



WOMEN OF SUBSTANCE

WOMEN'S DAY SPECIAL

Women entrepreneurs in our country face unique challenges. From minimal support, raising fund for their business to creating a work-life balance, the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs are many. Today, women-owned start-ups and enterprises are playing a critical role in the economy, in building the nation and inspiring other women to start their own ventures. Start-up is the buzzword now. Government initiatives and incentives to support women led start-ups are also a step in the right direction. In the present scenario, there is an encouraging environment for women led businesses to flourish. Though there are a lot of challenges women still face today, we have come a long way to support women entrepreneurship in India. We can't wait to see what the future holds for today's budding women entrepreneurs. What is remarkable is not just the achievements of women entrepreneurs in different fields, but the fact that they have been able to surmount prejudices and barriers. They have shown that business ability is without gender. Given the same opportunities, women can be as good as men in business. Women are not inferior in any way when it comes to starting a business, managing it or making it successful.

SHAHNAZ HUSAIN

Shahnaz Husain is one of the early women entrepreneurs. Back when Shahnaz was starting, there were very few women entrepreneurs. A lot has changed since then.

Here's her story as conversed with Farvi Motiwale Wadhwa, "I am a first generation entrepreneur. I did not inherit a business empire. I established my own enterprise, starting in a very small way, in my own home. My idea was to make the most of my determination, my iron will and my ability for sheer hard work. My ideas and innovations were my own and I went ahead with confidence to translate them into reality. Creativity and the ability to innovate are important factors for success. Translating them into practical terms is my success mantra. The desire to excel, determination to succeed and hard work are necessary ingredients for success. I believed that one should be willing to try every avenue towards success. I never rest on my laurels. I always feel I have another frontier to cross, another mountain to climb. I never give up. If you never give up trying, you cannot fail. I do not believe in destiny. I believe you can make your own destiny. In fact, in seizing opportunities and looking forward to challenges lies the secret of success."

Speaking about how women entrepreneurs in various field have made an impact, Shahnaz Husain says, "From conventional woman-friendly enterprises to new-age start-ups in the health, beauty and wellness domain, women are dominating the start-up space in India. There has been a lot of changes since I started my entrepreneurship journey. Over the years, the face of business, entrepreneurship and marketing have evolved rapidly, especially for women entrepreneurs. In the past, women faced the lack of role model and female mentors. Now there are so many success stories of women led businesses for budding women entrepreneurs to look up to. With more women in the Indian start-up ecosystem than ever before and women entrepreneurs turning investors, we will see more female led businesses."

Sharing a piece of advice to all women who are already entrepreneurs and to all those who are reading this piece and aspire to be one someday, "First of all, professional qualifications and training is the order of the day. So, it is essential to acquire professional and vocational training in your field. If you can get advanced training and also specialize in some aspect, it can be an advantage. Believe in yourself and your own abilities. Keep learning. Have the courage to say "I don't know this, but I can learn it." The sky is the limit, but one should have relentless determination to excel and the ability for sheer hard work. Have the ability to adapt and adjust, because one has to adapt to the changing demands of the market and trends. You may start in a small way, but think "big." You have to think that nothing is beyond you," recommends Shahnaz Husain.



We all firmly believe that a woman definitely has the qualities to be a successful entrepreneur. For one thing, while managing her different roles of wife, housewife, mother and career woman efficiently, she has learnt the values of time-management, patience and handling budgets. She has learnt how to integrate and nurture. Women have the courage, inner strength, foresight and capacity for hard work, all of which are necessary to be successful as entrepreneurs. "Therefore, in the near future, I see today's woman standing side by side with her male counterpart to work for the economic development of the country. Trends are already changing. Women have become more financially independent and self-reliant. For one thing, due to the glass ceiling, which still exists, many women prefer to start their own enterprises, because it gives them independence and opportunities to innovate. Ten years down the line and even earlier, I see women entrepreneurship playing an important role in creating jobs, so important for a developing country like India. I think we will see women leading the work force. We will also see millions of women owned businesses providing employment and thus improving the future of India. It is estimated that women entrepreneurs will grow by 90% in the next ten years," predicts one of the earliest women entrepreneur Shahnaz Husain.

As we celebrate Woman's Day, Farvi Motiwale Wadhwa brings to you, some inspiring stories of women who have broken the boundaries and have started achieving their goals.

