

National 
Business
○ Awards

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WHITE PAPER OBSERVED CHARACTERISTICS OF OUTSTANDING WOMEN IN BUSINESS

A review of the performances of the women finalists
in The National Business Awards 2006 and the
factors that contribute to their success



By Philip Forrest ACII, FCIM, Chartered Marketer
Edited by Mike Faulkner

FOREWORDS



The National Business Awards is unique in its ability to draw together a diverse mix of companies. It highlights examples of best practice from start-ups to multi-national corporations as well as the excellent contributions of individuals.

This Paper recognises the skills and achievements of one specific group of business people – women. As a woman working in a hugely diverse organisation, I have met a lot of successful business women and The National Business Awards has done a great job in recognising some exceptional women who should be an inspiration to all business people independent of their gender.

Industry statistics show that although women have now become a much more dominant force in British

business they are still under-represented as owners of start-ups or at the board-table. As organisations change I believe more talented women will enter the business arena.

Orange has been working with think tanks such as Demos and the Henley Centre Headlight Vision to look at the future of work. It has shown that the nature of work is transforming to become more flexible. Employees are calling for more dynamic and open set-ups that fit their values and respond to their aspirations.

I hope this paper will provide guidance for women in their careers and encourage the next generation of women to drive forward UK plc.

Suzy Edward
Partner Director
Orange Business Services

This Paper reinforces many of my own views and experiences of corporate life from a woman's perspective. The successful women I meet, both professionally and socially, all display self-confidence which I believe is pivotal to their professional progress and their personal satisfaction.

Outstanding women achievers in business are growing in number in many corners of the globe - whether these are corporate achievers or entrepreneurial women - and I believe this trend will continue. This is particularly well demonstrated in the area of Microfinance which aims to help bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. The vast majority of microfinance beneficiaries are women, who, with the help of this instrument and as a result their determination, have been able to dramatically improve their families' lives as well as their own.

Women generally have an ability to motivate others by injecting integrity into projects and by not imposing their views, which makes them almost universally trusted. They tend to display more empathy and seem better able to use this skill to achieve success. They are usually comfortable with admitting they need to know more before making an important decision. But like all good business leaders, successful women are results-driven, understanding the importance the numbers play on their ultimate legacy.

I believe that there are certain traits which contribute to ensuring a woman's success in business. The following are, in my opinion, some of the key points:

- Take responsibility – be proactive rather than reactive
- Communicate in a positive and confident style
- Be prepared to make tough decisions
- Have self belief and be prepared to recognise your successes
- Earn & give respect – treat people with empathy, earn their trust
- Acknowledge your limitations - work smarter, not harder
- Understand the importance of achieving great financial results
- Be yourself – be proud to be a woman

Outstanding women in business are outstanding for of a whole host of reasons but a common thread is their determination to succeed. Often this manifests itself in competing just a little bit harder and displaying a desire to win even the smallest contest.

Clear goals and aspirations are all very well, but to succeed to the degree that the women in this paper have, it is necessary to be courageous – to act, walk, talk and dress like a winner. I commend all women in business, whether they are corporate women or entrepreneurial women. Those at the very top have my utter respect.

Perhaps most telling of all is the fact that when I speak to women business achievers they tell me that the challenges for them have been different to those a man might face, but generally no more difficult.

Maya Salzmann
Managing Director
Credit Suisse, Private Bank



INTRODUCTION

Can a White Paper make a difference? This White Paper is written around many differences: between countries, between men and women and between women and women. Within these few pages you will also find a 21st century snapshot of a nation's businesses, its focus on providing enlightening analyses of attitudes and behaviour towards women. This Paper offers inspiration and unique insights from twelve gifted women who have made it to the top in their chosen careers. It delivers enough statistics to either confirm your worst fears or ignite the fires of ambition in your heart.

Take just two nuggets mined from the Paper's statistics: firstly, businesses run by women in this country generate £70 billion annually and they employ over one million people; secondly, if the equivalent number of women ran their own businesses here as do in the USA, the UK would have 750,000 more businesses creating wealth and work. By anyone's

standards, these are remarkable facts, prompting deeper thought and possibly an adjusting of one's views.

Within these pages you will also encounter perceptive remarks such as, "Tick Box Britain" and "the power of the gatekeepers", both of which represent obstacles on anyone's road to success. You will meet uplifting demonstrations of entrepreneurship and determination in fields as disparate as comedy clubs, construction, puddings, venture capitalism and the National Lottery (some may argue that the last two are one and the same, but that's a different argument).

Any perusal of this document will inevitably lead to discussion, probably heated, on whether the UK is culturally incapable or simply unwilling to embrace a more inclusive and optimistic attitude towards women in business.

Debate will arise over whether educational parity is enough and whether women are still held back by cultural

stereotyping - "Don't be so bossy!" was the cry reverberating in the young girl's ears, while her brother was praised for his outspoken displays of "leadership". Does that ring a bell (a warning bell) with anyone? Then there's the worry that women are their own worst enemies, forever harbouring a lack of confidence in themselves and a corrosive inability to work with other women.

My conclusion is that we should encourage everyone to succeed, in an environment of mutual understanding of each other's differences. Men can learn from women, women from men, and as this Paper will show, women from women. We can do it. We must do it, if the UK is to fully realise the immense potential of the entire workforce, and prosper accordingly.

Here is a White Paper with a difference. And I say, Vive Le Difference!

Gillian MacAulay,
Managing Director,
Strathclyde University Incubator Ltd

THE AIM OF THE PAPER

The three underlying tenets of all categories featured in The National Business Awards are Business Success, Innovation and Business Ethics. One of the characteristics of The National Business Awards is its commitment to good practice being widely disseminated to bring as much benefit as possible to the UK business community. The sharing of the intelligence gathered is therefore the primary purpose of this Paper.

The secondary purpose is to try to better understand the importance of women to the national economy both in terms of those that have made, or are already making, a significant contribution to the nation's wealth creating infrastructure and of those whose latent potential has yet to be discovered and realised. It is hoped that this document will add to the body of understanding and encouragement that has already been established by the government and a large number of NGO's with the aim of motivating more women to achieve success in business. This aim appears worthy from a number of viewpoints not least of which is that unlocking their potential makes good commercial sense. "Countries that do not capitalise fully on one half of their human resources are clearly undermining their competitive potential," Augusto Lopez-Carlos, chief economist, World Economic Forum.

This document has been prepared from a review of the applications of all women finalists in The National Business Awards, The National Business Awards - Regional Programmes and The National Business Awards for Scotland and from some information supplied by successful women judges. In addition a sample of postal and face-to-face interviews were conducted in order to gather some qualitative opinion about issues surrounding motivation and barriers to success.

This Paper is set within the context of the current UK economic climate (2006/07) and focuses on businesses set up to provide goods and/or services in order to create wealth for their stakeholders. It is based on observation of successful UK businesses founded or run by women that applied to, and became finalists in, the three National Business Awards programmes mentioned above. As such this is a cohesive group in terms of both achievement and timing.

The observations cover women in both the corporate environment and entrepreneurial ventures and from businesses as diverse as international professional bodies at one end of the scale to women builders at the other. Lifestyle or hobby businesses are not considered to be within the remit of this paper.

As worthy and interesting as many businesses set up on a not-for-profit

basis or as lifestyle concerns may be, such organisations are not considered in this document. However, businesses wherein the entrepreneur may be partially motivated by a long term social or charitable ambition are included.

Businesses owned by women already contribute some £70bn of Gross Value Added to the UK economy but the evidence shows that there is huge potential for many more women to deliver much more success to UK plc. This was recognised on a global scale twenty years ago by Barber Conable then head of The World Bank and the IMF who said "Women do two thirds of the world's work ... Yet they earn only one tenth of the world's income and own less than one per cent of the world's property. They are among the poorest of the world's poor."

It could be considered that not much has changed. But the observations of this Paper illustrate the point that some have already woken up to the fact that women's enterprise is a key driver of economic growth and consequently a key driver of greater prosperity for all businesses.

This Paper is not attempting to discuss the global picture but it is perhaps an interesting positioning statement that may go some way to explaining the root cause of some of the cultural issues that appear as barriers to success for women in business.

OBSERVATIONS OF SUCCESSFUL WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Women In Business - Entrepreneurs

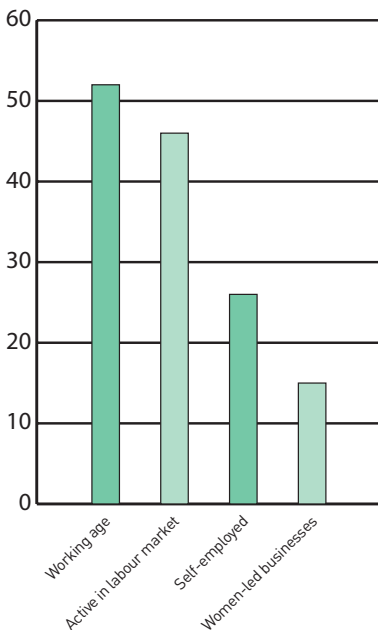
As one of the key economies in the Western economic arena, UK plc is both well placed to take advantage of a generally healthy world economy and conversely vulnerable to the competitive impact of other economic blocs with higher levels of productivity. The two key levers for improving economic performance are improving productivity and increasing the number of units that are economically active. The second of these actions requires people to start and operate such businesses successfully and it appears that the greatest potential resource to achieve such an aim is the female section of society. Given that women are at least as capable as men in business there should be no reason why this potential cannot be unlocked easily but the facts show a different picture.

