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Young women are changing the face of entrepreneurship around the world. Nepalese women lead rebuilding efforts in their country following last year's earthquake. U.S. government launches investigation into gender bias in Hollywood.

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Research shows that when you’re an entrepreneur and a woman, the deck is stacked against you. While the rate of women-owned businesses has grown by 74 percent since 1997, women face larger obstacles than men when trying to start or scale their business, particularly when it comes to funding. In a recent study of entrepreneurs in Canada, 80 percent of the women interviewed said they had difficulty securing bank loans, including one woman who claimed the bank wouldn’t give her a loan unless her father co-signed it. Women entrepreneurs continue to receive only 16 percent the amount of funding as men, and they continue face challenges in obtaining venture capital funding as well. Of U.S. companies that received venture capital in 2013, only 18 percent had a women on the executive team and 2.7 percent had a female CEO. And the credit gap for women-owned small to medium-sized businesses is a staggering $300 billion globally. This is true despite research that shows women often generate better company performance.

Yet, even when faced with these challenges, young women around the world are refusing to give up on their dreams by taking matters into their own hands, defying expectations and building successful enterprises.

Lee Mayer is one of these obstacle-defying women. Two years ago, Mayer founded an affordable online interior design site, Havenly, taking an innovative approach to market research – crowdsourcing. Mayer used crowdsourcing as an opportunity to determine everything from appropriate pricing to website design. And it has been a big success – the company recently raised $13.3 million in Series A funding.
Many businesses are now working hard to align their strategies and business goals with the ability to create social good. For example, Sona Shah and Teresa Cauvel joined forces in 2015 when they learned that each year nearly three million babies die in their first month of life, with 98 percent of deaths taking place in developing countries. The two biomedical engineering students founded Neopenda – a low-cost and easy-to-operate wearable hat sensor that continuously monitors the key vital signs of newborn babies, including heart rate, respiratory rate, blood oxygen saturation and temperature. Shah and Cauvel took advantage of crowdfunding opportunities – bypassing the traditional venture capital route – to fund their first field deployment on Kickstarter. The field deployment will take place in Uganda later this year.

Monica Phromsavanh represents another story of determination in an oftentimes male-dominated entrepreneurship space. Phromsavanh, a Laotian refugee who grew up in a small town in Argentina, dropped out of school when she was fourteen in order to take a job working 60-hour weeks in a warehouse in Buenos Aires. When she was seventeen, her mother bought her a one-way plane ticket to New York City. With $200 to her name, Phromsavanh arrived in New York and began working at various jobs – starting as a chocolate factory worker making $5 per hour and ending up as the top salesperson in the men's department of the Manhattan Burberry store. From there, she decided to found her own company, Modabox, which is a data-driven service that delivers customized outfits directly to the doorsteps of consumers. In a fitting homage to Phromsavanh’s roots, Modabox partners with Bottomless Closet, a nonprofit dedicated to helping under-resourced women enter the workforce.

Fortunately, there are many exciting initiatives on the horizon that aim to encourage women entrepreneurs in their endeavors – from India’s brand of technology companies started in Silicon Valley are founded by women.

Jennifer Fleiss and Jennifer Hyman founded online designer rental service Rent the Runway in 2009, when both were in their twenties and students at Harvard Business School. The women wanted to address the issue of spending large amounts on designer dresses that will only be worn once. Fleiss and Hyman devised a plan to rent expensive designer dresses to women at accessible prices. They leveraged their networks to secure initial funding from Bain Capital Ventures and second-round investing from Highland Capital. In doing so, they essentially created a new business model for the fashion industry. To date, the company has raised over $114 million in venture capital funding, staffs over 500 employees, services over 5 million users and maintains a collection of over 50,000 dresses.
new empowEr accelerator program for women entrepreneurs to Sally Krawcheck’s forthcoming digital platform for investing in women-owned enterprises, Ellevest. We look forward to the day when people no longer use the word “woman” alongside “entrepreneur” recognizing that women are just as savvy and successful as men when it comes to starting and owning a business. Look no further than Tupperware Brands to see entrepreneurship in action.