ANAMIKA SINGH, FOUNDER, THE MEMORY KEEPER (2011)

Quote you live by: Dream it and you can do it

In her words: I am a Chemical Engineer by qualification. After a stint of over a decade with leading multinationals, I realised my true calling and quit my successful corporate career to pursue photography. I always had a creative bent of mind and was drawn towards stories. Photography became a medium to tell stories and document real moments. My constant endeavour to do soulful work and passion for photography was the driving force to inspire me to start my photography business under this brand name. Being a self taught photographer, the learning curve was steep but I was committed to learning, working hard and thriving. Today I feel incredibly blessed to be a successful creative entrepreneur and touching so many lives and making a difference.

Solopreneurship comes with its own set of challenges but every day is a new learning experience and I continue to grow and evolve.



ANJALI RAWAT - CO-FOUNDER & DIRECTOR OF DESIGN THINKING, DIGITAL DOGS CONTENT AND MEDIA (2020)

One quote you live by: Every day is Day Zero

In her words: From every touch point in our lives, be it a good read, or the way we consume things or knowledge or content or emotions, every little thing is an opportunity for good Design Thinking. And the best ones are those we don't even notice but are highly influential in our decision making. Subtle. Powerful. Design. Thinking. Disruptive and different with no rules attached and yet creating a beautiful less complicated life. I have been in the advertising and design industry for over 25 years starting my journey from San Francisco. Having worked with the best agencies, it was time for me to create my own change. It's been a good 2 years and we have grown not in the number of people we have hired but also in the number of diverse disciplines we have created within. From content to product design, from graphic design to advertising, from strategy to production.

Design Thinking is a concept I strongly believe in. Not only does it have the power to change the way we live, it possesses the supremacy of changing the way we THINK. Universally.



ARCHANA BATRA, FOUNDER, ARCHANA BATRA'S DIET CLINIC & DIET EDGE (2012)

One quote you live by: The best way to predict future is to create it
In her words: Our country has been undergoing a rapid transition in health over the past several decades – a shift from infectious diseases to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, hypertension or digestive disorders.

And most of these diseases are caused by wrong eating habits or bad lifestyle. Hence, this inspired me to study nutrition in-depth and to come up with a comprehensive plan to address such serious issues and to contribute to the well-being of our community. I Started my career with SBISR & Medanta - The Medicity as an Obesity cum Diabetes Educator & Dietitian. I Left my job in 2012 and started my own clinic as entrepreneurship offered more flexibility. And since then, there has been no looking back.

I have worked with more than 7000 patients till date and I feel happy to have bought a healthier change in their lives.



BANNYA BASU, FOUNDER, BANNYA BASU IMAGE CONSULTING (2015)

I am Bannya Basu a certified image consultant and soft skills facilitator. I am running my company "Bannya Basu Image Consulting" successfully for last 6 years. The story steps back in time when I was working with Air India as an Air Hostess with a cosy salary, lots of perks, travelling the world.

Having been on the job for 12 years, I experienced a certain dip in excitement due to erratic working hours, literally living out of a suitcase. My relationship with my family members had become less than cordial, increasing my levels of stress, interfering with my peace of mind.

I opted for VRS, which eventually led to health issues. I cut down on my social calls, was unhappy, depressed. At that time, I had two choices, either to go back to my previous job or have a larger purpose in life by helping millions of people who are going through the same ordeal and transform them. I chose the latter.

That's the time I came across an advertisement of Image Management Programme. I attended the presentation. My work in hospitality industry always demanded me to remain well groomed, well dressed and well mannered. It helped me to gain knowledge that image is what others perceive about you just by looking at your appearance.

"First impression is the last impression" may sound cliché but the truth is, the world revolves around this fact. That was the turning point. I enrolled myself in Image Management Programme. Now I customise the program and provide solutions which are simple and easy steps to implement. The people I have worked with have seen the benefits in their professional personal and social life.





DAMINI OBEROI, OWNER & FOUNDER OF Q EVENTS AND WEDDINGS (2015)

Damini Oberoi, Owner & Founder of Q Events and Weddings (2015)

