

Tendencies

Women on top

Different colors, a struggle

Three entrepreneurs in Ghana, India and South Africa explain their struggle to achieve success

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Barcelona

They are successful entrepreneurs in their countries who struggle without blinking in the business world, three different points of the world, three separate companies, each with its own idiosyncrasies in regards to the inequalities between men and women. As little is known in the beginning, all of them sit and talk about their experiences. And immediately after arises a common vision. Ghana, India, South Africa ... the substance of what they say and feel with all its nuances, is also present in this IWEC Convention, Barcelona 2012.

"It is necessary for women to liberate the mind to grow. In Ghana the general mentality of women is adapted to social and cultural pressures that push us to take a subordinate role and if a woman has a career goals that she wants to meet, society will push against her to achieve, they'll intimidate her, men will be rough with her... It's sad, yes, but we have to pull decisively forward" says Grace Amey Obang, who, with the support of her husband and children, leads an aesthetic group composed of six companies. It has several salons in the capital, produces its own brand of products traded worldwide, has a training school and publishes a magazine.

The view from Ghana
"The patriarchal model frightens you lest you develop professionally".

The council of India
"The husband must make it clear from the beginning that nobody will stop your dreams".

That's what these three professional women in their forties and fifties with long experience repeated constantly during a relaxed chat. Preeti

Sharma says she needs approval of none. "It's just what I think, my husband, my father, my mother, my family have to be persuaded to understand my viewpoint." But the road is not easy. Sharma recalls how it cost her nearly a decade to run her company which is an Executive Training Center to major corporates in India handling

new and emerging technologies. Often her company's own employees did not like command from a woman, she also felt rejection when negotiating with bankers, financiers or suppliers in a country where there are still areas where, having a daughter is not well seen.

Jennifer Paterson, single

mother and director of a tour company that organizes safaris stresses that the most important thing for women is to have economic independence. Without money there is no real freedom and she tries to employ in her company "strong women" that can multiply the example she wants to set. Running a business is very tough

and you really need to be fully committed. And she believes that in today's uncertain global economy, companies headed by women are weathering the storm better, due to their empathy and their ability to get to everything done.



THURSDAY, 1 November 2012

Tendencies

25 VANGUARD

**THE WINNERS
THE 2010'S
IWEC**

Networking
Businesses take advantage of the forum to do business and open new markets

24 Winners
Chambers of commerce elects three representatives in the region between large companies

In Barcelona
Those chosen by the Chamber have been **Susana Monje** (Essentium), pictured, **Chelo Tonijuan** (Carnia), and **Mar Raventos** (Codorniu)



Conferences
The forum has been about the global economy, unaccented female

But these three successful entrepreneurs are people of flesh and blood. They have felt guilty to be identified as not caring "enough" for the family. "If we are not careful about ourselves, nobody will take care of us," says Sharma stressing the importance of health for women, the need to take care of oneself. Sharma says "Work out the power balance between male members of the family and self. You have to stick your feet soon, explain what your limits are, and state clearly what you want to be in life. And make it clear to take it or leave it." Sharma believes that she was late in this and, therefore, it has been harder to shake the patriarchal

pressure. But is proud of having taken her daughter to a more powerful model then what she inherited from her mother.

"I now spend more time with my grandchildren," says Grace Amey Obeng, "and above all, I dedicate a special time to translate my vision of the world with gender equity. In our culture, it is common to serve boys more food than girls, and I do it backwards. And today there is a battle for my daughter in law. She wants to be a lawyer and my son is not thrilled. I am defending her decision tooth and nail." Grace, a female businesswoman in Ghana, reminds her female employees that it's not necessary to and have

children to be happy. Present in these three women is a common sense, universally recognizable but every society has obviously arrived at different points in regards to equality. Grace Amey, Preeti and Jennifer have help at home, a broad domestic service covers them all housework and allowing them a full part in their businesses and spending some "quality time" with their families.

These days all three are in Barcelona at the International Women Entrepreneur Challenge (IWEC), a forum initiated by the Chamber of Commerce of Barcelona, with the sponsorship of IESE and Caixa bank, to connect to medium and large entrepreneurs worldwide to expand their business options. Paterson has decided to stay a few days in Barcelona with her sister for sightseeing – her professional passion. Obeng and Sharma are returning home quickly because they expected a mountain of things back.

**Management in South Africa
"Employment at my company for strong women sets an example"**

**The common key
"Doing what one believes, resist, study, take what they say and never give up"**

The key to their journey, they say, has been the commitment to themselves and strong resilience. They recommend to all women to be aggressive, assertive and fight for what they believe are their rights. Everyone gives way depending on the society in which they live and work. But the music sounds the same everywhere. On Tuesday night, in Barcelona in IWEC gala, the awardees came with the chords and lyrics of John Lennon ("you may say I am a dreamer / but I'm not only one"), courtesy of U.S. general ex consul in Barcelona, Ruth Davies, and businesswoman Subirana Adela, driving on the forum.

The formula of every entrepreneur: raising children Independent, take them to work or settle

The story of an ordinary day

C. SEN Barcelona

Preeti Sharma. The alarm rings at 6:30 am in Bombay. Eat breakfast, do your prayers, take a walk for half an hour and off to work. In Accra, Grace Amey Obeng has risen at seven, then the personal fitness trains her for a while and then, at 8:30 am travels to her beauty centers in the city. Jennifer Paterson is up at five in the morning, has exercised and at 7:00 am reaches office even when no one is around to work quietly and plan the day before employees arrive.

Plan, delegate, dispatch all that I can by e-mail and phone, go to the reunions with messages well studied and give workers confidence to meet the objectives. These are the methods these women apply to their businesses to operate. Past mid afternoon Sharma gets off work and goes to see her mother. After reaching home she shares an hour with her daughter without any interference. The dinner is prepared by the domestic service and they can chat quietly at home. "Since childhood I have taught my daughter to be independent, to manage herself alone in the morning. Even when my daughter was 7 years old she had already very long hair and combed it alone."

Grace Amey recalls as she took her three children to work when they were young. "I had them with me, around me, but always with a nanny who helped me because, of course, there are many times when it is impossible to work. So I could get on with the business." Today her children are older. On Fridays she calls all the children and grandchildren to dinner at home and occasionally spends the weekend away but always with an eye on the business. Everyone knows that the pursuit of beauty runs mostly on weekends.

At 14 hours, Paterson returns home as she is an early riser. As a single mother she has always been very aware of her son and tried adjusting

her timings with his school timings, especially since her profession often forces her to make long journeys outside their country. It is clear that in addition to the intense dedication to her company safaris, Paterson has managed to balance with her family. "My son is now 20 years," she explains, "but for me he is still my child, I like to take care of him, as I am excited to be his mother; I agree to his every whim".

**Common patterns...
All the workday begin very soon, uncut at noon.**

**And different...
Indian business woman with her daughter**

In Bombay, at 10.30 pm, Sharma is sending messages to prepare all employees for the next day before going to sleep. "At 10.30 you're still connected and instructing employees." Yes and weekends too, because in India weekends are almost nonexistent." she replies.

Each in its own way, as anywhere in the world, every day trying to square the circle.



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