Nepalese women play key role in rebuilding their country

Intel will provide digital literacy training for Kenyan women

Intel is Partnering with the Joyful Women Organization to provide digital literacy training for one million Kenyan women

This month American technology company Intel announced a partnership with non-governmental
Women in Nepal are rebuilding their country following a disastrous earthquake

Following a 2015 earthquake that resulted in almost 9,000 fatalities and destroyed over 750,000 homes, Nepal has been on a long road to recovery. Mindful of the fact that one-quarter of Nepalese households are headed by women, Oxfam America developed Cash for Work, a program that employs Nepalese women to aid in rebuilding efforts, giving them leadership roles in reconstruction efforts like debris cleaning, road repairs and construction of water and irrigation systems. The program employees are nearly 50 percent women and are paid a much higher wage than women typically make selling wares in the marketplace. (via Women in the World)

Fatma Samoura appointed first woman secretary general of FIFA

Earlier this month, the president of FIFA (the global governing body of soccer) appointed Fatma Samoura to the organization’s secretary general role, making her the first woman to hold a senior executive position at FIFA. Samoura, who hails from Senegal, has a 21-year career with the United Nations, most recently serving as the resident representative for the United Nations Development Program in Nigeria. The announcement follows criticism of the organization for sexist policies, including the exclusion of women from senior roles and large pay gaps between men and women soccer players. Samoura’s appointment is expected to lead to better opportunities for women in soccer. (via The New York Times)

US government investigating sexism in Hollywood

ANN INC. and UN Foundation empower women workers in supply chains

ANN INC., the parent company behind brands including Ann Taylor and LOFT, is on a mission to empower women working throughout their supply chain with their 100,000 Women Partnership with non-governmental association, Joyful Women Organization (JOYWO), which will provide digital literacy training for one million women in Kenya by 2020, as a part of Intel’s She Will Connect program. JOYWO already has an extensive network in Kenya, and Intel will step in to provide these women with training and access to technology. The trainers will then be empowered to reach women throughout the country and ultimately help close the internet gender gap, which is estimated to be 43 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa. The initiative will enable women to safely use the internet as a means to pursue their goals through learning and connecting with others. (via All Africa)
This month, nonprofit advocacy organization the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) announced the investigation into gender discrimination against female film directors in Hollywood, which will be led by two federal agencies, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs. The investigation was prompted by the low number of women reaching senior levels in the American film industry. For example, only 7 percent of top movies and 14 percent of television shows were directed by women in 2015. According to one ACLU executive, "Our hope is that [the investigation will] push industry leaders to address the ongoing violations of civil rights that women directors in the industry have experienced and are experiencing." (via Makers)

This month, the United Nations Foundation traveled to Jakarta, Indonesia to visit one of the participating factories in order to document how health education has helped transform the lives of women workers. The result was a powerful photo essay that delves into the experiences of four individuals – including one managing director who remarks, “The health of these female workers is an asset of the company. When they share a sense of belonging towards the factory … be it efficiency, production, or even workers’ peer-to-peer relationship, it uplifts the whole factory.” (via The UN Foundation)

This month’s Tupperware Woman of the Month is Rebecca Deutschmann, Star Director at Tupperware U.S. & Canada. Deutschmann is currently putting herself through college and paying for it by running her own small Tupperware enterprise.
How did you get your Tupperware business started?

I got the idea of starting my own Tupperware business from my Mom. She started in Tupperware when I was two-and-a-half, and I was always inspired by how she built a business around our family and was able to set her own hours, not to mention her many successes and accomplishments. As soon as I was 18 and had graduated high school, I knew that this was something I wanted to try. I was a little apprehensive at first, as a lot of people did not see an 18-year-old as fitting their definition of a "Tupperware lady." However, I stayed active in the business and developed dreams of growing, both personally and financially, and reaching the heights that I had seen be achieved by so many women I look up to.