From the narrow perspective of The National Business Awards only around 7.5 per cent of the finalists are businesses operated or led by women. Yet in the economy women represent almost half the workforce, around a quarter are self employed, but only 15 per cent of businesses are led by women.

Please see graph 1 below

Graph 1 - Women's representation in the UK economy

Source DTi



The business ownership statistic also shows that women are not as well represented as they could be.

Please see graph 2 below

In the USA 26 per cent of all businesses are majority women owned, over double the UK figure. "If the UK had the same rate of female owned start ups as the USA it would have 750,000 more businesses," Martyn Wyn Griffith.

It may be illegal to discriminate on the grounds of gender but thirty years after the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act a 2006 EOC report Sex and Power: Who Runs Britain? states that only 11 per cent of directors at FTSE 100 companies are women. Only 20 per cent of MPs (with only two ethnic minority women) and 16 per cent of local authority council leaders are women. The pace of change remains painfully slow.

There appears to be no economic rationale for such a situation. A report from Catalyst, The Bottom Line: Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity states that in exploring the links between financial performance of Fortune 500 companies and gender in management teams - a sample of companies from

eleven industries showed that those with the highest representation of women on their top management teams experienced better financial performance.

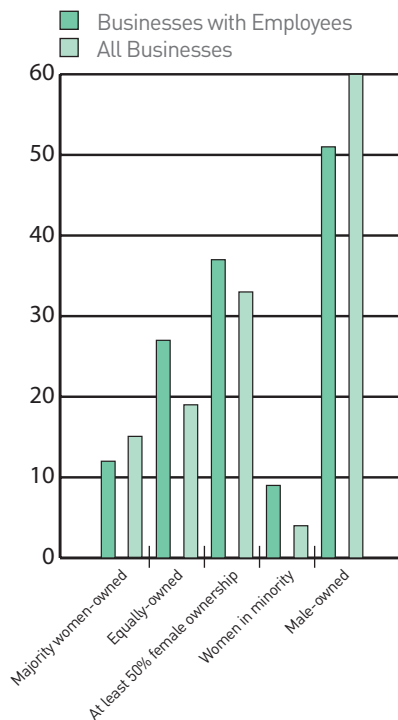
So, if women managers improve financial performance why are they still paid less? A recent Women's Enterprise Day identified the pay gap as approximately 13 per cent, yet, so many women are economically active the differential in rates of pay does not appear to be the main factor inhibiting women's success in business. In fact it could be argued that becoming a successful business woman is one way of overcoming such a barrier as Clare Logie, director of Women in Business at The Bank of Scotland points out, "It is self-employed women who seem to be really leading the charge for equality." However finance, rather than pay, is seen as a barrier to women entrepreneurs. Prowess, a membership network of quality support providers working with the Small Business Service, reports that while research shows that gender does not affect the success or failure rate of a business, access to capital is a major issue for women, with many relying on their own savings for start up funding. So are some of the banks and other sources of capital missing a major opportunity with women? Could this be a reason why the ratio gap between male and female entrepreneurs puts the UK fourth among the G7 countries behind USA, Germany and Italy?

It could however be more fundamental, the idea of starting a business is still not considered as an option by enough women. It is a picture that is improving as a DTi report shows, but while the good opportunities are increasingly recognised - as is the self belief in their skills the number of women actually expecting to start a business has moved on less substantially and the fear of failure remains as high as ever as the key de-motivator. The self-belief in skills may stem from the fact that several of the drivers of productivity are areas in which the evidence shows that women outperform men:

- Women are more likely to be innovative than men in their approach to business development and new ideas
- Women are, on average, more qualified than men. Around a quarter of self-employed women (24 per cent) have a degree or equivalent, compared with the lower level of 18 per cent of self-employed men

Graph 2 - Business ownership (%)

Source DTi



- Research also shows that more highly qualified women entrepreneurs grow their business at a faster rate

Please see graph 3 below

The number of women expecting to start a business is almost half of their male counterparts and men are twice as likely to translate that expectation into action. Attitudinally women generally hold views which result in them relatively lacking confidence in their entrepreneurial skills, their ability to spot good business opportunities, and confidence in their ability to succeed in business. This is reflected in the reasons given for starting a business which stem more from lifestyle preferences than from calculated market opportunity observations.

Please see graph 4 below

Additionally ten times more women (21 per cent) than men cite family commitments as a reason for starting a business. This may be driven by a need to have greater independence and control of their lives in order to cope with work/life balance, although the opinions of the successful women interviewed present a slightly different picture.

A recent survey by PriceWaterhouse-Coopers found that the number of women in senior management positions had declined by 40 per cent with the need for women to have more flexible working arrangements in order to manage the work/life balance suspected as the key driver of this statistic. The study also observed an increase in the number of women starting their own businesses.

What did these women do prior to starting out in business? The vast majority were in full time employment with other situations not even a close second. The research also revealed that many women run a business whilst they continue with other occupations. Female entrepreneurship is higher than male entrepreneurship among homemakers and those who run a business as a sideline to their other employment; perhaps a reason that women-led businesses grow differently from those run by men.

Please see graph 5 below

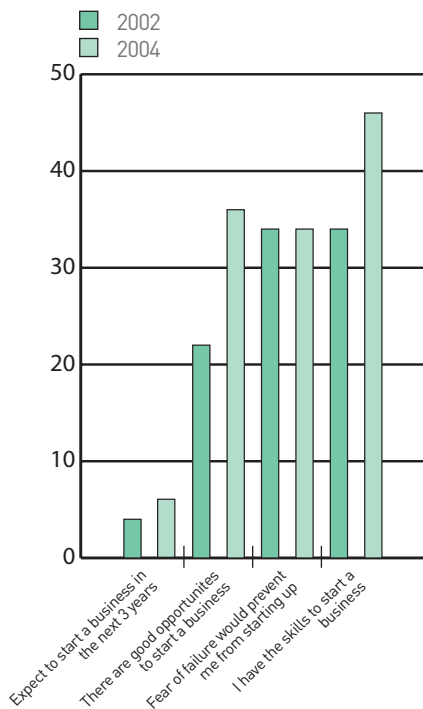
Women's experience of running a business in the early years may be very different from their male counterparts, making it more important for them to

have peer group contact, networks and pre-start up support. Research appears to indicate that a significant proportion of women who are thinking about starting their own business will look for a particular kind of support, relevant to them and, in some cases, different to the mainstream. Women interested in starting up their own businesses do seek help:

- 70 per cent of women-owned businesses seek advice at the start-up phase compared with 64 per cent of all businesses
 - 48 per cent of visitors to www.businesslink.gov are women. Relatively high proportions of both Mentors (48 per cent) and Clients (38 per cent) of the Business Volunteer Mentoring Scheme are women
 - Young women say that they could be tempted to train for work in a non-traditional female sector if they see other females making the same choice, and if they are given support and encouragement from other women
- Interestingly the interview research carried out among successful business women expressed some views which were not totally aligned to these findings. Even so, women are nearly three times as likely to collaborate ►

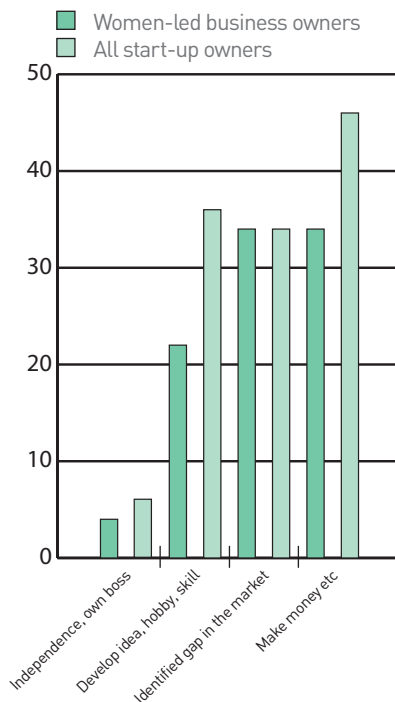
Graph 3 - Female attitudes to entrepreneurship (women %)

Source DTi



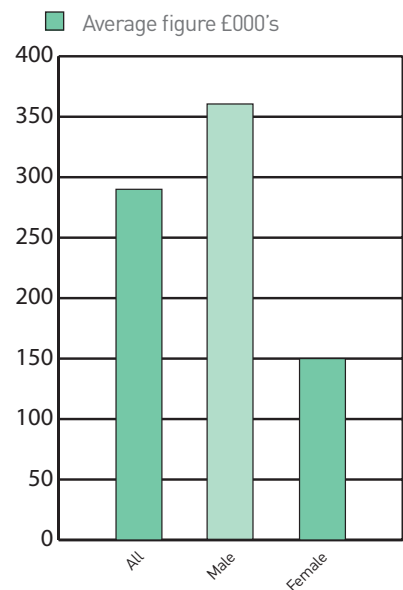
Graph 4 - Rationale for starting new business

Source DTi



Graph 5 - Businesses between 1 & 2 years old

Source DTi



with research institutes (universities in particular) than male businesses (11.4 per cent compared with 3.8 per cent).

Women are more likely to look externally for R&D collaborations than are men. However, women do not tend to collaborate with competitors to the degree that men do. 23.5 per cent of male owner-managed businesses collaborate with other enterprises compared with 18.7 per cent of female-owned businesses. This reticence for women to share with other women was also identified in the interview research.

The discussion so far has focused largely on findings about entrepreneurial women, the other key section of women in business is corporate women where the environments in which corporate women pursue their career development are markedly different.

