



Working in a male dominated environment

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"This is a man's world, but it wouldn't be nothing, nothing without a woman or a girl" sang James Brown and he's right - it's still a man's world even though the work environment has improved greatly for women.

My first experience of working in a male dominated environment was when I was just 24, working for a traditional stockbroking firm which led to me spending time as a trainee dealer in the London Stock Exchange. It was a steep learning curve for a shy young Guernsey girl, but the experience stood me in good stead for the remainder of my career. In the 1980s, there was little discussion about women's role in the workplace, so at the time I had no preconceived ideas about working in the Exchange - for me it was just a job and I was looking forward to what I knew would be a fantastic learning experience. Indeed, I have no horror stories and I don't recall any negative experiences. The older brokers were delighted that women had been admitted to the trading floor after spending their careers surrounded by other men in pinstripe suits. The younger guys enjoyed a bit of ribbing, but never any nastiness which has largely been my experience throughout my long career in what is still a sector dominated by men.

I'm also often asked about my experience of relocating to establish my business in the UAE which is certainly a traditionally male dominated society. However, the Dubai Government is hugely supportive of female entrepreneurs and there are many initiatives in place to encourage women to set up their own business, so I experienced no obstacles there. Rather, in my opinion many other countries would benefit in establishing initiatives such as the UAE

Gender Balance Council which is making great strides to eliminate discrimination.

I believe the root of the issue which prevails for women lies in societal norms which have been established over hundreds of years and in fact a great deal has been achieved in a relatively short recent time period in terms of equal pay, gender discrimination, improved representation of women on boards - sometimes it just doesn't feel like it.

I've never really paid any attention to the fact that I'm in a minority in most professional situations - I've simply been fortunate to love my work. In my experience the majority of men enjoy the benefit of having somebody on the team who may look at things rather differently. Sadly, I'm more often told of instances when a woman hasn't been supportive of other female members of a team which is disappointing.

Looking back, I believe I owe my successful career in a man's world to a number of important factors which I have learned over the years:

- Always be yourself and never try to act like one of the boys
- Make clear any 'red lines' from the outset - this ensures everyone knows where they stand and avoids any unnecessary discomfort on all sides
- Trust your intuition
- Find your own way to add value
- And the most important asset - a sense of humour!