

Entrepreneurship is important for both the country's GDP as well as job creation. That's why it's crucial to promote it and to equip people who want to start a business with the right tools. Ignoring the contributions of women entrepreneurs would be a missed opportunity. According to the Quebec Entrepreneurship Index, Canada is one of the few of countries where women entrepreneurs account for more than 30% of all business owners. To help us do even more, our expert is here to share some tools and advice to help women who'd like to start a business.

How would you describe women's leadership?

Women's leadership applies to both women entrepreneurs as well as women in management positions within an organization. What do they bring that's different? "Most notably, women set themselves apart in the way they inspire people and in their participatory approach to decision-making. They also excel in their ability to define expectations and give recognition to others," explains Isabelle Savard, Vice President, Commercial Strategy and Sales Effectiveness at National Bank.

"We've also seen that women, same as men, are very skilled at fostering development. It comes quite naturally to them, and they're often excellent role models. This management style usually has a positive impact on the next generation of workers entering the job market."

What about women entrepreneurs?

Why should a woman start a business? "First and foremost because she has a good idea!" Savard says without hesitation. "But also because it will give her a certain amount of control over her life; it provides her with greater flexibility and independence."

According to the Quebec Entrepreneurship Index's 2019 report, more and more women are in fact attracted to entrepreneurship due to the flexibility afforded by the work and the opportunity to set their own schedules.

What challenges do businesswomen face?

One of the challenges that women business leaders have to deal with is work-family balance. "Without making any generalizations, the challenge is that women still have a fairly traditional role in the household, either by choice or for other reasons. They take more responsibility for family activities, and it isn't always easy to balance family life with work life," adds Savard.

Another challenge that women have to confront is the fact that the businesses they run are usually smaller; they often work alone and therefore may be inclined to take on all the responsibilities themselves.

Join a group

Surrounding yourself with the right people means joining a network and spending time with people who believe in your start-up and who can help you develop and grow your business. The Accélérateur Banque Nationale | HEC Montréal and entrePrism are just a couple of the organizations providing support, networking opportunities and mentorship for women entrepreneurs, which can help build confidence and break down isolation.

There are some networks that support, educate, and empower female entrepreneurs such as Mompreneurs which also provide affordable ways to promote their businesses locally and nationally.

When it comes to going into business, it is also important to know that there are women's entrepreneurship support programmes that accompany women through all stages of setting up their businesses. One of these programmes with a provincial scope is Femmessor, created in 1995 and aimed at facilitating access to financing and advisory services for women entrepreneurs.

Encouraging women to launch their own businesses

Anne-Sophie and Clarisse chose to take a risk and launch their own businesses. And if more and more women take the plunge and become entrepreneurs, it can only benefit the Canadian economy.

But Clarisse believes we still need to do more to encourage entrepreneurial spirit among women. She dreams of the day when women entrepreneurs won't be seen as the exception—they'll just be entrepreneurs.

"We need to start teaching this in high school. We need to show young people, especially young women, that there's another career choice out there, another way of living. We need to teach them that they can achieve anything with a bit of faith. As a business owner, success and a healthy work-life balance are within your reach!"

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