

IT IS IN TROUBLED TIMES THAT ENTREPRENEURS MUST GIVE THEIR BEST



TUESDAYVIEW

JULIE MEYER

THE daily grind of business can be really tough. You've got to find your optimism every day when you wake up. More and more people are setting themselves up in business these days, so more are experiencing the highs and lows of the "buck stopping with them" – payroll, morale, sales, won and lost, new competition and all the other problems that plague entrepreneurs.

Think about adding the complexity of being an outsider to also being your own boss, however. Now that's hard work.

FOREIGN SUCCESS

One such exceptional entrepreneur is Francis Zadan, who fled Tehran in 1981 when he was 17, and obtained a Master of Engineering from Imperial College later that decade. He set up 3aTelecom from the back of a mobile phone shop in Manchester in 1996 and grew it to 75 employees, £18m in annual revenues in 2000 and a customer base of 35,000 subscribers when he sold to Vodafone in the first quarter of 2000 for a multimillion pound sum.

Francis then bought a French business which was struggling, and has built it into a multi-national success story attracting top talent. That busi-

ness, Corebridge, has a very slick CRM and communications application which enables you to manage all your communications and contacts seamlessly if you're a time-poor girl like myself. If I can't find my last meeting minutes with an investor and want to try him at all his numbers until I reach him, Corebridge will figure it out. It is indispensable for any banker, lawyer or advisor.

Why are there so many "foreigners" who succeed as entrepreneurs? Without any home court advantage, they have to build something new.

Many women feel the same way, and that's why last week's report on the continued prevalence of a glass ceiling elicits just a yawn from this columnist.

FEMALE STRATEGIES

If you are a woman, you should build your own home court advantage by setting up your own firm with rules of engagement which make sense to you; stop trying to take over male-oriented companies. The chances of winning are slim. I've now converted all five of my closest girlfriends into entrepreneurs, and they never stop thanking me.

Let's celebrate that so many foreigners can come to the UK to be successful as entrepreneurs – people like Francis – who have never taken no for an answer. And let's not worry about the tall poppy syndrome – that fear that if I succeed, I'll scare the pants off of all my friends, lose them all, so it's better to play small.

The times when you're truly alone facing a market downturn are when you understand what you are capable of as a person and as a business person. Now is such a time.

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