



Robert Ciccone

How have I learned? Let me count the ways *Women have taught me many lessons*

The other day, my wife and I were looking at our two-year-old daughter and wondering what she'll decide to be when she grows up. Thanks to today's generation of entrepreneurial women, the proverbial glass ceiling is being shattered, and my daughter has many opportunities available to her, far more than in prior generations.

Over the years, I've learned a lot from working with women entrepreneurs. Today, my client base is essentially a 50-50 split of male and female business owners.

I've worked with second-generation daughters who have taken over the family business from their fathers. I have one client who is starting her first business at a time when many people are thinking about retirement. Some of my clients have been women who launched a business while or after devoting time to raising a fam-

ily; others are women who have taken over failing businesses from their husbands and turned them into successful enterprises. I've even worked with one woman-owned business that was started in the owner's basement and recently sold for over \$25 million. These are just a cross-section of the talented women with whom I've had the honour and pleasure of working with, who've taught me so much.

For one thing, I'm in awe of how women can juggle priorities. They can run a business and make it a huge success while still, in many cases, taking on the primary roles of child care and household responsibilities. Women seem to do a better job than most men (sorry guys, but it's true) of balancing family and business responsibilities.

Women are better at multitasking, while I find men typically prefer to focus on one thing at a time.

Being a dad has made me more aware that from an early age men and women receive different messages about their roles in society. For instance, if a boy decides to make some extra money by shovelling the snow off his neighbour's walkway, we might have the tendency to say something like: "Look at that little go-getter, he really has the makings of a great entrepreneur!"

But if a girl decides to make her pocket money by babysitting, do we praise her entrepreneurship? Probably not. Most likely we would say something like: "How sweet; she's so good with children!"

Without cutting down my own gender, I frequently find that women do a better job of seeing the big, long-term picture and how the smaller details fit into that picture, whereas men frequently want to focus on the immediate, short-term here-and-now.

The women leaders I know tend to be more interactive, collaborative and personal in business; through them, I've learned I can be those things as well. Men can sometimes be controlling and demanding in their efforts to focus on results.

Don't get me wrong. Women care about results just as much as their male counterparts, but they also seem to care about the process and will take

into account individual needs, skills and challenges while they're working toward a result. Women strive to gain rapport and to make connections; they tend to define success by the quality of their relationships as well as by more material measurements. Men often define success by title, status or how many zeroes come after the dollar sign.

Through working with my female clients, I've learned that I need to be aware of emotionally relevant details in business. They've taught me to slow down, dig deeper, persevere and take into account what's going on in people's lives; they've also taught me to chill out, to have fun, and to look for balance in my life.

Working with these great women entrepreneurs has shown me that my daughter can do or be anything she wants. She can be the boss and control her fate. She has a chance to pursue opportunities that in previous generations might have only been available to men: power, money, success and acclaim.

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