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BUSINESS SUCCESS ADVICE FROM LEADING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS - 10 TIPS

By Tara Turkington, Founder
of Flow Communications

PERSEVERANCE IS KEY

Starting a business is like taking the first step on a long hike that will have many peaks and valleys. Running a successful business is all about the route, the experience, getting lost and refinding your way, forging new paths, interacting with the people you encounter on your journey, and persevering through all the ups and the downs.

Statistically, most businesses fail within the first two years, so it's only the fittest, most tenacious and most resourceful that will survive.

LEARN FROM THE BEST

Here are 10 tips from leading South African women entrepreneurs to help you along your journey.

Know your "why". If you know what value you are wanting to add to the world through your offering, you always have your guiding direction. – Kim Potgieter, Chartered Wealth Solutions

Rather than worrying about finding a particular niche or a "new" idea (it's been said there is no such thing), rather know what problem you want to solve with your business. Do you want to help people, as Kim Potgieter does, with planning for a successful retirement? Do you want people to enjoy a healthier yet delicious way of eating chicken as Robbie Brozin and Fernando Duarte did when they founded Nando's? It doesn't have to be something huge and unique – it can be as simple as helping people to communicate better with one another or offering quality products or services in a particular field.

People will view you as you portray yourself. If you project confidence and passion, people will believe in you and your business. – Vimala Ariyan, Southern African Institute of Learning

As an entrepreneur, you need to believe in yourself and your ability to succeed.

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There are plenty of times you will doubt yourself, which is fine (it's also important to remain humble and never be arrogant), but deep down, you need to believe you can. It's usually best to ooze confidence towards potential customers, suppliers and employees. If you ever don't feel confident in front of these people, quite frankly, you need to fake it.

Listen to advice given and take action where you feel it will benefit your business; you don't have to take action on all advice given. – Peta-Lynn Pope, PwC

You'll get loads of advice as an entrepreneur. Use what's useful and lose the rest. No situation and no business are the same. When in doubt, listen to your gut. As the saying goes, "if the plan doesn't work, change the plan, but not the ultimate goal".

Taking one step forward and three steps back is not necessarily a bad thing. Taking three steps back allows you to reassess, realign, refocus and regain your balance to restart with renewed power and purpose. – Zaida Enver, Pure Grit

If starting and building a successful business was easy, a lot more people would do it. You are going to go backwards and get lost, and that's okay. Always remember, you're in it for the long haul.

Find your tribe – it makes the very complex entrepreneurship journey easier to navigate. – Ayanda Mzondeki, Liyema Consulting.

Build a small circle of trust of advisors whose opinion you value. If possible, do this with other entrepreneurs, who will understand your journey.

Network, network and network. Linked to finding your tribe – put yourself out

there to meet different people to expand your network, expand your insights, see what others are doing and understand business trends. Make sure you meet other business owners and join business associations.

Running a successful business is all about the route, the experience, getting lost and refinding your way, forging new paths

Organisations like WEConnect South Africa (for women-owned businesses of all sizes, including start-ups) and the Women Presidents' Organisation (for businesses with over \$1-million in annual revenue) should be on top of your list. – Jean Chawapiwa, Win Win Solutions 4 Africa, and head of WEConnect South Africa: Networking gives you support and affirmation (managing a business is a lonely walk), and helps to scaffold you by learning through the mistakes and experiences of others.

Most problems in business, whatever your industry, are similar. They revolve around cash flow, sales, staff, and growing revenue and profitability. You might not be experiencing a particular problem, but understanding the issue from someone else's perspective will help to prepare you for if or when you do.

Don't be afraid to fail, remember that we all do at times. The success comes in recognising it and "failing fast". – Judy Sunasky, Prime Cleaning

Ask any successful entrepreneur about their failures, and they'll have stories to tell. Those who haven't failed, haven't tried

much. Failure and tough times will teach you far more about yourself and your business than the times when you're flying along.

Do not rush through laying the foundations of your business and attend to cracks before they grow. – Helen Williams, CleanAll Services

It's often said about parenting, "Small children, small problems. Big children, big problems." Businesses are much the same. Problems don't necessarily go away with growth. Don't be afraid to confront conflict and do what's right for the business.

Build a roadmap to success – know your purpose, have a vision and be disciplined enough to follow through. – Christi Maherry, LAWTrust, V3 Foundation
Your business efforts need to be intentional. Life is short; make sure you live it wisely by having an idea of where you want to go on your business journey. That includes the way you'd like it to end.

Entrepreneurship is like space exploration. Small steps are big leaps. Too often, people chase the single silver bullet (the one, great, game-changing idea ...), but the reality is, it is much more activity focused. Don't underestimate things like preparation, taking advantage of timing and opportunities and, of course, backing yourself, even in situations you've never explored before. If you're uncomfortable, you're learning. – Genevieve Allen, Sherpa Kids South Africa

One of the great things about starting and growing a business is that you'll never be bored. It will challenge you every step of the way. Enjoy the journey, allow yourself to enjoy the sights along the way and, hopefully in the future, you'll be able to look back and marvel at just how far you've come.

