



Boss Babes: Resourceful, Determined Women

by Sophie Sherwin

What do highly successful women have in common? What nugget of wisdom would they pass on to someone who is just starting out in business, especially right now? With the unexpected events 2020 has brought us so far, business owners are feeling this collective consciousness of fear and instability. So what can we learn from these women on how to thrive - not just survive - in these unusual times?

When you think of successful women or the phrase "Boss Babe", there are the usual powerhouse women who spring to mind, such as Oprah Winfrey, Ellen DeGeneres, Rihanna, and Sheryl Sandberg, to name just a few. However, there are also not-so-well-known women knocking down the door of the title "super successful". More women are now making it onto *Forbes'* lists of powerful, successful, rich, self-made, or billionaires. It is such an inspiration to focus on those who built their success starting with "nothing". The majority were not handed a silver spoon, business or money, but they are self-made from pure determination, tenacity, resilience, and integrity. *Forbes* has stated that it

"...defines 'self-made' as someone who built a company or established a fortune on [her] own, rather than inheriting some or all of it."

Diane Hendricks, a self-made billionaire, certainly fits the criteria. She started from humble beginnings in Wisconsin and is now worth \$7 billion, according to *Forbes* in June 2019. By the time she was 22 years old she had a child and had filed for divorce. Determined to raise her son on her own and make money, she started studying for her brokers license while selling new construction. Who said having a child sets you back? After garnering success selling custom made homes, eventually she met and married Ken Hendricks, and together they started a business buying real estate. Their next venture was to buy three roofing stores, which birthed *ABC Supplies Inc.*

Their empire was expanding but, as the saying goes - "when life throws you lemons..." She was thrown a whole lemon tree when, sadly, her husband died unexpectedly. She was faced with running this huge company and 30 other businesses on her own, but she did not give up. She stopped

and thought about what was needed at that moment. So, she slowed down the pace of the business and said to a *NY Times* journalist, "Progress is a lot of simple little decisions." She has gone on to balloon the success of the company and landed as *Forbes* #1 America's Richest Self-Made Woman for two years in a row. Diane was quoted in *Forbes*, November 2010 when asked about her business success, "I don't think I have ever taken any 'offbeat' advice. Actually, I don't know I take any advice very often. I trust my own instincts and seek out information so I can make fully informed decisions. That's what's worked for me."

"I've always been very driven and knew that to get where I wanted to go, I could never give up". -Diane Hendricks

Bethenny Frankel is another Boss Babe entrepreneur, who started her journey with *Skinny Girl Cocktails* and has subsequently dipped her fingers into an impressive number of pies. She has now added the credits of best selling author, tv producer, philanthropist, investor, lifestyle influencer, and importantly, a mother. It seems in this pandemic her energy has not wavered and she is just as busy as ever. How is she thriving? In an interview with Taylor Locke while in lockdown and giving tips on how to still be productive, Frankel said, "I always say, 'All roads lead to Rome,' which means you will get derailed and may hit a roadblock, but as long as you're moving forward and staying positive and being productive, you'll end up getting to where you want to get to, even if it's a circuitous road."

When it comes to getting to the top of her game, Serena Williams is no stranger to roadblocks. Williams is best known as the #1 tennis player in the world, but also impressively, the first athlete to make it onto the *Forbes* list of America's Richest Self-Made Women. In addition to amassing wealth and success on the court, she has now added a clothing line, as well as Serena Ventures, a company who invests in startups, focusing on companies founded by women and minorities.

It seems to be a theme that resilience is key to success and staying on top. Williams is another woman who has not let childbirth set her back - returning to the court and tournaments only six months after giving birth. Getting back to her passion did not come easily though, and perhaps she took her own

advice of once saying, "I really think a champion is defined not by their wins, but by how they can recover when they fall" (*The National*, September 2012). She is another example of coming from humble beginnings. Williams was homeschooled and taught tennis on the streets by her father, rather than being sent to a tennis academy and the junior tournament circle. Williams spoke of her father's way of doing things: "It really shaped me for the rest of my career, both on and off the court in terms of taking a chance and how to be different and how to stand out" (*Forbes*, June 2019). This philosophy is reflected in her businesses, which is allowing her success to continue.

