



"Women are re-creating themselves and their businesses. We're realizing there's an altruistic element, a bigger picture" that we can contribute to, says Eileen Proctor, founder and owner of a strategic marketing, business development and entrepreneurial training program in Phoenix called Top Dog Business Boosters.

Cheryl Walsh, founder of WalshCOMM, a Phoenix-based integrated marketing solutions company, agrees.

"When we have something we do well, we should use it in a way that benefits the community in the best possible way, which includes for-profits and nonprofits," Walsh says. "Doing well by doing good has been very important to me."

There are other significant motivators for women to work for themselves. Walsh quickly rattles off her reasons: Improved flexibility in scheduling that has allowed her to raise three kids; more control of her work environment, team members and responsibilities; and more freedom to help more people and businesses through her work. Other perks women entrepreneurs value include the absence of a boss, earning more money and the personal rewards of inventing something that improves the status quo.

But living the dream and owning a business that's personally and professionally satisfying often doesn't come true without taking risks along the road to success.

The Center for Women's Business Research

reports that women entrepreneurs are prepared to face risk, and 66 percent are willing to take above-average or substantial risks for business investments. Lack of financing is often thought to be the biggest obstacle for entrepreneurs trying to start and grow a business, but Nell Merlino says otherwise.

Merlino is the creative force behind Take Our Daughters to Work Day and currently serves as president and CEO of Count Me In, a nonprofit that provides online business loans and resources for women to grow their micro businesses into million-dollar enterprises. At a Count Me In conference in Scottsdale, she finds a shaded picnic table outside and takes a break to chat. In a thick Manhattan accent, she shares what she's learned.

"Women are looking for coaching and marketing help more," Merlino says. "The main challenge for women is that they don't know where to go to ask for help, or they don't know how to ask for help. So many women plateau (in growing their companies) because they think they have to do everything themselves and they can't possibly work any harder than they are."

Asking for help and developing relationships with people who can help one's business is key. Professional development through education, professional organization membership and formal and informal networking becomes imperative, especially for the sole proprietor running a one-woman show or the owner operating her small business from a home office.

Why are you in business for yourself?

"I thrive off variety in business, and working for myself has allowed me to tailor my company to my interests, keeping the work fun and challenging. I have been lucky enough to find and recruit employees from around the country. ... These are people who are talented, enthusiastic and passionate about what they do. It is that passion that produces great results, allowing Crosby-Wright to be the luxury brand public relations and advertising agency that we are. ... Most importantly, I have long-term friends that have become clients and in turn, clients who have become long-term friends."

— Valerie Crosby, Crosby-Wright



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