The corporate world particularly has traditionally been the preserve of the male and it is still today a predominantly male world. Susan Vinnicombe in the 1996 study *Women Setting New Priorities* in quoting Pillinger describes a scene which is only a little changed today. Women constitute 41 per cent of the workforce yet occupy only 10 per cent of the management positions and make up a mere 1 per cent of board members. The higher the level of management the more glaring the gender gap. In spite of this the UK has the highest number of women in management (33 per cent) according to a Grant Thornton survey and the lowest number of businesses

with no women in management (37 per cent) but is still a long way behind the USA and Australia with 43 per cent of their managers being women.

[Please see graphs 6 & 7 below](#)

One of the reasons cited to explain this imbalance is that of the family/children issues which affect women more. The publication *Women Corporate Directors: Current and Future Direction* by Diana Bilimoria and Jane V Wheeler from where these figures are taken goes on to say, "One might assume that female managers would have the greatest chances of achieving success in the Scandinavian countries where some of the highest numbers of women in the workforce are recorded and family policies and equal opportunities programmes are strongly enforced by legislation. Yet the number of women managers is not significantly higher in Scandinavian countries than elsewhere in Europe."

This reality is supported by the findings of the LSE sociologist Dr Catherine Hakim in the book, *Key Issues in Women's Work*. Hakim's research is controversial, and her views run counter to current trends in large businesses, which increasingly employ diversity officers to improve women's prospects.

The book argues that such policies are counter-productive. In family-friendly Sweden, 1.5 per cent of senior managers are women, compared with 11 per cent in the USA, where maternity leave is much less

generous. Citing research into Sweden's family-friendly policies, she states: "Extensive use of parental leave, time off to care for sick children, and reduced work hours, make female workers less attractive to employers. It is not possible, to devote time to managing a career and running a family."

This view is largely supported by the interviews conducted with successful business women in the UK where the view is that the business comes first. However the Scandinavian countries do fare well on 'The Global Gender Gap Report 2006', produced by the World Economic Forum covering 115 countries, representing over 90 per cent of the world's population, it uses a unique new methodology to capture the size of the gap between women and men in four critical areas:

- Economic participation and opportunity
- Educational attainment
- Health and survival
- Political empowerment

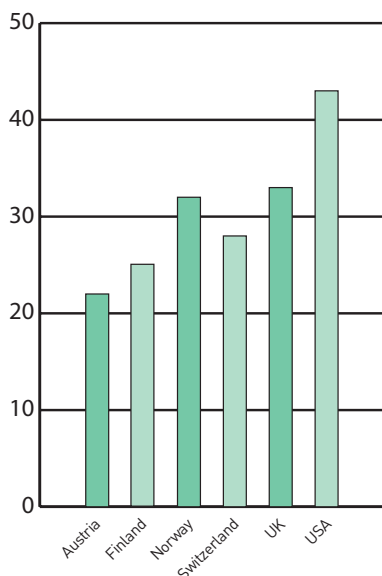
It is interesting that the UK comes ninth while the USA comes only 22nd yet has a much better record of women achieving business success. A look at the individual rankings of the four criteria explains this:

[Please see graph 8 overleaf](#)

Ranking	UK	USA
Economic participation and opportunity	37	3
Educational attainment	1	66
Health and survival	63	1
Political empowerment	12	66

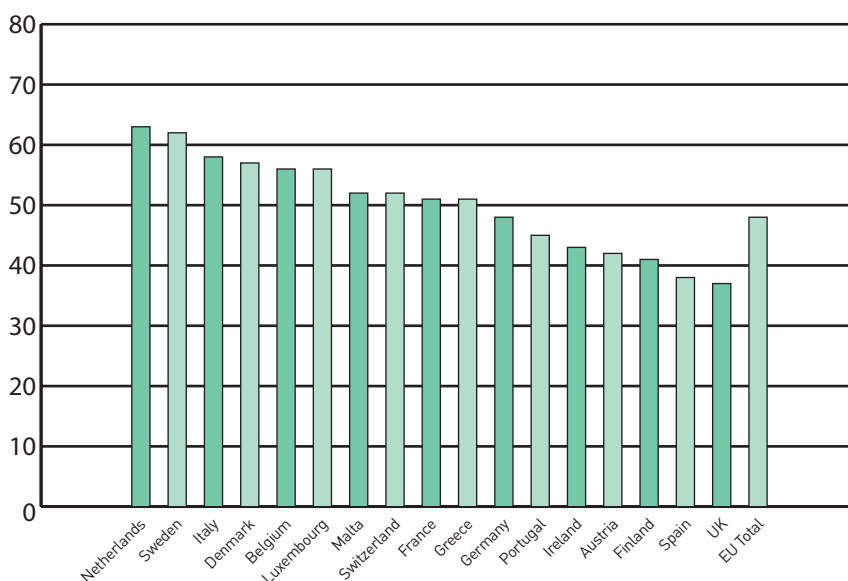
Graph 6 - Percentage of managers who are women

Source DTi



Graph 7 - Percentage businesses with no women managers

Source DTi



The Educational Attainment measure is interesting in that the women in the interview sample gave their educational/qualifications standing as one reason for giving confidence. This is supported by the fact that in the UK over 24 per cent of women starting a business have a degree level qualification compared to 18 per cent of men.

It may be that aspiration to succeed is not so highly developed in women. A recent study by Catalyst among successful director level women in large organisations in Europe and the USA found that 53 per cent of the European sample of 500 cited lack of desire as a success barrier compared to only 30 per cent in the USA.

The same study identified that among the barriers to success, 'stereotypes of women's role models and lack of management experience' were among the top 3 reasons on both sides of the Atlantic. [Please see graph 9 below](#)

The study went on to understand better what strategies might be employed to overcome such barriers and three of the top five strategies identified by both European and USA director level women were:

- Exceeding performance expectations
- Having a recognised expertise
- Having high visibility/difficult assignments

[Please see graph 10 on the next page](#)

Graphs 7 & 8 show a broad consensus. However when it comes to the

importance of some of the more detailed success drivers there is greater disparity between the views of European women directors and their American counterparts where 'Style' and 'Performance' have a higher perceived priority than 'Experience' and 'Goals'.

It is interesting to note the USA emphasis on 'Networking' and lack of emphasis on 'International Experience'. [Please see graph 11 on the next page](#)

Chris Parry, the former chief executive of The Centre for High Performance Development supports this view and believes women are given fewer opportunities in a male-run organisation: "Men are much more capable at the things that get you promoted, in terms of getting exposure, being visible, communicating upwards, getting people to know what you're doing."

Women, on the other hand, tend simply to get on with the job and expect - wrongly - to get promoted on their ability alone: "If a group has created that kind of structure and culture, then generally that group is going to know how to play it much better than the group that didn't." This is why, she argues, women do better in organisations with open, transparent promotion policies that can be understood by all.

Another reason fewer women become leaders is to do with self-confidence. "If you ask men and women to rate their capability, men always rate themselves higher and women always rate themselves

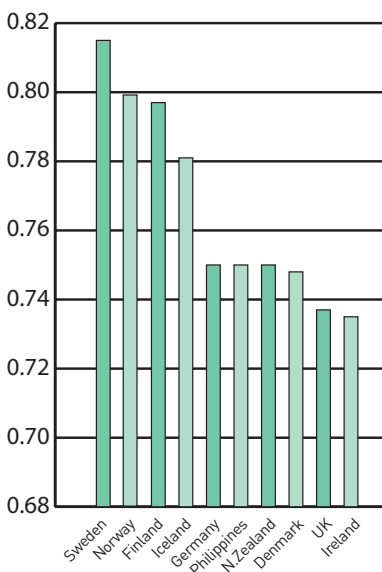
lower than they really are," she continues.

This may emerge from childhood. This view is backed by Hilarie Owen, founder of Renew, an organisation aiming to get more women into board positions. Owen recently did research among schoolchildren about attitudes to leadership, and found that 48 per cent of boys thought of themselves as leaders, compared to 18 per cent of girls. She believes that girls are discouraged from thinking of themselves as leaders because, from a very early age, adults reprimand them for being bossy.

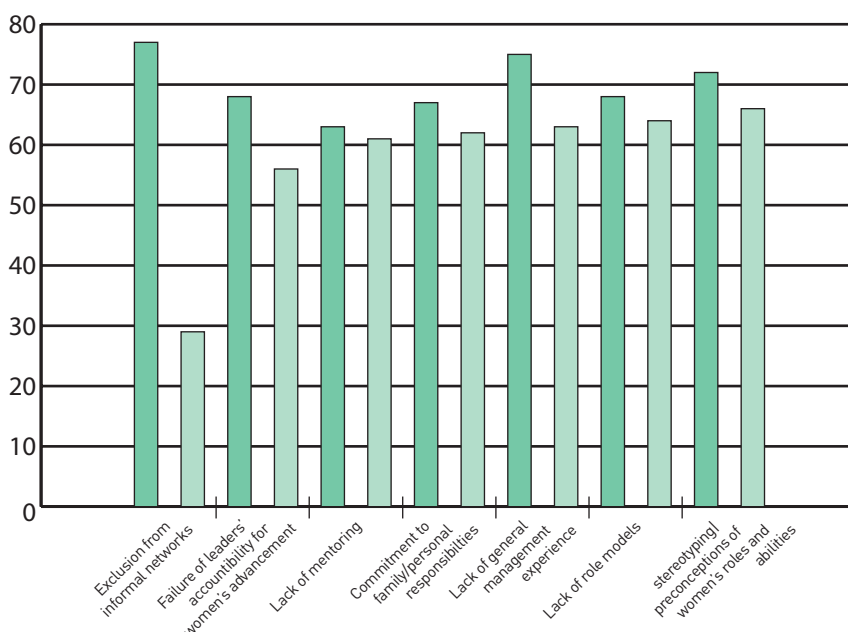
Another piece of Catalyst work carried out with the Swiss Institute for Management Development, looked at Cultures, 'Similar Perceptions: Stereotyping of Western European Business Leaders'. Given that the widely supported view that gender is not a good predictor of performance the study showed that across cultures, managers consistently perceived differences in leadership behaviour and effectiveness of women and men, even though prior research showed that leadership traits of men and women are similar. "This study confirmed that stereotyping knows no borders," said Ilene H. Lang, Catalyst president.