"Nothing good really happens unless you surround yourself with good people," Barbara Corcoran tweeted in April 2020, when she was asked about her business success. Best known for being on *Shark Tank*, a real estate mogul, motivational speaker, and author, she certainly knows a thing or two about business. Corcoran's childhood home was a two-bedroom apartment which housed nine siblings and two parents in a rough area. Straight D student, at the time she did not know she had dyslexia so she spent her childhood proving to everyone that she was not stupid. Corcoran admits that is what motivated her. After failing at 22 jobs by the time she was 23 years old, Corcoran borrowed \$1,000 from her boyfriend at the time and they opened a small real estate office in New York. With her love for real estate, they grew the business and in two years she had 14 agents and over \$500,000 worth of sales. When the relationship broke down, she set up *The Corcoran Group* and became the biggest brokerage in New York and a self-made millionaire. One of the lessons she shares is advising business owners to «expand before you are ready» and then trust that it will work out (www.speakers.com, June 2016). Being a woman amongst a sea of male sharks is something she considered to be a great asset, as she stood out instead of allowing them to swallow her up. Reflecting on her life now, she says, "It is a miracle, you never know what life brings".

We cannot look at successful "rags to riches" stories without mentioning one of the world's most famous authors, Ms. J.K.Rowling, whose story is well

documented. "Poor and almost homeless, the 'Harry Potter' creator eventually became the world's first billionaire author," said Tim Ott, in February 2019 for www.biography.com, (although Rowling has denied being a billionaire, according to *Business Insider*). Whether she is or not, we can all certainly agree she is highly successful in what she loves and followed her childhood dream to become a writer. 1990 was when the world of "Harry Potter" was officially born, but it was not until five years later that the manuscript was finished. She had a dozen rejections from publishers before being picked up by a small publishing house and as they say, the rest is history. Within ten years of her first "Harry Potter" book being published, Rowling became a self-made millionaire. "I was set free because my greatest fear had been realized and I



still had a daughter that I adored, and I had an old typewriter and a big idea. And so rock bottom became a solid foundation on which I rebuilt my life," Rowling said about her journey, in her 2008 *Harvard commencement address*.

Another incredible inspiration comes from Gabby Bernstein. Bernstein started telling her story after reaching rock bottom in her early 20s. She conveys how soaking up spiritual principles helped her find her way out from the bottom of a bottle, drugs, and darkness. She is now a speaker, best selling author, and guest on *Oprah's* stage. Gabby wrote recently on her website in February 2020 that the number one tool she has always used in life and business was said to her by a good friend, Marie Forleo, "Everything is figureoutable." She admonishes that you should ferry this mindset around with you. She went on to say, "And I learned what it meant to work smarter, not harder." As we have seen, a highly successful business can start from anywhere. We

have amazing experiences from women in the field of art and entertainment, real estate, beverage, sport, etc. - so no field is off limits to reach amazing heights.

These women have given some very useful tips which anyone can use, right now and moving forward. Williams, Corcoran, Frankel, and Rowling have all faced and experienced failure and rejection, but they say that's part of business. How you respond to it is the most important aspect. Corcoran believes that what makes a great salesperson stand out in a sea of good salespeople is "how well people could take a hit" - they would take less time feeling sorry for themselves, and focus on continued forward action.

"I have failed so much, but I have learnt so much more in life from my failures than my successes." -Bethenny Frankel (Interview with *Chelsea Logan*, February 2016)

"Why do I talk about the benefits of failure? Simply because failure meant a stripping away of the inessential." -J.K. Rowling (2008 *Harvard commencement address*)

"The biggest challenge in business isn't your competition, it's what goes on inside your own head." -Barbara Corcoran, (*Entrepreneur*, April 2013)

"Much of our anxiety and stress comes when we're focused on fear and disconnected from the voice of our inner guide." -Gabby Bernstein (Gabrielle Bernstein, 2014: "Miracles Now: 108 Life-Changing Tools for Less Stress, More Flow, and Finding Your True Purpose")

The story behind the determination to succeed is very personal to each and every business woman. But the drive is about believing in yourself and getting back up after taking a fall. Something that provides comfort in these shakey times is the fact that we are all in the same boat. We all have to look change in the face and adapt. That is what good business (and personal) sense is all about.

And in true words by J.K. Rowling: **Anything is possible if youve got enough nerve.**