Professor Barbara Orser, M.B.A., Ph.D. Deloitte Chair in the Management of Growth Enterprises
University of Ottawa Telfer School of Management, Ottawa, Canada

Abstract

Feminine Capital. Unlocking the Power of Women Entrepreneurs*

The presentation will focus on the intersection between entrepreneurship and feminism. This includes how female entrepreneurs are infusing personal values in business practice and the ways that gender can influence entrepreneurial decision-making. Insights are shared about how leveraging feminine capital is helping women to create distinctive brands, build new markets, and drive profits.

The presentation is based on a new book that captures the experiences of over 20,000 business owners. We learned that entrepreneurs embrace a continuum of perspectives about how gender has an impact on the ways that they do business. For some entrepreneurs, they perceive that being female has no influence on their business practice. For others, it’s all about being female. Women are making the conscious decision to not let others’ perceptions about aspirations and behavior limit their commercial success. Underlying the way in which some women do business is a sense of determination and passionate belief in the importance of their enterprises. In certain cases, perceptions about inequality and women’s subordination have triggered entrepreneurial inclinations. A common ambition of many women entrepreneurs is the desire to empower others. Entrepreneurship is seen as a mechanism for creating opportunity, economic self-sufficiency, and equity-based outcomes. The gender matrix of venture creation is discussed.

To close the presentation, the implications of feminine capital are considered, including how researchers and educators can use the lessons learned to inform research, programs and curriculum.