

# We need to talk about **EQUALITY**



THE main issues of inequality in the workplace for women – unequal levels of pay, glass ceilings, too-often-stagnant promotional prospects – are not directly dealt with in *The Meaning of Success: Insights from Women in Cambridge*.

*Insights from Women in Cambridge.*

This absence is actually very much to the books' – and its many wonderful contributors' – credit. Clearly the masculine status quo has hitherto been able to simply turn the volume down when it comes to being harangued. A different approach is required and it is this: a cogent, disciplined look at the day-to-day requirements of juggling the professional with the personal which resonates across the gender divide.

The aim here is to identify “the brutal fact that fewer

women than men are recognised as successful based on current standards and value assumptions” and thereby “to stimulate a rethink about who and what we value, why and how”. From there we can “create more inclusive workplaces, which can in turn influence progress towards a fairer society”.

What emerges from the 26 interviews – with an additional comments submitted by a further 126 women – is “a pressing need to broaden and redefine the term [success] in order for it to be more

meaningful, relevant and accessible to women, as well as men. The redefinition is not about lowering standards but actually about enhancing them”.

By commissioning and publishing *The Meaning of Success* “the University is demonstrating a determination to achieve change on this scale” and indeed this 100-page paperback’s ambition to “embrace success, but only when [it is] reframed to have more relevance and meaning” is fulfilled on a grand scale.

Pretty cool or what?! I mean, we all sort of know we don't

(quite) live in a meritocratic society. Almost, but there's a few cultural tectonic plates that need to come together yet. Too many institutions operate to standards that “put women in a double-bind of wanting to advance based on their competence rather than a quota, whilst at the same time being judged against subjective criteria with an inbuilt gender bias”. And indeed there are organisations operating a further “boy's club” at the top which then means that an exclusive circle of chums with self-referential agendas dominate a hierarchy inaccessible to others whether they be male or female. It is this state of affairs which “Insights” addresses.

One of the ways forward has been to introduce quotas: the BBC has done this with its studio-based programmes. It's not a policy Bostock necessarily advocates but there's a sense that, if injustices are to be corrected, then adopting quotas for long enough for women to compete fairly in a hierarchy currently slanted towards men may be a valid option. Then, once that experience has sunk in – say, over ten years – a new type of societal order will hopefully have emerged.

But make your own mind up by reading these interviews. It's fair to say that every possible shade of opinion under the sun is represented. Mary Beard says that while “it would be a lie to say that gender has held me back in my career, it has sometimes been a case of feeling in a foreign country”.

Dame Carol Black says what every Cambridge entrepreneur knows, that “if you're going to succeed you must somehow develop the resilience to recover quickly from setbacks”.

“Changes can bring their own opportunities if you let them,” says Joanna Cheffins.

“Cambridge can be a very inspiring place to be a woman,” says Rebecca Simmons while Nicky Clayton says simply “What's success? I want to be able to play!”

An aspiration to which surely we can all relate – along with the core notion that what we really need is the creation of “effective, modern workplaces” rather than dressing the problems as “women's issues”. ■



## **The Meaning of Success: Insights from Women in Cambridge**

with photographs by Pari Naderi (Cambridge University Press, £9.95) is available from the CUP shop/website and from Heffers and Waterstones bookshops



Mary Beard

**Sally Guyer of the Cambridge Raincoat Company**



**Carol Lovell and Sarah Koche of Stow London**



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*HE StartUp Kit – Everything You Need To Start A Small Business* investigates the strewn acorns of entrepreneurial endeavour and establishes parameters to ensure that yours have a fair chance of growing.

Published by Enterprise Nation, Harriman House's resource imprint for homeworkers in the UK, it's written by Emma Jones, who set up Arthur Anderson's Inward Investment practice – to attract investment into the UK – before leaving to start her own business. Having successfully sold her first company she began the imprint for an "online, in print and in person" market/audience in 2006.

After the formalities are concluded – there's a foreword by Lord Young of Graffham – *The StartUp Kit* is divided into three sections: Prepare, Launch and Grow. There's a lot of time – quite rightly – devoted to the "Prepare" segment, from asking yourself basic questions such as "Is there a gap in the market?" and "Can my hobby become the means by which I can make a living?" through to advice on when to register for VAT and what sort of company structure might best suit.

The case studies start on page 4 and they're brilliant. There's a herbal tea manufacturer, a multifunction printer (the person not the office prerequisite), an illustrator turned pottery producer and a clothing specialist – all have stories to tell and a degree of success under their belts. There's loads of practical advice: it's the sort of book you can use to pick up all sorts of suggestions, tips, information and goodwill. Dip into it and you'll always find something stimulating.

Two of the case studies are Cambridge firms. One is Stow London, whose successful crowdfunding model has led to a range of luxury goods which have been written about extensively in the Business supplement in the *Cambridge News* every Tuesday. Founders Carol Lovell and Sarah Koche explain their aim as being "to consistently build online sales through our website and other online partners while developing strong partnerships with key boutiques and stores throughout the UK".

The other, Cambridge Raincoat Company, is run by Sally Guyer, whose all-year round garments have made full use of the fact that "being made in Britain is still synonymous with quality and being classy".

Lots of fantastic links mean you can get to grips from initially working from home – "Do I need to inform my insurers?" – to protecting your IP to making your brand race up the Google search rankings, to outsourcing and selling overseas.

*The StartUp Kit* is a cracker, steaming and bubbling away right from the off and never letting off, to the point of that I defy you to read it without coming up with a list of at least half a dozen ideas, hobbies or gifts of your own that the world might like to make itself more acquainted with. ■



**The StartUp Kit – Everything You Need To Start A Small Business**

Enterprise Nation, £14.99

**Budding entrepreneurs start here**