The study found that stereotypic perceptions were more widespread in cultures with higher gender equality. Although Nordic nations are recognised for their high levels of women's representation and emphasis on gender equality, stereotypic perceptions were most prevalent in this region. ▶

Graph 8 - Gender Gap Index
0=Inequality 1=Equality
Source WEF 2006



Graph 9 - Barriers to women's advancement
Source Catalyst Women in Leadership



Some key similarities and differences the study found included:

- Across Western Europe, a large majority of managers ranked 'inspiring' as an important leadership attribute
- Anglo, Latin, and Germanic managers also saw 'team-building' as another important leadership behaviour
- Nordic managers placed a high value on 'delegating'

Stereotyping can have a different impact on women depending on which leadership behaviours their cultures value most.

Anglo men were the only group who perceived that women were relatively ineffective at inspiring others. This could be especially damaging for Anglo women as inspiring others was the leadership behaviour respondents in the Anglo cluster valued most.

The interesting observation that flows from this finding is that most of the women finalists in The National Business Awards and The National Business Awards for Scotland are truly inspiring on any and every level, so it could be that successful women need to be more highly prized and more widely promoted, not only to inspire other women but to educate the business community at large about their success and the huge potential extant in every company.

Nordic men perceived women as relatively ineffective at delegating, a behaviour that was top-ranked by over three-quarters of Nordic respondents.

Anglo, Germanic, Latin, and Nordic managers perceived the largest differences between women and men to be:

- Supporting others
- Problem-solving
- Influencing upward

If a woman is judged effective at supporting, she is more likely to be judged effective at team-building. Conversely, women's reputations at problem-solving could have an adverse effect on their perceived effectiveness at inspiring others—the most highly valued leadership behaviour.

The study recognises that eliminating stereotypes is not an easy feat. Moreover, since highly valued leadership behaviours often vary by regional clusters, global companies need to be particularly aware of these differences as they transfer their executives in and out of these cultures.

The study offers some concrete measures for companies to implement to curb stereotypic biases so they do not have a chance to influence behaviour:

- Expose employees to advocates for women leaders
- Engage men - through employee resource groups, discussion forums,

or mentoring programmes - as advocates for women in leadership

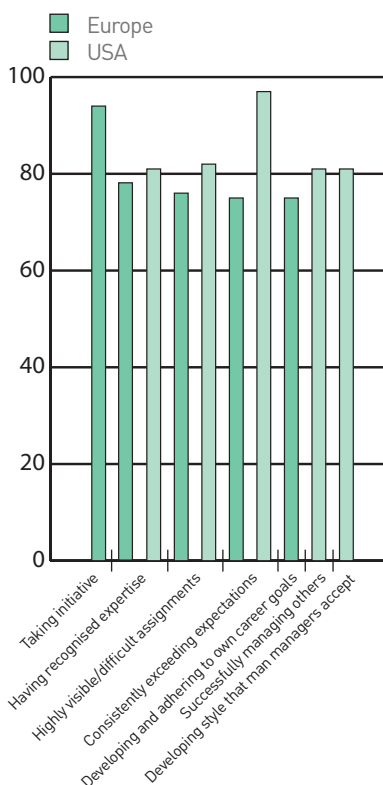
- Through education, increase employees' abilities to monitor and control the effects of stereotyping on behaviour
- Define gender equality in measurable terms and evaluate managers' performance against these metrics

There are many other view points on where the attributes of corporate woman are stronger or weaker or circumstantially more effective than those of their male counterparts. There is also a viewpoint about whether it is useful or not to continuously compare the qualities of men and women and whether there might be some more constructive and productive way. One person to attempt that is Warren Farrell in 'Why Men Earn More: The Startling Truth Behind the Pay Gap - and What Women Can Do About It', which has identified more than 80 occupations in which women already earn more than men on average.

The book also raises the question: why do some fields pay women a premium? One factor may be scarcity. In fields like engineering, a company may get one woman and seven men applying for a job. If the company wants to hire the woman, they may have to pay a premium. That's because a women may have more competing offers than male

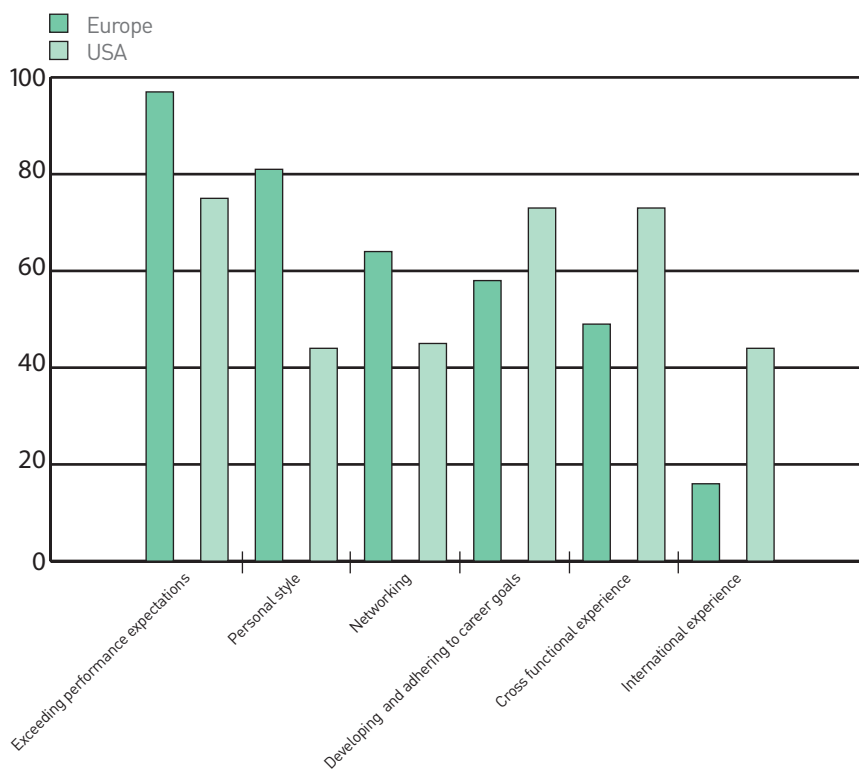
Graph 10 - Advancement strategies: Percentage women directors who agree as important

Source Catalyst - Women in Leadership



Graph 11 - Importance of success factors

Source Catalyst - Women in Leadership



counterparts. She may not only be a top performer but employing a woman helps a company improve its equal-opportunity standing, which in turn can help it secure government contracts.

Also, where women can combine technical expertise with people skills - such as those required in sales and other arenas where customers may prefer dealing with a woman - this is likely to contribute to a premium in pay.

Another factor also may be an increase in the number of career programmes designed to advance women and it's not that Farrell doesn't think pay discrimination exists, but it's not always against women.

Farrell also identifies a number of work/life decisions that men and women make in the course of their careers that have a direct bearing on their earning potential, men for instance are more likely to opt for making decisions which can lead to higher rewards, including:

- To relocate or travel extensively for work
- Take on more hazardous assignments
- Work in the hard sciences
- Take jobs requiring greater financial risk
- Work in unpleasant environments (e.g. prisons or coal mines)

Women, by contrast, are more likely to seek careers that are more fulfilling, flexible and safe but the trade-off is that: "The pay can be lower because more people compete to be fulfilled, causing the supply to exceed the demand," according to Farrell.

Even among highly paid women it was found they are more likely than men at the same pay level to forfeit some pay in exchange for more time free from the office. While men may end up with more pay in many fields, Farrell believes women can end up with a better life on balance.

So the background shows a picture where the world of business is improving for women but could still do with a serious dose of climate change. In general terms achieving success is never easy for men or women but the evidence appears to show that it is still harder for women to succeed in business in both the entrepreneurial and the corporate worlds not only because of the conventional forces of commercial competition but also of a deep rooted cultural atmosphere that appears to be paying a lot less attention than it should to the inspiring success that women in all business sectors are achieving.

Successful Women In Business

The interviews that The National Business Awards carried out sought to acquire qualitative views on some of the above and other issues that surfaced from pilot interviews designed to unearth the kind

of things that successful women had identified along the way. It attempted to get behind some of the generalisations, to try to develop a picture of the journey they took, their motivations, how their initial perceptions were changed by experience and how they addressed the pitfalls they met along the road to success.

Of the women interviewed 30 per cent came from the corporate world and 70 per cent from the entrepreneurial arena.

Motivation

The initial part of the interview looked at the motivation behind the achievement of success. In the corporate world the evidence clearly shows that all of the women had the confidence to take the 'initiative' which in the Catalyst studies was identified as the key advancement strategy in the opinion of women directors in major European companies. This confidence stems from a belief that they had the skills, knowledge and experience to take on a major undertaking.

"Feeling I had the skills and motivation to make the business environment more people focused and hence more productive," - Ruth Spellman OBE formerly chief executive of Investors in People now chief executive of The Institution of Mechanical Engineers.

