

DATE	9 th March 2015
USERS	121,733,045



Women in Leadership

How I made it happen: leading businesswomen share the secrets of their success

The theme for this year's International Women's Day is 'make it happen'. We asked some of the UK's leading businesswomen for their best advice

Lottie O'Connor

Sunday 8 March 2015 11:30 GMT

Shares Comments

38 0



“I took the gamble of delaying children until it was almost too late, having my daughter at 39 and my son two years later”. Photograph: Blend Images / Alamy/Alamy

The theme for this year's International Women's Day is "make it happen". We asked some leading business women for the advice that helped them get ahead at work and what they wish they'd known.

Theresa McDermott, assistant director, Investors in People

Never stop learning is one of my key mottos in life that has always helped me to push myself to do better at whatever I'm doing. Feeding into that is always testing yourself to ensure you're doing the best you can for yourself and those around you – and if you're not, come up with a way to change and improve yourself. Meanwhile, practice resilience to stand up for yourself and your beliefs, which you need in any competitive business environment, alongside acute attention to detail. These are the credentials which have served me well throughout my career. Beyond that I'd like to think having a fair and approachable attitude to those around me has helped me build strong associations who have stood by me throughout my career. Having colleagues that encourage a nurturing and empowering environment does wonders for any organisation."

Belinda Rowe, global managing partner and UK chair of ZenithOptimedia

Starting out in the media industry I came across a number of roadblocks. I learnt you've got to be tenacious and determined to stand out in this sector; many of the leadership roles remain male dominated to this day.

Before becoming global managing partner at ZenithOptimedia, I lived in Australia and took charge of combining a fragmented set of trade bodies to form one unified organisation - Communications Council. This was set up to represent the interests of the advertising industry to have a stronger voice in Government.

What's helped me most in my career is loving what I do. Nevertheless, passion alone isn't enough; you must have the drive and strength to have a point of view and the ability to reach your goals by communicating your vision. Exciting opportunities are emerging in the media industry all the time, you just have to be strong enough to stand up and grab them head on.

Anna Walker, chair of the Office of Rail Regulation

Three principles have been really important to me. Firstly, to go for jobs which matter to people, where I felt I could make a difference and I really wanted to do them. That has given me the energy and commitment to do the job whatever it brings! The second is that team and partnership achieve infinitely more than "I". Building and working with a team is also much more rewarding. Thirdly, listen to others particularly if they are challenging or critical. They can provide a different perspective which may be the difference between where you are now and the future agenda.

🗨️ **No need for International Women's Day? What world do you live in?**

Harriet Minter

[➔ Read more](#)

DATE	9 th March 2015
USERS	121,733,045



women in leadership

Join the Guardian Women in Leadership

Guardian Women in Leadership provides insight on gender diversity for progressive thinking organisations, as well as career advice and inspiration for senior women. Sign up now to become a member of Women in Leadership and receive exclusive benefits.

[Click here →](#)

I strongly believe understanding your personal brand and key attributes are core to personal and professional development. The ability to effectively communicate your story, expertise and vision (complimented by authenticity) goes a very long way. In business, and post The Apprentice, people have told me they felt inspired by or respected me because I was just being me. My business slogan: “be you, only better”

Never underestimate the importance of just being kind and honest in business - ‘It is nice to be important, but its more important to be nice’, people buy people.

I have built my business and client base via networking and referral, complimented by a strong personal brand and knowing you are your best

ambassador.

Rebecca Swift, director of creative planning, iStock by Getty Images

I started out in photography over twenty years ago now, and was immediately struck by both the passion for the image which drives photographers every day, as well as the transformative power of a picture for effecting social change. Through encouraging people to literally repicture the world in its true form – trying to broaden visual imagery and challenge stereotypes around how key groups and concepts are depicted - an image can drive change.

Visual anthropology is still very much a specialist and emerging area and it hasn’t been until more recently - specifically our partnership last year with Sheryl Sandberg’s LeanIn.org to create a collection of images that demonstrate a powerful depiction of women - that our expertise has come to be understood by the wider industry. As an academic, my biggest challenge, and what still drives me forward, is making sure that the widest possible visual language is available to depict and define how people communicate.



Events to mark International Women’s Day 2015

[→ Read more](#)

Mary Nightingale, presenter, ITV news

I get scores of letters from girls who want to pursue my career path asking advice on how I make it work. The truth is, I have been incredibly lucky; unlike many newsroom colleagues, presenters have largely predictable hours, unless a huge story breaks. I have been able to combine ITN with caring for my young children because I usually know in advance when I will be home from work; it’s more complex for reporters and producers, who have to be ready to travel, often with little notice. I also took the gamble of delaying children until it was almost too late, having my daughter at 39 and my son two years later.

I made sure I was established before I risked the hiatus of maternity leave. Fortunately it all worked out but even in my privileged position, combining work and family is a challenge. As I say, I was lucky.

[More features](#)
[Topics](#)
[Work/life](#)
[Office politics](#)
[Women](#)
[International Women's Day](#)