In her words: The itch of doing something that was my own and being self sufficient started very early in life for me. I think the biggest reason was growing up seeing my parents work very hard. While having regular jobs my Mother especially, always had new and amazing ideas that she would never shy away from developing. This was while being a successful working woman and a mother of two. But successful or not I saw how that kept her alive. So I too started with turning a hobbies and talents into something bigger. From selling my own created artwork to teaching dance to kids in my society I basically always looked for opportunities. Post my 12th class, I studied hotel management and realised there was a gap in the market with good gourmet caterers and so I started "Celebrations" - an outdoor catering division along with a small cafe. I was always good at organising small parties within my friends and family and the thought of putting it all together really excited me. The thought of making someone's special day memorable excited me a lot. After 2.5 years I stopped my catering division and started doing small social events along with doing guest lists for brands that were establishing themselves in the city. The need for the kind of services requested and offered slowly increased and I started Q Events and Weddings in 2015 to be able to offer all these services. I became a full fledge wedding and events planning company. I've grown from a small town event planner to a national wedding and event planning company in all these years and we offer a one stop shop right from planning to creative designing to decor designing and execution. I have had my own struggles in all these years. Being a young woman entrepreneur in the wedding space and been taken seriously has been my biggest pet peeve, which I've managed to win over eventually. I love what I do and it makes me the happiest to see my brides or the mom who just celebrated her child's first birthday.

I myself prefer charismatic and authentic brands. As an entrepreneur one of the most interesting processes was to first put down my ideologies and beliefs and then to create a brand that stands for and believes in something. A brand that has a story to tell.

FARAH MALIK BHANJI, MANAGING DIRECTOR, METRO BRANDS LTD (1955)

In her words: My grandfather Malik Tejani opened the first store under the Metro brand in 1955 in Mumbai. Later, my father Mr. Rafique Malik carried ahead the business. I have been lucky to have a forward-thinking mentor that is my father. At a time when most Indian business households chose their sons to handover the reigns of the business, our father had complete faith in us to take his dream of Metro Brands forward. That inspired me to work hard and take Metro Brands ahead of its time. It is empowering to be a part of the legacy and we hope to take this forward by leaps and bounds. I began my career with marketing and then grew into revamping the technology road map and supply chain of Metro Brands Limited. I joined the family business in 2000. And today we have expanded our store network from 100 in 2010 to 629 Stores across 140 cities in 2021. As well as collaborations with third-party brands such as Crocs, Skechers, Clarks, Florsheim, and Fitflop, which complement our in-house brands. In fact, back in 2009 when e-commerce was not as big as it is today, we launched India's first footwear e-commerce website- Metro Shoes. Today Metro Brands has a strong presence on all off India's major e-commerce marketplaces. We also have our own digital platform for brands like Metro, Mochi and Walkway.

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MISBAH QUADRI, FOUNDER & CEO, MONOFYS MEDIA (2020)

One quote you live by: "Everything you can imagine is real"

In her words: I love the line of work that I specialize in. Being able to build a bridge between the honest work done by brands and their target consumers; getting the opportunity to work in sync with their growth journey, projecting it to the viewers while the companies continue to build their foothold in the industry; thorough and effective management of a brand's online and offline reputation, handling time bound crisis – this is something that gives me an adrenaline rush. Monofys for me, happened when all my clients knew that they could trust my team and I to tell their stories to the world through the lens of authentic and compelling news. I won't call myself successful yet, I have oceans to cross and the journey ahead is long and exciting.

Anyway, no matter what juncture of life you are at - there is always scope for becoming a better version of yourself, and I would say I am still lingering at the beginner level.



RIMA AND RAASHI KAPADIA, FOUNDERS, OCEANA CLUTCHES (2019)

One quote you live by:

“Visualize your higher self, the woman of your dreams. Start showing up as her.”

“Accidental entrepreneurs” is what we call ourselves. Both, Rashi and I (Rima Kapadia) share a mutual love for handbags. We once made the bags for a private gathering and the outpour of support from friends and family was overwhelming and gratifying. As a result, we decided to turn our art into a passion-driven business. Me being a commercial artist and Rashi coming from a finance background, we both pooled our passion and love and gave birth to Oceana Clutches. We were and are continually loved and flaunted by all the A-list celebrities like Alia Bhatt, Shilpa Shetty Kundra, Ananya Pandey, etc; influencers like Masoom Minawala, Roshni Bhatia, Komal Pandey and many more. Ofcourse, alongside amazing real women from all walks of life.

Every woman achiever, who has that extra zest in her to sprint ahead in life and leave a mark, it could be in any walk of life. It’s amazing how she balances her work, home and social life beautifully, so more power to each and every woman out there.