It also identified that successful women are perceptive about the environment in which they choose to work and have a clarity about their ability to accept the challenge of delivering a quality performance in return for the rewards of advancement.

"It is a meritocracy where I'd progress quickly if I was good." - Sarah Weller managing director of Argos, non-executive director of Mitchells and Butlers.

Or the reason can be very straightforward. "After leaving University I wanted to earn a decent salary," Rita Clifton, chief executive - Interbrand.

In the entrepreneurial world the same quality of self belief was evident in all the women though going into business from entirely different routes. Some came from corporate backgrounds where they found the structure and routine less than satisfying: "I dislike routine, get bored with the mundane and am always looking for a challenge. For me corporate life was too structured. Fifteen years later I still get the sparkle from my business," Robyn Jones co-founder and chief executive Charlton House Catering - Credit Suisse Outstanding Woman in Business 2006.

A redundancy gave her the small push she needed to start what is now a £50m turnover business employing almost 1500 people. But it was dedication and tireless

commitment for 9 hours a day to achieve the goals she established for herself that were the key to getting the business up and running, and the same commitment to achieve even more success continues to motivate her on a daily basis.

Others from the corporate world with the same self confidence saw a market opportunity waiting to be exploited.

"I had a self belief that I could make a difference in an area I felt passionate about because I had identified a compelling need in the market. I was confident I could provide a different perspective, thought leadership and joined-up thinking to create better solutions than those currently available. Most of my career was in the City, this armed with an FCA qualification gave me the confidence to venture into business," Gita Patel, FCA director, Stargate Capital, and head of Trapezia.

Some came from backgrounds where working for one's self was an absolutely normal thing to do, but in some cases not if you are a woman: Helen Colley is the founder and chief executive of Farmhouse Fare a business that specialises in the finest hand made puddings. Growing up on a farm on the Yorkshire/Lancashire borders she had always wanted to work for herself and as a small girl made cakes to sell at the farm door to customers coming for eggs. Her schoolgirl ambitions of owning a café were translated into a contract catering business which she built into a major success over 18 years. It was when she began to specialise in puddings however, that all her business experience and drive were able to make it the multi-million pound success story it is today. Her company supplies all the major supermarket chains with 250,000 hand made puddings a week from a state-of-the-art factory in Clitheroe, incidentally named after her Scottish great grandmother whose recipes were the foundation of her success and perhaps showing a glimmer of the birth of woman-inspiring-woman culture.

In the environment in which Helen Colley grew up working for yourself was normal. It was the same for Madi Sharma, chief executive of The MADI Group. Almost everyone in her wider family was a business person, or more precisely all the men in the family were business people. Sharma wanted to run her own business from the age of 16 and helping in her father's business from an early age had given her a flavour of business life, and the belief that she could create her own wealth began to burgeon. However she was initially discouraged, firstly by ►

her father who insisted that her education was far more important, and then by her husband. It was not until she was 29 years-old that she had the opportunity to start her business citing that the lack of encouragement and support had wasted over a decade of business productivity. She spotted an opportunity to replace the tasteless Indian foods she saw in the supermarket and Original Eastern Foods was born. Her business acumen continues with the MADI Group now trading vigorously with India and her expertise being applied in The European Community as a UK representative of The European Economic and Social Committee.

Perceived Barriers

The women interviewed were asked what barriers they perceived they would encounter prior to starting out. The answers are set out below:

- Most said they did not really perceive there would be any barriers and certainly none specifically attributed being a woman to being a barrier
- Some anticipated that being taken seriously would be an issue either because they were young or inexperienced or new into the business arena
- Some expected to find prejudice about the ability of women, their ability to deliver and their hard headedness in making business decisions
- The inability for the market to accept change and the inflexibility of traditional mindsets
- Naivety was also stated as a reason for not being able to perceive the kind of issues that could arise
- The "Glass Ceiling" was generally anticipated

Overall the comments created a picture of self confidence, which was summarised as "Did not perceive any barriers which could not be smashed through, perhaps arising from a kind of cultural conditioning created by the likes of Margaret Thatcher and Germaine Greer," Sarah Noble, founder and chief executive of The Spa Consultancy

Actual Barriers

The actual barriers indicate a number of issues that are common to both men and women striving for success, but while the statistical data is not available to support the hypothesis, indicators show it is probably the case that being a woman magnifies the degree of difficulty involved.

Some of the barriers identified were:

- Struggles with money
- Growing and expansion issues
- Doubts about the ability to deliver
- Getting others to accept a business had

to be run properly
 Typical of these is: "I faced normal barriers as expected but I had no appreciation of how entrenched they were and my eyes were opened to 'tick box Britain'. I was amazed at the power and influence exercised by the gatekeepers. Taken together, this mentality holds back innovation and focuses on finding ten reasons why something is not possible instead of five reasons why we should make it possible. Therein lie the hidden barriers, - 'Can't do attitude'." Gital Patel, director, Stargate Capital

Gita Patel also encountered difficulty with other women executives:

"Stereotypical views and behaviours of women were also challenging. They lacked confidence in their decision making ability when it came to investments. There was also lack of knowledge and understanding of tax breaks. It was visionaries in the end that backed the fund and saw the segment as one that could not be ignored in terms of market opportunity."

There are other comments regarding women to women relationships in other parts of this section of the White Paper.

The actual barriers more specific to women included:

- Not being taken seriously, not being accepted as the boss. Being asked, "Did you ought to get that decision checked?" Robyn Jones, who also reports that because of her name, she was assumed to be the secretary of Robin Jones and was often asked on the telephone "To put him through."
- That a women at the head of the business was the same as any other woman in the business. This was particularly prevalent in businesses that employ mostly female personnel e.g. Travel, Catering
- Competition in the sector creating competition for the top place
- Finding a way to deal with men that did not have to do with issues like sport or penetrating their inner social circle
- Confidence and mental barriers of the woman's own making. "I don't believe that I encountered barriers being a woman. I did however make barriers for myself," (lacking confidence etc.) Deirdre Bounds, founder, i-to-i

Overcoming Barriers

The most common response to the ways in which barriers were overcome was just to be straightforward and deal with them professionally and head on.

Specific thoughts included:

Not being taken seriously

"Getting out there and networking, networking and networking more." Vicky Brock - Highland Business Research

Being true to yourself

"Finding your own style, dress, manner and way of dealing with things." Helen Colley

"By presenting and maintaining a thoroughly professional focus." Sarah Noble

Dealing with Men

"Men have sport and the like to act as a door opener, I was happy to use my femininity for that purpose but the more serious message is that people do business with people and the first thing you have to do is sell yourself. However women have to be stronger and that can result in men finding successful women very scary but they have to create role models for other women." Madi Sharma

"As a woman I found it easier to talk to men about their ambitions and personal lives as I not only found it genuinely interesting but for me it helped to develop working relationships, if people like you then it helps." Rita Clifton

Competition

"I had to recognise that the need to listen and respect other people's experience, and to make the most of being noticeable by making sure that what I did was of the highest possible standard." Sara Weller

"By being persistent, learning from others and adopting a constructive and positive attitude." Ruth Spellman

Self Confidence

"This is very subjective and I believe that women need to work harder on this than men. I entered the Small Business Awards in Yorkshire and won! It was then that I truly began to appreciate what I had created and my own talent." Deirdre Bounds

Being Helped/Hindered by Being a Woman

One of the more interesting positive observations was the opportunity to treat men as equals. This entailed having an attitude from the first moment that assumes that the playing field is equal,

which is an excellent example of the kind of confidence that can deliver success.

Being a successful woman in a man's world was also seen as a benefit. The view was expressed that getting higher, more senior and more successful makes a woman more unusual. That in itself can attract interest, media support and generally help in business. "It has a rarity value at the top," states Ruth Spellman.

Women state that they bring different skills to a business and therefore add value to the mix of skills necessary to make a business successful.

Women also believe they are able to use the emotional tools better in relationship management and are more honest about their weaknesses and more open and willing to ask for help when needed.

Being able to turn on the charm and to perhaps get away with a little more was seen as a potential benefit, but only within the context of the view that people always buy people, so if the spark is not there no amount of charm will work.

One of the less positive aspects of being a woman is that of not being taken seriously in a man's world particularly when dealing with some institutions like the banks and some of the support organisations.

The Advantages and Disadvantages Women Face in Managing a Business

The respondents' views were sought on the following aspects of business management.

Staff Management

Women generally believe they have higher levels of compassion, empathy and skills and are more intuitive at dealing with the personal issues involved and are generally better at all round staff management. It was also felt that when necessary they found it easier to be black and white about the issues that needed to be addressed in that way.

Some negative experience was reported on older men's response to younger women as the boss. There is also a view that women can be too soft on some emotional issues and may not produce the best returns for shareholders.

Financing the Business

- Women believe they are very rigorous in financial management terms and delivering what they promise so while there may be initial difficulties these diminish with experience. They did however express the view that their own risk aversion could be a self inflicted difficulty
- Experience of some women has shown that growth has been inhibited by the ability to attract funding. The predominantly male world of banks and

finance is perceived to talk over women rather than to them

- A recent study by Warwick Business School identified that women entrepreneurs applying for business loans are often charged a higher interest rate than men, a situation on which Margaret Hodge the Government Minister responsible for small business has promised to challenge the banks

Operating the Business

- Women feel they are more collaborative, better team workers and better at subordinating their own interests to create win-win situations for the business overall. They also feel they are better at multi-tasking and ensuring that detail is properly and effectively managed

In the corporate world this is seen to have some dependency on the culture of the business and particularly with the boards and middle management of plc-type companies which are seen as being more traditional in their outlook. Women also feel they may be less well equipped when it comes to technical or mechanical issues but also feel that in recognising this they are more ready to seek the skills they lack.