How has having your own Tupperware business impacted your life?
I literally could speak about this forever. It would almost be easier to say how it has **not** impacted my life. I joined Tupperware just after high school, which is not always the easiest stage of life, and it certainly was not in mine. I went from having zero confidence and very low self-esteem to hosting parties, speaking at training meetings, and most importantly, learning to love myself for who I am. I didn’t even mention the flexibility and income, which is allowing me to pursue my Bachelor’s Degree, with a double major in History and Psychology; I never had to ask Tupperware for time off to study for finals. Plus, I have been driving a company vehicle now for over six months. The idea of being 22 and driving a new vehicle and having the insurance, repairs, and even oil changes taken care of is absolutely incredible, and I still cannot believe it is real sometimes! Tupperware's impact is truly endless!

**Who has been your biggest inspiration?**

This is a difficult question. Overall, I will say that my Business Leader, who happens to be my Mom, has been nothing but inspirational before and throughout my Tupperware journey so far. She inspires me to discover my dreams and make them a reality, in Tupperware and in life. However, I cannot say that I have attended a single training meeting, conference, or even a Tupperware party where someone has not inspired me. The beauty of this YOB (Your Own Business) is that you get to meet people that you never would have, had it not been for Tupperware. I am inspired every day by women that have changed their own lives: Tupperware gives them the tools, and they go out and make it happen. From testimonials at a party about how a product has saved time, space, and money, to incredible entrepreneurs that have created million-dollar businesses through Tupperware, I am amazed every day by what this company can do.
What does the word “entrepreneur” mean to you?

To me, an entrepreneur is someone who has a vision, creates a plan and executes it. This is not to say that the plan will be perfect, as we all know that all of the greats in any industry have fumbled on their way to success. An entrepreneur will always find ways to improvise, adapt and overcome these hurdles, and they are constantly working towards achieving their dream. The willingness to endure, to always be receptive to others and to try new approaches are the things that, in my opinion, separate an entrepreneur, who strives to achieve their own dream, from a business person, who is being paid to achieve someone else’s dream.

Do you have any advice for other young women looking to start their own businesses?

My strongest piece of advice is to discover what your long-term vision is for yourself and for your business. When you know what your vision is, tell your family, friends, neighbors: share it with the world! Most importantly, write it down and post it somewhere you will see it multiple times a day. When I first wanted to become a Manager at Tupperware, I typed "I will be a Manager" and stuck it on my bedroom door and my bathroom mirror. It may seem silly, but it keeps that vision at the forefront of your mind. Doing this was crucial for me, as I did not reach that goal by certain deadlines I had set for myself. Had I not given myself a visual reminder of that self-belief I knew I had, I am not sure I would be where I am today. Once I achieved that first promotion, I tore it down and started a new vision. I would highly recommend never going a day in your life without a dream; you will never know how far you can go until you believe in yourself enough to know you can reach the top!
Is there anything else you’d like to share?

I truly believe that lifting others up is an incredibly important part of finding your own success. Although business and entrepreneurship naturally has a sense of competition, this does not give us a reason to tear others down. The rewards that I have received for helping (and being helped by) those who may not directly "benefit" me in a financial sense are invaluable. You may never know that the little bit of assistance or a few words of encouragement you share with a fellow entrepreneur could be life-changing. Especially with fellow women, where that competitive nature may feel especially high, we should always look for ways to encourage and uplift each other.

Help Us Make Waves – A Call for Ideas!

Thanks for reading our monthly newsletter! We’d love to hear your thoughts. In the next issue, we’ll be highlighting women in the culinary scene. Is there a woman you would like to see featured? We’ll include some of your answers in the next issue. Send your responses to WMW@tupperware.com.

Power the Wave: Use the social media buttons at the top of the email to share the newsletter with others who want to further the women’s empowerment movement!