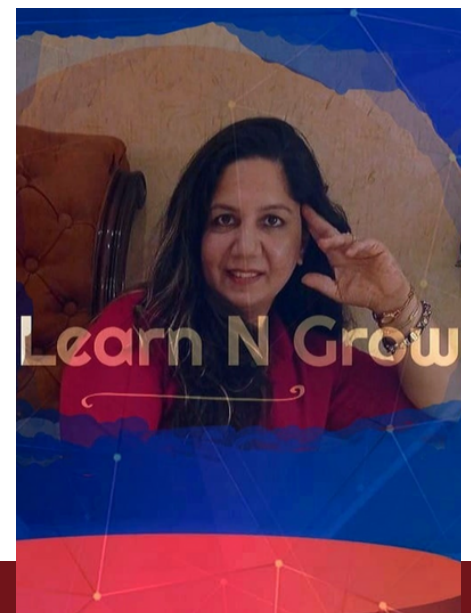
In the Indian fashion sector, we want to bridge this gap and make our mark on the international map as well, to be known as a highly detailed and ethical Indian homegrown brand. We strongly believe that a purse completes a woman.



RUCHIKA RASTOGI, FOUNDER, LEARN N GROW ACADEMY, (2020)

In her words: Success is not only determined by money but also by satisfaction, happiness and inner peace. With these parameters in my mind and a passion for writing in my heart and soul, I quit my reputed job as a teacher in a prestigious school in Delhi. Gradually, I became a part of few English and Hindi anthologies. Besides this, I also became the author of the book — A Mystical Majesty: The Woman. Though I loved being in the company of litterateurs, a desire to achieve something had often left me in tears, which I believe, had led me to move out of my self-proclaimed luxury zone into yet another unexplored zone of struggle. It was my desire only which assisted me in leaving the habit of procrastination, thus helped me in peeping through the tiny window of optimism. From there, my chapter of becoming an educator unfolded, which actually led to the foundation of ‘Learn N Grow’ in January 2020, the institute, in which I tried to mold the personality of a child, with reference to the development of English as a life skill. During this process, I learned a few lessons. Firstly, you should never stop learning at any stage while you grow in any field. Secondly, be inquisitive as it will help you to reach your destination. Lastly, always have perseverance and positivity up your sleeves as they will pay you off well!

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SHREYA SHARMA, CEO, REST THE CASE (2020)

One quote you live by: Miles to go before I sleep

I got the idea for Rest The Case when I was studying Law in the UK and noticed how law and legal services are very readily available on the internet there. It was easy to find a lawyer and easy to get connected. However, the same thing in India was very difficult. One has to run pillar to post to find a good lawyer who can help them with their legal issues. So I thought of working out a way in which people all around the country can find a lawyer based on their own personalised requirement. Then when the lockdown happened, and I came back home to India I saw it getting tougher than ever because people required information and help but there was nowhere to go, that's when I started working on creating Rest The Case as a One Stop Solution for Legal Information and Services. So that even if a person requires basic information or they required a lawyer for their case they could find it in one place. I have always wanted to have my own business and I wanted to create something that I can be proud of. With Rest The Case I see that happening.

I love to work and love to add new things that I think will help people. I do however believe that I have a long way to go and lots more that I still have to do.



SAKSHI GOEL, CEO, RENT N FLAUNT (2020)

Quote you live by: Phil Knight - the founder of Nike- ' Life is growth, you grow or you die'.

I don't think we can define 'successful entrepreneur' , I'd rather talk about my journey as an 'entrepreneur'. Building your company is like raising a child, it's one of the most fulfilling experience but full of new challenges everyday. You really can't predict how's your next week gonna look like. Experimentation, pitfalls, learning from them and executing better the next time is the mantra for us. I think the biggest quality any entrepreneur has is patience and resilience. Everything else you learn on the way at your pace but what can bring one down is the anxiety and fear of losing. It's a never ending journey but the joy, satisfaction and pride you feel when a happy customer gives a review is unparalleled and that builds the confidence that you are on the right track.



SIMRAN KHATRI, PUBLICIST & BRAND CONSULTANT (2019)

Quote you live by: Be thankful for what you have; you will always end up having more!

In her words: From the ripe young age of only 16, I was working for my way to making a difference. During my college time I did so many internships, learnt many things about the field, client servicing. I was very dedicated & focused towards my work. My dedication for my work inspired me to start my journey. I started with one client, now I have a team and we are handling clients from overseas. My journey of being an entrepreneur was amazing. I learned & learned so much and I am loving who I am becoming. I trusted all my decisions and most importantly I accepted my mistakes and learned from them.

I am a woman of steel on the inside and exudes a melange of elegance and confidence.