The absence of good role models, particularly for young women was also mentioned and this may be linked to the view that women often do not set their ambitions high enough. There is also a view that women who make hard decisions or negotiate hard are seen as tough in a derogatory way whereas the same qualities in a man may be perceived as more smart and clever.

Dealing With Customers

Some customers make the assumption that the MD will be male but this issue is seen to be easily overcome by dealing with them in a proper and professional manner. In many instances it was seen as a very positive benefit to be a woman dealing with large numbers of men customers and gave the skilled business woman a competitive negotiating edge.

- A view was expressed that it was more difficult to deal with women buyers in big organisations who seemed to have an issue about dealing with a successful woman supplier. A patronising attitude often expressed in the form of unnecessary reassurance or faint praise was stated as another issue

Dealing With Suppliers

- It was also seen to give women a negotiating edge when dealing with suppliers
- It sometimes surprises suppliers that

the MD is a woman and being treated like a little girl, although even this could have positive outcomes too

Dealing With Shareholders

- Shareholders in big companies were seen to be interested only in the results and gender is not an issue. In smaller businesses a more paternalistic view was seen to exist
- Shareholders were felt to hold more conservative views when dealing with women in business perhaps stemming from the fact that women may be perceived as an unknown or unproven quantity, and therefore create in shareholders a fear of the unknown

Whether it is easier as an Entrepreneur Woman or a Corporate Woman

Here there is divided opinion with around half of each expressing one view or the other.

The advantages of the entrepreneurial world were seen to be:

- There are no boundaries, no infrastructure and no glass ceilings
- Simpler (not easier) at recruiting, organising and managing
- Simpler for planning and controlling

The disadvantages of the entrepreneurial world were stated as

- Difficulties with managing the business and a family – no maternity leave
- Having no one to talk to or to share discuss ideas and plans
- Taking very hard decisions sometimes necessary to achieve growth
- Uncertainty creates its own kind of pressures in areas like cash flow, sales, customers, staff, markets and sheer survival
- It takes greater guts in the entrepreneurial world

The advantages of the corporate world were seen to be:

- Being able to network better
- Being able to get and give support
- Easier to be aware of dynamics, responsibilities and behaviours and adjust personal responses and tactics accordingly

The disadvantages of the corporate world were stated as:

- An inflexible structure that makes progress slow and difficult
- Difficult political environment as one gets closer to the top
- Lack of team spirit
- Doing so many unnecessary things ▶

- Usually run by men and with a male oriented culture
- Recruitment to fit the culture not the role
- Things that are valued are those that have made senior people (men) successful in the past
- Difficult to accept how a new person (woman) with a new way can succeed

In whatever world women work the formula for success was expressed as:

- Personal desire to succeed
- Strong belief and self worth
- Established support systems
- The ability to lead
- Clear vision and remit
- Good interpersonal skills

Dealing With Overt or Covert Sexual Harassment Issues

The general response has been that all successful women have been able to deal with such issues in a way that has not inhibited their success. That is not to say that such prejudices and actions do not exist or are not experienced by women in business. While women are understandably reluctant to discuss such things in detail, it was stated that there was a danger in appearing to be too friendly as this was very easily perceived as being flirty, even though no such action was intended, and continual awareness of the fine line this can create has to be carefully managed.

There were also some views expressed about the difficulties of dealing with the more social aspects of business like lunches and dinners where it appears misinterpretation can arise if the relationship is not properly managed.

There also appears to be a male tendency in some cases to carry out what might be termed 'business stalking' or becoming what was described as a 'Cling On' by one respondent whereby the frequency of the contact goes beyond what is commercially necessary.

It was also stated that because a woman dresses smartly it does not carry any other intended meaning than expressing her wish to look well-presented and deserves no other interpretation.

It was considered prudent to develop deflection skills which not only reinforce professional standing but also need to ensure that offence is not created that could prejudice the business relationship. In the corporate world this is seen to become more covert the higher up within the organisation, as the women succeeding in the traditional male environment may be perceived less as simple competition and more as rivals in the political power struggle.

It was generally felt however that there

were more positives than challenges in business relationships between men and women.

Managing Work/Life Balance Issues

This is seen both as a challenge for women and a misnomer. This arises from the implied assumption in the term that 'Life' is something that happens outside and away from 'Work'. Perhaps seen as a hang over from a more industrial age when men went down the mines to work. Successful women see work as an important part of their life. It is something they wish to do, enjoy doing and are not ready to give up. It is not understood why work should not define women in the same way as it does a man. If a man says "I am a doctor, or a welder, or an insurance clerk" it appears to carry a different social gravitas than when said by a woman. The thought emerges from the interviews that 'Work Family Balance' might be a better term.

Whatever the term it is a challenge for women seeking success in business. The general view is that family issues will become subordinate to business issues. That is not to say that the situation cannot be effectively managed as the respondents, clearly demonstrated, but the underlying truth that emerged is: "The business comes first," Madi Sharma, and that is an important priority for women seeking the highest levels of success to accept.

The management of the issue requires high levels of organisation and self discipline and the help and support of colleagues, friends and others but if it is not effectively managed it will not work.

The women interviewed also expressed the view that the legislation surrounding maternity/paternity leave was having an effect on two fronts. It was felt that having key personnel in a business disappear for nine months created highly difficult management, operational and customer relationship issues, and also, that the decision to have children was made by some potentially successful women as an excuse for not formulating and applying themselves to the achievement of their business ambitions.

Managing and Maintaining Personal Relationships

This again was an area that was challenging and some respondents felt that their pursuit of a successful business career had contributed to the break up of personal relationships. However most again saw it as a dimension of life that had to be properly managed. Being married to another professional person who understood the issues and pressures involved or to someone who was prepared and happy to

play a more supporting role was seen to be helpful. Whereas successful women really getting on in business who were with a partner without an understanding of the realities of business life would be likely to face relationship difficulties.

Some of the entrepreneurs also now had their partners working in the business and this was also seen as a positive way of helping the business.

The Essential Characteristics of a Successful Business Woman

The respondents were asked what they believed to be the essential characteristics of a successful business woman:

- Talent and Sound Business Ideas
- Self Belief, Self Discipline and Courage
- Focus and Leadership
- Passion, Drive, Resilience, Tenacity
- Energy and Commitment and a 'Can Do' Mentality
- Flexibility, Creativity
- Persistence and Hard Work
- Persuasiveness and Level Headedness
- Humour and Optimism
- Empathy and Loyalty

Advice to a Young Woman Setting Out On Her Career

The respondents were asked to give advice that could offer inspiration or aspiration to women embarking on their business careers. A selection is set out below:

"Because you can make money doesn't mean you understand business so develop your business skills and learn to talk the same language as the men."
Sarah Noble

"Be prepared to dedicate yourself to the cause."
Deirdre Bounds

"Listen, learn and be seen out there, if you want it enough make it happen."
Vicky Brock

"Don't go to business support organisations, particularly if you are an entrepreneur as they do not understand entrepreneurs. Surround yourself with people who have done it, not people who are supposed to know it."
Madi Sharma

"Know what you want to do and know you want to do it, and do a great job and you'll get back what you put in."
Sarah Weller

"Be yourself and don't worry about making mistakes, men do it all the time."
Vicky Brock

“Learn all the skills you can, really throw yourself into whatever you do in a big way and be really good at it.”

Rita Clifton

“A mentor is important but needs to be chosen wisely, build your contact base and nurture it, don't just take, also give to create goodwill.”

Gita Patel

“Don't worry about being a woman - more positive than negative - plan and do things properly and if you really believe in it have a go. Do it.”

Helen Colley

“Don't be put off, be determined, keep focused, have a clear head and go for it.”

Robyn Jones

Other Countries/Cultures Where it is Easier for Women to Operate

The USA and Canada are perceived to be ahead and the earlier Gender Gap Index chart confirms how the Women's Business Ownership Act of 1988 may be having an effect that puts the UK 20 years behind that piece of legislation. While women have reached educational parity they still lack business parity and much more effort is seen to be required to increase commercial literacy in the women's world to increase the painfully slow change in the business culture. Other countries seen to be making an effort to actively support women in business are seen as Dubai, South Africa and India.

The UK is seen as a fair and not overly difficult place to do business but with a great deal of scope to improve the encouragement and support for women in every part of the commercial community.

One Key Lesson Learned

Respondents were asked what was the one key lesson they have learned from their experience of success so far that would stand them in good stead if they were to start again. A selection of 10 is shown below:

1. We only have one life, hold your dream and make it count
2. Get the right people to walk the rocky road with you, let the nay sayers go fast
3. Believe you really can do this well
4. Dare to be different, never give up
5. Don't stop when you get the first contract, keep selling
6. Be personally committed to deliver
7. If you don't like what you are doing do something about it, it is your life only you can make it work
8. Make certain everyone in the team has completely bought into the vision and

are pulling in the same direction

9. Know your business and what you are talking about
10. Be professional in everything you do, knowledge, skills, appearance and performance

Conclusions

Women are a vital part of UK plc. The businesses run by women contribute over £70bn a year to the UK economy and employ over one million people.

This places the UK in a position where it is far from being the worst economic climate for women but one which has a huge amount of ground to make up in order to be on a par with the leading nations of the world.

