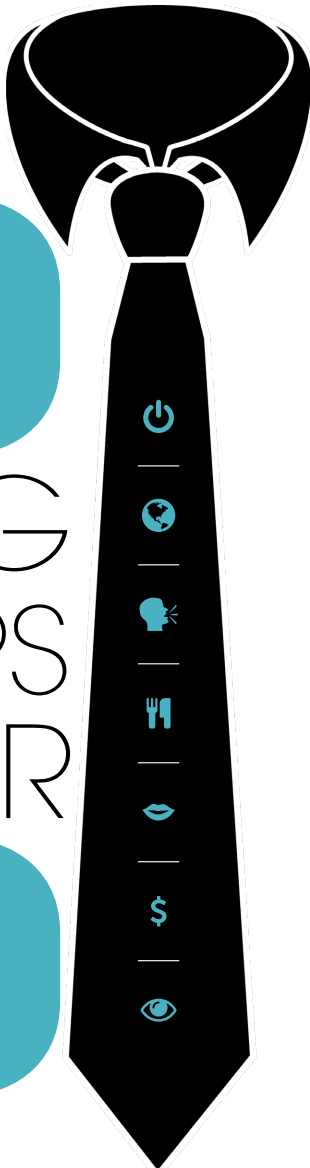


SME

30 YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS UNDER 40



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> **FUTURE SNAPSHOTS** < with Anne Lise Kjaer



LET'S START TALKING THE LANGUAGE OF SUCCESS

Success does not come in one shape and size, so why do we still talk as if it's a big deal that someone 'made it in their 60s' or happens to be female? We need a new mindset and language to reflect the business landscape we want to see in the future, and this is about much more than political correctness – it's a cultural shift driven by inclusiveness.

DITCHING THE LABELS

We live in the 21st century, where the 'Female Factor' and a diverse workforce play an essential role to economic growth and sustainability, but it requires a new language and narrative to make change happen. I particular struggle with pointless labelling and outmoded thinking, as an entrepreneur who happens to be female, I find it tiring when I am referred to as a 'businesswoman'. While I'm certain no offence is ever intended, categorisation in a world where we need diversity, balance and inclusiveness to make success happen it just doesn't make sense. Indeed, there are role models in every walk of life, but why label them?

GENDER EQUALITY FOR PROSPERITY

While many of the current generation of business success stories – both female and male – started on the shop or factory floor, we know that more jobs in the future will require degrees and that two thirds of graduates from developed nations will be female by 2020. This inevitably means many more women will inhabit the boardroom and political life. The Female Factor – as outlined



in my trend article (SME Magazine, July 2013) – is the shape of the future and is set to be good for business growth because gender balance brings fresh ideas and management styles to the table. This is a model already in place in Nordic countries and the results speak for themselves: enhanced social inclusion and happiness. These countries are also top performers on prosperity – living proof of Goldman Sachs' prediction that to drive future prosperity across Europe and drive income per capita we need to close the workplace gender gap.

NO AGE POSSIBILITIES

Creating a truly balanced workplace also means recognising the contributions multiple age groups can bring to society. A 5G (five-generation) workforce is fast becoming a reality, as people work longer or embark on new careers path to boost their pensions, their personal

wellbeing or simply because they still have the drive and a passion for making a difference in the world. With over 20% of the global population predicted to be aged 60+ by 2050, we cannot ignore the potential of this vast talent pool. We need inclusive thinking to take businesses into the future, and to tackle the big challenges our society faces. A true entrepreneur can never be labelled by age, gender or race – it is a mindset of brilliant ideas and solutions – backed by a 'personal operating system' that make them happen. To adapt an innovation culture that operates in a wider context – we must tap into the wisdom of entrepreneurs.

LANGUAGE OF BUSINESS SUCCESS

Forbes 2013 rich list notes that China has six female self-made billionaires, compared to seven in the U.S. It's a strong record and a positive marker for China's inclusivity. However, I still look

forward to the day when rich lists don't refer to gender, age or race but instead emphasise the achievements of the individual because behind every success there is an inspiring story. Zhang Xin, co-founder and CEO of commercial property developer SOHO China – one of China's billionaires mentioned – began her career working in factories to save up enough money to pay her way through university. When Zhang – with a current net worth of \$3.6bn and a place at the World Economic Forum – was recently interviewed on CNN they asked the stereotypical question: how does she cope with negotiations when she is the only businesswoman in a room full of men. She simply said: "I don't think about myself as a woman. I'm just coming in to do a deal – I need to get it done". Now that is the language of business success in the 21st century – avoid unnecessary labels and focus on getting the job done.

Anne Lise Kjaer is a futurist and Copenhagen Goodwill Ambassador and the founder of London-based Trends Management agency that helps corporations plan their future strategies. Anne Lise is also a visiting lecturer at Hertfordshire Business School. She is currently writing a book, 'Trends Management Toolkit', for publication in 2014. SME