SMITA SHETTY KAPOOR, FOUNDER, KELP HR, 2013

One quote you live by: Be the change you want to see – Mahatma Gandhi

In her words: When I was moving out of the corporate world, I came face to face with a reality – a huge workforce; needless to say women, remain unutilised because they cannot go to office every day. I felt this compelling need to create opportunities for such women. Utilising such a vast talent pool that has had to stay home due to exigent / extraordinary circumstances would bring so much value, be it to industries, the economy and to the society at large. 2013 was the year when our nation was introduced to the law on the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplaces (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. Many organisations were confused on ways of ensuring compliance. Fortunately for me, since I had worked with a few multinationals who had implemented this law prior to the introduction of the act, I had an understanding of the fundamentals and what they encompassed. So, we started out by simplifying the law & enabling organisations to develop a framework & implement PoSH law. We started with helping a friend's organisation set up governance around the law. That's when we started receiving requests & enquiries on a formal way of consulting organisations to comply with the law since compliance is difficult and not the layperson's cup of tea.

Over the last few years, as pioneers in the space of Prevention of Sexual Harassment; KelpHR has been successful by simplifying the whole aspect of the law and bringing it to lay person's understanding. Today we have catered to close to 700 clients. We have touched 2,310,000 lives.

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SOHINI MITRA, CEO, AVANT GARDE FILMS (2013)

One quote you live by: Live and let live.

In her words: wanted to do something on my own where I can work for myself as well as inspire and train the next generation. My biggest supporter on this was Mr. Sameer Makani who had given me the idea to think out of the box and had given me my first set of projects to kick start agf. My main aim was not just to produce content but to delve into creativity and give an experience to the client to experiment with new mode of creative marketing ideas. I have been working with various ad film houses where I felt that I wanted to do more. Thus a germ of an idea came to my mind with the support of a mentor Avant Garde Films was founded in the year 2013. We started as an ad film production unit and soon ventured into promos for top Hindi and Marathi gec channels like star plus, zee tv, color and many more. We even have a unit where we specialise in branding for various new brands like ideating on what their logo should be – one of our prestigious project was for viacom's tipping point films. Due to our past experience in the film making post world we got the leads of working on the post work for various production houses through either VFX, 2d and 3d modes of creative visual output. And when you see the kids do well in the outside world that is when I proudly call myself a successful entrepreneur. It always gave me a kick to give back to society through my knowhow and knowledge. Hope to take agf to the next level and currently studying the nft world



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VIDHI CHAWLA, FOUNDER, FISICO DIET CLINIC (2012)

Quote you live by: The groundwork of all Happiness is Good health

In her words: Since the beginning I was inclined towards nutrition and always used to wonder how each nutrient affects the human body as a whole, this made me pursue my specialized education in the field of nutrition. I completed my masters in Dietetics and began my journey of what I am today by practicing in hospitals and slimming centres. Turning point of my life, June 2012. It was the time when I decided to start my journey as an entrepreneur and there has been no looking back ever after. I was born and brought up in Delhi in a business-oriented family. From a young age, I was always curious and enthusiastic about learning something new every day. I dreamt of becoming a doctor and helping people and serving humanity. And in this process of chasing big dreams, my mother was my pillar and her concrete support system.

My mother was a housewife and managed a family of twenty members, but always took out time for me. That gave me the courage to be an independent woman.





VINEETA SINGH, CO-FOUNDER & CEO, SUGAR COSMETICS (2015)

In her words: I have always felt strongly about building a brand with women as the core audience. As a naive new B-school grad, I remember making many women-centric business plans - lingerie, athleisure, beauty - on paper. But it was back in 2014 that I noticed the Indian Beauty Industry was largely dominated by multinationals, with very few of them actually offering a product range suited for the Indian complexion. With that in mind, SUGAR Cosmetics entered the Indian market in mid-2015, with our main aim being providing bold and nonconformist beauty essentials to every Indian woman. The product range was and is designed to be high on style and higher on performance.

Since my collage days I have wanted to be entrepreneur, with the goal of building a women-centric brand. So when my first startup didn't scale, I worked even harder to launch a beauty subscription company with my co-founder, Kaushik, in 2012. During this period we had 200,000 women share their detailed beauty preferences with us, they were at the heart of our pivot to SUGAR Cosmetics that launched as a direct-to-consumer makeup brand. Through my numerous ventures, I have learnt that it all starts with making a simple decision - We are going to do this to the best of our ability. Of course, things may not always pan out that way, but I believe that if you have the drive and passion, you can accomplish everything you set your mind to.

My being a successful entrepreneur today can be attributed to not just me but even my team, who is even more passionate, with unwavering commitment and strength to stay resilient in the face of adversity.