As productivity becomes an increasingly important competitive issue in the global economy the only two levers available are to increase the effectiveness of the the businesses that exist and to increase the numbers of businesses that are economically productive. The fact that the UK currently has only 15 per cent of the 42 per cent of the workforce that is female and actively economic, owning businesses, indicates that there is huge commercial potential available from the development of the role of women in business. The educational parity achieved by the UK will not be enough. The poor economic participation and opportunity rating puts the UK at almost halfway down the top 80 nations. If the UK had the same rate of female start-ups as the US it would have 750,000 more businesses.

The government and other support organisations are making some efforts in this direction. But the question is raised about whether the effort is enough or is properly focused on right targets necessary to address some of the underlying issues that appear to affect the ability and capability of women to play a more productive role in achieving the ambitions of future success for UK plc. Perhaps social prejudice issues and female business education criteria could be better dealt with to create a climate where it is expected that women will be successful in business, and where the expectation is also that such an outcome is the norm.

The women that have been finalists and winners in The National Business Awards have demonstrated in a clear and unambiguous way that the UK has the talent not only to succeed but to do so in a spectacular fashion, in almost any field they choose. The diversity of the business arenas in which they operate shows that women have the capability to be successful everywhere. Their views show

some valuable insights into the world in which they operate and the very skilful way in which they deal with it.

To unleash this potential does not create a situation where women compete with men for a share of the UK economy, it creates a situation where UK plc is stronger and better able to compete in the global economy and that can only be good for, and to the benefit of, all concerned.



PROFILES OF NATIONAL BUSINESS AWARDS FINALISTS OF SUCCESSFUL WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Elena Ambrosiadou **Chief Executive Ikos** **Business: Hedge Fund Manager**

Elena Ambrosiadou paid herself a staggering £16m in 2004 to become Britain's highest-earning businesswoman, after building one of the most successful hedge funds in the world.

When the early '90s hedge fund industry was still in its maverick adolescence, Ambrosiadou put \$100,000 of her own money into an account that would trade on the foreign exchanges based on a programme she had designed.

When the fund increased by 50pc in two years, she called it "Ikos" - which means "Home" in her native language Greek - and left a career working for companies such as BP, where she had been the youngest ever senior executive at the age of 27.

She founded Ikos in 1992 with business partner and husband Martin Coward, in the belief that complex mathematical models and computer wizardry were the keys to success in an electronic market place.

A firm believer in the value of an international perspective, Ambrosiadou says: "I grew up as a person in Thessaloniki, and as a professional in London, both of which gave me massive advantages."

Ikos now manages more than £1billion in assets, but Elena still finds time to act as patron of children's charity ARK and trustee of the Oxford Philomusica Orchestra.

"Being a business person means that you understand the nature of sacrifice, integrity and balance," she says.

Rita Clifton **Chief Executive Interbrand** **Business: Brand Consultants**

Rita began her career in advertising, working at DMB&B and later at J Walter Thompson. She joined Saatchi & Saatchi in 1986 and worked with a wide range of the agency's high profile clients. She was promoted to director of strategic planning there in 1992, and to vice-chairman & executive planning director in 1995.

In 1997, Rita was invited to join Interbrand, the world's leading brand consultancy and pioneer of Brand Valuation, as chief executive in London; in January 2002 she became chairman. In her time at Interbrand, she has introduced

a range of new services, including internal brand management, digital branding, brand equity tracking and brand futures. Interbrand also publishes the definitive, widely quoted annual league table of the world's 100 most valuable brands, and its clients have included most of the world's leading businesses - and just about every type of organisation and sector.

Rita also appears regularly on a wide variety of television programmes on business, brand, marketing and communication issues (including the Money Programme, BBC Breakfast, CNN, Channel 4 News), as well as being in great demand as a speaker at conferences around the world. Her writing has included Interbrand's publication 'The Future of Brands', the APG'S 'How to Plan Advertising', and most recently, The Economist book 'Brands and Branding'. She also chairs Populus, the opinion pollster to The Times.

Rita joined the board of Dixons Group plc as a non executive director in September 2003, and became non-executive chairman of Populus, in September 2004. Her most recent non-executive appointment is with EMAP plc.

In 1998, she was voted one of the 75 Women of Achievement in the fields of advertising, media and marketing over the past 75 years, and has been named in the 'Power 100' list by Marketing magazine.

"If brand management were a religion, Rita Clifton would be a deity," Time Magazine.

Ann Gloag OBE **Co Founder Stagecoach Group plc** **Business: Transport**

Ann Gloag OBE is co-founder and a non-executive director of Stagecoach Group plc, one of the world's leading transport companies.

Born in Perth, Scotland, Ann was a theatre nurse before she founded Stagecoach with her brother Brian Souter in 1980, running two bus services between Dundee and London.

With an entrepreneurial flair and an eye for innovation, Ann and Brian grew the company to touch as many as five continents around the globe.

Stagecoach was one of the first companies to take advantage of transport deregulation in the United Kingdom and was one of the first major transport operators

to expand overseas, including Asia, Africa, Australasia and North America.

After continuing expansion in the UK and overseas, Ann and Brian floated the company in 1993 and diversified into rail operations in the mid-90s. In 1996 they did a deal with Richard Branson and Stagecoach became 49% shareholder in Virgin Rail - a position maintained today.

The company has lost none of its entrepreneurial drive and has continued to innovate, launching in 2003 the UK's first web-based low-cost inter-city travel service, megabus.com, which now serves more than 30 major cities across the UK. It has also piloted demand responsive taxibus services as it looks to develop new markets in public transport that deliver a viable alternative to the car.

"The key to my success has been very simple - lots of hard work, luck and the ability to make things happen quickly."

Maria Kempinska **Creative Director** **Jongleurs Comedy Ltd** **Business: Comedy Clubs**

If you want conclusive proof of the virility of the live comedy boom over the last 20 years, you only have to look at Jongleurs. Its vital statistics are awesome.

This chain of clubs currently has 12 premises spread across the UK - three in London, one in Watford, plus more in Oxford, Southampton, Leicester, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Manchester, Glasgow and Cardiff and an invaluable database of 25,000 regular members.

There are also plans for new clubs in Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Swindon and Reading, and two in the heart of Leicester Square. But Jongleurs isn't just a comedy circuit within a circuit. It's also a thriving comedy agency and corporate entertainment business, with a £20million turnover. And yet the relatively modest venue where it started is still open for funny business, every weekend.

This multi-million pound venture all began on 4 February 1983, when a 29-year-old schoolteacher called Maria Kempinska opened a new club called Jongleurs above a pub called the Cornet, on Lavender Hill, just around the corner from Clapham Junction, Britain's busiest railway station. Lavender Hill is a hub of affluent South

London nightlife, a world away from The Comedy Store's Soho origins.

The first time that Maria Kempinska put on a show was at her all-girls convent school during Lent to raise money for charity. It was an unlikely debut in show business but it clearly stood her in good stead. When she sold her chain of Jongleurs Comedy Clubs, she received a cheque for £8.5m.

"The secret is to know what you are there for - and then to do what you do extremely well. Do what you want to do but do it absolutely brilliantly."

Robyn Jones
Chief Executive
Charlton House Catering
Business: Contract Catering

Robyn Jones started her career as a school dinner lady and is now chief executive of a £50 million company.

She established Charlton House in 1991 at the height of the recession, working initially in her spare bedroom, and armed only with a telephone, a telephone directory and endless enthusiasm. The business survived on a weekly £50 Government allowance.

For the first six months she sat at her desk from 5am until 5pm each day making cold calls. She wouldn't let herself have a cup of coffee until she had spoken to a potential client, or lunch until she had made an appointment. Apparently, she got very hungry and very thirsty!

Naively, she thought that her greatest challenge would be gaining her first client. In fact, it was gaining her first appointment.

By the end of 1994, turnover stood at £1.2million and Charlton House employed 62 people. Turnover has increased by an average 40 per cent year on year since then, and over 30 per cent of the company's growth to date can be attributed to extension of existing contracts.

What is truly remarkable about her achievement is that she did it alone, albeit with the emotional and professional support of her husband, Tim. This is not the story of a woman taking over a father's business, or a woman joining an established organisation. Robyn Jones has built up a £50 million company from scratch and has never once sought finance throughout the entire history of the company to date.

Today, Charlton House is the

largest independent contract caterer to have grown without acquisitions. Clients include many nationally and internationally renowned organisations in the UK, including Her Majesty's Treasury, and the corporate headquarters of Sony (UK) Ltd, BUPA and Network Rail. Charlton House Catering was also Food Service Caterer of the Year 2006. "Be true to your self, always lead by example and never compromise on quality standards."

Gita Patel
Director Stargate
Capital Management
Business: Venture Capital
Company

Gita was born in Kenya and with her family arrived in the UK in 1968. She is one of six girls whose parents have offered love, support and belief. After winning a place at Grammar School, her academic success led her to the London School of Economics, then onto gainful employment with Arthur Anderson.

She co-founded Stargate Capital Investment Group in 2004 with a number of likeminded visionaries with the ultimate objective of becoming a small cap investment firm to fill a gap in the market. They got private investors to finance the operation and spent the first year obtaining their FSA regulations and created two regulated subsidiaries: Stargate Corporate Finance and Stargate Capital Management.

In 2005 she was listed in 'Asian Power 100' as one of the 100 most influential Asian people in the UK, and in 2006 was short-listed for the Asian Women of Achievement Awards as the entrepreneur of the year. The above are a small selection of many achievements of the last two years which have not been free of local prejudices, stereotypical barriers especially with respect to gender and knocking on closed doors of traditional mindsets.

