist in me would demand it. But at the same time I don't like to look back, the present is what matters.

If you could do it all over again what would you do the same or differently?

I think it is more like - "If you don't know what you want before you ask for it, don't be surprised if you don't like what you get!".

Do you believe life is as simple as "if you don't ask, you don't get"?

You can do anything you want, be anyone you want, but you have to want it for yourself and be prepared to work hard to get it.

We talk about thinking big, it is not only for ourselves but also for our daughters. What advice would you give mothers for their daughters?

I look at my daughters and I see how they want to be a different thing every day sometimes changing their minds midday. The important thing to me is that they are already setting themselves goals and dreaming of the possibilities that could come into their lives. Remember how lucky and blessed your daughters are that they have the right to dream, we are still living in a world where educational opportunities for girls are few and far between especially in India and Pakistan where I hail from. The fact that my daughters are in good schools and exploring every part of their educations makes me sure that whatever career they decide to pursue, they will have the chance to succeed. I did the traditional job and it has led me down an unconventional path and for that I am supremely grateful!



Sally, founder of Connect2colour helps families, schools and business organisations through the medium of painting, to come together, strengthen their core values, build confidence and great working relationships resulting in a beautiful, vibrant, 3D canvas that reflects this. Sally originally came from an educational background teaching children with autism and communication difficulties, and then worked with corporate clients to bring the voice of their values alive through art.

Lisa Åkesson works with women, empowering them to be brave, bold and assertive as leaders and communicators. Lisa has encountered many women in both the public and private sector telling her that despite being Managers and Directors they often did not feel intelligent enough, confident enough or able to fully step into their authority and express themselves authentically as leaders. Lisa comes from a theatre and voice coaching background, working with actors and also with business individuals on their personal impact, presentation skills and public speaking.





Lisa and Sally both realized they had one thing in common - they shared a fundamental desire to help others free their voices and be heard with confidence power and impact. The fusion of their skills brings together a unique, cathartic and liberating workshop that helps transform how individuals communicate with one another, build relationships and express themselves through art.

The ART of Confident Communication not only empowers individuals but also brings leaders and teams together. If you are interested in such a workshop or any other of our services, do get in touch with either of us.

Lisa Åkesson - www.lisaakesson.com Sally Webb - sally@connect2colour.com

After a sell out workshop in November, Lisa is currently running a second 'Impactful Leadership for Women' training in London on the 8th of March 2014. Details on www.lisaakesson.com





T.07957220299 rubinakapoor29@gmail.com www.rubinakapoor.com



Q&A with Rishi Rich

Song Writer / Music Producer / Artist Management

Was there a conventional job you always thought you would have when you grew up? I like to work with computers and started a degree in computing. Even when young I played with electrical items and built a radio station transmitter from my bedroom at a young age.

However, I always had a strong interest in music and my school teachers really nurtured that. It was always going to be one or the other. Life happened to give me a break in the music industry and me energy was

focused there. My friends still come to me to fix their computers though.

Now as an adult I have a keen interest in law and hope to study law one day when I have more time.

The field you went into was unchartered by the Asian community. Was this something that you gave a lot of thought or even a consideration for you?

At the time we didn't know what we were creating. I took musical influences from my childhood and created music that I liked. At home my mum would listen to Elvis Presley and RD Burman so I grew up around a mix of both types of music. The plan was never to make a new sound, now it is.

Where did you get the courage self-determination and belief to take that path of music production?

I knew I loved making music and I knew I was good at it. I remember when Aaja re Aaja came out 20 years ago. I had a look at the back of the cassette and saw the production studio was not far from where I lived. I made a demo tape, knocked on their door and handed it over. From there the company signed me and we created Love2Love.

Was everybody around you supportive?

Yes. My mum was my greatest support. She bought me my keyboards when I needed them. My music teachers would let me stay after class to carry on making music. As my success grew my family, especially my dadima (grandmother) was so proud of me. Everyone has been great.

What's the best piece of advice anybody gave you? The best piece of advice was to stay humble and always find a challenge.

What is the worst piece of advice anyone gave you? Haha - all advice is good advice. You just learn from it all.

What would you say to those who are forging out on their own today by way of advice or warning? Believe in yourself. Don't worry about money. Perfect your trade and the money will come itself.

What are some of the challenges you faced?

When I started out it was very frustrating when presenting my music to record labels or radio stations as the fusion sound was very confusing to many. But I kept on because I knew this was the sound I wanted to represent. Also finding a good manager or lawyer is the key.

What was the most challenging period and had to overcome it? Every minute of this Business is challenging. That's what makes it fun!

Do you measure your success in different way the Industry or public would do so ? I think so. As music producers it's difficult to measure success or know how much is enough. My family are proud of my achievements but I feel there is still so much more for me to achieve. This is just the surface.

When did you know had been successful or "made it"? I'm still on that journey.