"However in spite of all these the passion, drive and tenacity to succeed has been a determining force as well as the guts to challenge status quo."

Rita Sharma
Chief Executive
Worldwide Journeys
Business: Travel

Rita started her career in a small serviced office in Oxford St, the size of a small broom cupboard 20 years ago. She had no formal business training whatsoever except for a desire to win and succeed despite all odds and failure was not an option she had ever considered. She was a hugely optimistic 25 year old female, full of energy and ready to sell airline tickets from the time she started-work in the morning to late at night and also dealing with administration work after hours at least 6 days a week. It was the drive and passion that has brought Rita to where she is today.

Of course along the way she has had some knock backs, made mistakes but each time she picked herself up and carried on and learnt from the experience and that has been a necessary part of the learning process. She believes she has always played to her strengths rather than her weaknesses.

Since those beginnings the business has evolved into a fully fledged tour operation and a niche has been built selling bespoke luxury holidays at affordable prices. The business continued to thrive for many years as a traditional bricks and mortar business until May 2003 when it officially became 'clicks and mortar' business ready to take its place in the 21st Century alongside the Goliaths of the industry such as Expedia & Lastminute.com.

"My leadership style in one sentence is charismatic, persuasive and intuitive"

Janet Shelley
Founder Director
Women Builders Ltd
Business: Construction

Janet decided on a career change in June 2003 and set up Women Builders Ltd, her goal being to operate a building company staffed predominantly by women. She completed a brief period of market research which supported her opinion that a predominantly female building company would be very marketable, be in line with government initiatives in the construction industry (further funding opportunities) and provide employment opportunities to the growing number of women wanting access to the industry but who had thus far been thwarted by its old world attitudes and practices.

In 2004 the company started to trade,

employing eight people. In 2005 it had grown to 16 people and was continuing to expand. It tendered for and won a second £250,000 contract with the Learning and Skills Council to deliver NVQ2 qualifications in Construction. It achieved Investor in People accreditation in an incredibly short period of time, with glowing references from the assessment board (most companies fail the first assessment!).

In 2007 the company has grown to over 25 staff and has consolidated its position in the industry. It tendered for and won several further LSC training contracts for projects working with unemployed individuals seeking employment in the construction industry. Its success in this area has led to discussion of further projects with both the LSC and CITB at a national level. Obtaining work for Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale councils working on their Decent Homes Initiative which again has taken Women Builders into a new market sector.

"I believe that with sufficient determination and motivation you can achieve anything, and this is the basis upon which I lead my company."

Penny Streeter OBE **Ambition24hours** **Business: Staff Recruitment and Management**

Penny's core objective in the last three years has been to continue to expand the business into niche sectors which offer synergy with its existing businesses, in particular to maximise new revenue streams and the return from investment in business processes and systems (including its own bespoke CRM and booking system). Also to continue to operate with zero debt and no outside shareholders, so as to maximise profitability and control of the business, to the long-term benefit of staff and customer stakeholders.

Major milestones in the last three years have included:

- Opening of its domiciliary division, to provide care direct to the public at home. This was a major step as it had, to date, served only the staffing needs of the B2B healthcare sector - hospitals and primary care providers. The objective was to make good use of its bank and

management of 13,500 nurses and carers, and to diversify into a new income stream. This continues to be successful with the growing 60+ aged and paediatric markets where the public increasingly seek private health care

- Opening of a sales office in Cape Town, South Africa, and development of its own bespoke CRM and IT booking system, within 30,000 sq ft freehold premises. As planned, this has further optimised its operational systems and cost control, to deliver even better differentiation and considerable competitive advantage
 - Opening of a call centre at its Cape Town offices. This represents good utilisation of IT infrastructure and expertise in call systems and HR, to provide call centre services to other UK organisations by a UK-experienced provider. In the four months since launch, it has attracted considerable interest from a range of companies - at zero additional fixed cost, it has already made the required investment for its own core business
 - Acquisition of Nursing Services of South Africa - the second largest provider of temporary nursing personnel in the country, supplying over 300,000 hours of staffing each month. It has also acquired a niche locum agency. This is the first step in its international expansion
- "Key factors to success are continual review and revision of our core business proposition, costs, business processes and market positioning - to maximise our capabilities and optimise our response to the new market opportunities and challenges."

Dianne Thompson **Chief Executive Camelot Group** **Business: National Lottery**

Joined Camelot in 1997 as commercial operations director and took over as chief executive in December 2000 when Camelot was awarded the second licence to operate the lottery. As chief executive she has overseen the management team which has developed and driven Camelot's strategy for growth, which has succeeded in delivering the longest period of growth in the history of The National Lottery, bucking the international trend for falling lottery sales.

Total returns to Good Causes have now passed £18.6m, funding more than 238,000 individual awards and the largest programme of civic regeneration seen in the UK since the 19th Century.

Camelot launched interactive services in 2003 and now runs the world's most successful interactive lottery via the internet, interactive TV and Play by Text - with more than 1.8 million registered players, ticket sales of £4m a week and more than £1m being raised for Good Causes every week. With a clear emphasis on innovation it has also recently launched National Lottery Fast Pay - a true worldwide first which allows lottery tickets to be bought at supermarket checkouts with other groceries - and the lottery's first dedicated games, in support of London 2012.

Camelot also led the creation of EuroMillions, bringing together 10 lotteries across nine countries. Now the biggest lottery game in the world, by population eligible to play, EuroMillions has also produced the world's biggest lottery jackpot, when the 11-week rollover series at the beginning of 2006 produced a jackpot of £125m.

Camelot runs the most cost efficient lottery in Europe, with around 4.5 per cent of total revenue spent on operating costs.

"My mantra is never give up."

Helen Colley **Chief Executive Farmhouse Fare** **Business: Pudding Manufacturer**

Farmhouse Fare started as a prestigious outside catering company operating from a converted barn at Shuttleworth Farm where managing director, Helen Colley, grew up. To create top quality food, traditionally made using the finest ingredients, has always been the company's aim. Her business apprenticeship lasted for 18 years as she built the company into the largest independent outside catering company in the North West.

In 1998, Helen and her team held a charity coffee morning for Macmillan Nurses selling their delicious dishes. The Sticky Toffee Pudding stall was a complete sell-out and the phone lines were hot in the following weeks with requests for more. To satisfy these new customers, Helen approached Booths Supermarkets for a listing and was soon sending Sticky ▶

Toffee Pudding deliveries to all of its stores across the North West of England.

Farmhouse Fare is now a well-respected player in the food retail world, operating from a purpose built BRC Grade A level accredited kitchen on the outskirts of Clitheroe - a rural market town in Lancashire. Tradition runs deep in this part of the North and HQ Anderson House is named after Helen's great-great grandmother Janet Anderson, who features on all the packaging, photographed spinning wool.

With a portfolio of 28 traditional hot puddings, with some organic variations, the company now supplies ASDA, Booths Supermarkets, Costco, Makro, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Selfridges, Tesco and Waitrose. Its biscuits and traybakes can also be found in Waitrose cafes.

From a business that Helen started in her parents' kitchen at the age of 18, Farmhouse Fare now has a turnover of £5m, employs 70 people and produces 45 different products.

New product development is very strong at Farmhouse Fare with new ideas and recipes constantly on the go. Recent additions to the range include fabulous fruity numbers, such as granolas, streusel and sponge crumbles, premium chilled desserts ideal for dinner parties and 'own brand' creations for the major supermarkets and hotel industry.

The winner of 16 business and industry awards in 2006 is proof enough of Helen Colley, The Queen of Puddings' huge success

"It's my hobby, my career and my life but time, slog and hours must be put in."

Hilary Devey **Founder and Chief Executive Pall-Ex** **Business: Transport Logistics**

The profile of the Pall-Ex brand is the result of strategic PR and marketing. But behind the scenes one person's single-minded determination, vision, ideas and hours of hard work have strengthened the company and helped it prosper.

Pall-Ex was created - and is still owned - by Hilary Devey in 1996. Devey saw how the early pallet networks took off and using her considerable experience working for the likes of Tibbett & Britten and TNT, she set out to create a pallet network that would be number one. "I do not consider the other pallet networks as competition!" Devey retorts when we ask her about why her network does it better.

Working from her £12 million purpose-built hub at Ellistown, Leicestershire, the managing director of the Pall-Ex Group has built a business that now incorporates nine brands - well, 10, because you must include Devey herself - and she is now taking her company into Europe.

Much of the success of Pall-Ex is down to its massive investment in IT, "After the hub our biggest single investment has been in IT. We have a room full of computers and servers running the whole operation. Everything from our website to POD, pallet tracking, load planning and scheduling arrivals and departures; plus there is a 24-hour IT help desk," explains Chris Martin, Pall-Ex's marketing director.

"Our long-haul trunks from Scotland, the North of England and Ireland have two drivers and arrive first. They call us 10 minutes before arrival. Everything stops so they can be turned around within 59 minutes. We schedule mid-hauls next and we aim to turn them around within four hours and the locals will come in, drop a trailer and then can go off and do another job before returning to take their final trailer," he says.

The driving force behind the rise of Pall-Ex is a single-minded determination to be number one. "Pall-Ex ensures it delivers the best quality of service on the market."

APPENDICIES

Appendix 1

Potentially helpful web/email addresses

www.Scottishbusinesswomen.com
www.careerwomen.com
www.everywoman.co.uk
www.forwardladies.com
www.womenintothetnetwork.co.uk
www.enterpriseweek.org
www.prowess.org.uk
www.womenof.com
www.catalystwomen.org
www.cfwbr.org
www.weforum.org/gendergap

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