If you could do it all over again what would you do the same or differently? I wouldn't change anything. The ups and downs have all been a necessary learning experience to put me where I am today.



DVK PLC

Deepak Kuntawala

CEO of DVK PLC

In the heart of London, based in Green Park, Deepak Kuntawala, the CEO of DVK has been making waves in the finance industry for several years. His calm and cool demeanour has proved to be his best asset guiding his company through and an ever-changing and volatile industry.

Its beginnings lay at the turn of the past century, when Deepak's grandfather started supplying the colonial army of the British Empire with textile wares while stationed in Southern Africa. This spirit undoubtedly percolated through the lineage down to Deepak who founded DVK in 2000. His achievements have been recognised by the business community winning six business awards in six months.

DVK has continued to prosper all around the world with a strong foothold in key locations of global trade, headquartered in London, Hong Kong, Mumbai and Moscow, the company's reach spreads through Europe, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, China, Russia, India and Central Africa.

DVK's service roster includes private equity, wealth management, asset and investment management, structured trade & commodity finance and global commodity trading while some of the sectors in which the company operates are aviation, commodity trading, media & entertainment, finance & banking, PPP infrastructure, and real estate.

Most recently, Deepak lead his company's expansion into the high-flying film industry by branching out and creating an entertainment and film fund. This fund is marking itself as an industry disruptor having brought Al Pacino to London after 29 years with 'An Evening with Al Pacino' at the London Palladium. Also, having financed the Bollywood 'super hit' Bhaag Milkha Bhaag, the fund continues to demonstrate its investment magic, sensing success where others may not.



THE TWINDIVIDUAL DIARIES

The Twindividual Diaries is a lifestyle blog created by London based twins, Sukhman and Hernoor. They share their varying passions and interests from Photography to Music and anything that inspires and excites them. The blog, to some degree, is a representation of who they are as twins (and as individuals). They hope the blog continues to encompass their growing curiosity and zeal for life itself. Their motto, 'Time is precious: do what you love' sums up why they choose to express themselves through their many creative endeavours and projects.

http://thetwindividualdiaries.tumblr.com/





WWW-SUKHMANGREWAL.COM

E: sukhmankaurgrewal@gmail.com

T: 07515060821



WE and Me - Ravleen Sharma F.C.C.A

Having had a successful career, a few years ago I decided to take time out to look after my children and give them my undivided attention. I spent my days lunching, shopping, going to the gym and just having the days to myself. This utopia was soon shattered after realising that I did not suit the 'domestic goddess' come 'socialite' role.

While I enjoyed spending time with my loved ones, I came to the conclusion very early on that my true passion was to keep myself occupied in the business world. I liked juggling several balls up in the air and managing to keep a work life balance in comparison to not working at all; I longed to get back to work, yet I decided to wait until my youngest had finished the 'dreaded 11+' exams. In the meantime I started looking at a few business ideas but having been out of the work environment, I had lost confidence in myself. The tasks I managed in the past, which I could do with my eyes closed had become a huge struggle.

Coincidently, Reena told me about her new Women Empowered concept and asked me to attend the first event. I went along out of loyalty and wanting to support Reena and Mona's vision, not that I completely understood what they hoped to accomplish out of it. I certainly didn't expect to get my inner, deeper ambitious desire poked! Just listening to the inspirational, likeminded women talk and to hear the confidence they had in themselves motivated me to progress with my business. I continued to attend the many WE events where a few quotes stimulated me to continue with the research and development

These were the words that gave me encouragement:

I needed to invest in before launching the business.

- Do one little task each day towards your goal and by the end of the month you would have done thirty jobs.
- If you can dream it, you can achieve it.
- Enjoy the highs and deal with the lows. Pick yourself up and don't let the lows get in the way of your ambitions.



After investing time and money developing the perfect candle and personal care range with several USPs, I launched my products last year. My first was the WE evening in September 2013 where my products were showcased and sold. At this event, I made several important contacts which raised the company's profile and gave it a wider audience thereby enabling growth and expansion.

WE gave me the push to get going. WE gave me important networking opportunities. Without WE, Spry Candles may have stayed a dream and not become a reality.

See my product range at www.sprycandles.co.uk

Our Champions



Rajesh Agrawal Chairman, Founder and CEO - RationalFX



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

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



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



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".

Image(s) courtesy of Amina Malik of Ampixz - https://www.facebook.com/Ampixz

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 ad 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 you 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.

Image(s) courtesy of Amina Malik of Ampixz - https://www.facebook.com/Ampixz

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.

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

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 ad 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 form 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 KMPG and featured Priti Patel MP, ClIr Lurline Champagnie OBE and ClIr 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%.

Image(s) courtesy of ISHK Photography - http://www.facebook.com/ishkphotography

ls 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-Khakhu of ISHK Photography for the pictures the world would see.



Image(s) courtesy of ISHK Photography - http://www.facebook.com/ishkphotography

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 or 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 tat 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 eliviate 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.

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 minister 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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