



HURDLES: There are still more obstacles for female bosses to clear than their male counterparts, a new survey has revealed.

Women business leaders face significant barriers

By **SHAUN LOWTHORPE**
Business editor

Women bosses are still facing significant barriers to taking their businesses to the next levels, according to a major survey.

Businesses owned and run by women represent about 15pc of the UK business base, with more than 700,000 currently contributing approximately £75bn to the economy.

However, a study of 220 female business owners by the business support network Enterprising Women concluded that many felt stuck when it came to taking their businesses beyond the start-up stage to the next level of group.

But Enterprising Women, which next month will begin a series of one-day workshops in Norwich for women in business, said that unlocking the full potential of female business owners could generate an extra £323m towards the UK economy and more than 3,500 jobs over three years – outstripping the levels of job creation promised in the government's regional growth fund.

The study found that a significant proportion (39pc) still felt they were being held back from achieving their full potential by the struggle to achieve a work/life balance.

In addition, 37pc found it difficult to achieve focus and a clear direction for future growth, nearly half (45pc) raised concerns about how marketing spend would convert to sales and 44pc said they lacked the knowledge needed to break into new markets. Sales were also highlighted as an area of real consternation, with 41pc of women surveyed not knowing how

WOMEN'S STYLE OF LEADERSHIP SUITS THE MOMENT

The leadership style of women is more effective in the current economic conditions facing the UK, according to a study.

Research by occupational psychologists Geoff Trickey and So Yi Yeung showed different styles between the male and female personality, suggesting that risk-taking is influenced by gender.

Women are more than twice as likely to be wary or prudent, while men are twice as likely to be adventurous and carefree, the study among 2,000 workers in more than 20 occupations – ranging from firefighting to accountancy – showed.

The researchers said the findings suggested that risk-taking must be a “distinctive feature” of gender, adding that it offered a likely explanation for the differences in female and male leadership styles.

They added that the study provided more evidence that the typical leadership style of women was more effective in the present economic climate.

Mr Trickey, of Psychological Consultancy, said: “The implication of our gender difference findings is that male/female risk type differences are genetic, having

achieved a balance shaped by evolution which would have been critical to survival of our species.

“It's easy to see how the balance between prudent, cautious, long-term decision-making of females would have married up very effectively with the impulsive, carefree, adventurous approach of males.

“Risk taking is necessary and desirable, but we need to reinstate the balance that ensured the survival of our ancestors.

“Whether this is best done by gender selection manipulation is arguable, but the aim should be to achieve a balance of risk types.”

to build their sales pipeline.

A common concern for both men and women, Enterprising Women said this was made worse by the under-capitalisation of female-owned businesses – and further exacerbated by the fact that many women chose to operate in highly competitive sectors.

Bev Hurley, founder of Enterprising Women, which was set up in the East of England, said: “Publicly funded growth support is sadly limited to non-existent for the majority of SMEs.

“And despite government stating that rebalancing the economy and stimulating private enterprise, competitiveness and productivity is a priority, the growth plan does little to address the growth potential that could be unlocked from the SME economy by female entrepreneurship in this country.

“It is not all gloom and despondency though. Far from it.

“Female entrepreneurs will – and do – seek out what they need, demonstrating remarkable resourcefulness, pragmatism and the will to steer their businesses through the tough times as well as the good.”

Sandy Eaton, director of Enterprising Women, said: “With such substantial challenges in the areas of sales and marketing, it is disappointing that start-up training and standard information resources typically skip over these critical areas, with a cursory mention of ‘doing market research’ and the barest mention of sales.

“Access to finance did not appear to be regarded as a major barrier, being overshadowed by anxiety about unpredictable cash flow, which was reflected in high levels of uncertainty

about borrowing money.

“Because Enterprising Women engages with women at every stage of the enterprise journey, we are in a unique position to understand the dynamics of female entrepreneurship, and we are working to share these insights with policymakers,” she added.

■ **Enterprising Women's flagship Growth Programme will run in the East of England for the first time this February, with seven one-day workshops held over 14 weeks from February 7 to May 15.**

■ **For further information on costs and how to register for the 2012 Norfolk Growth Programme, please call 0800 0121 365, visit www.enterprising-women.org/norfolkgrowthprogramme or contact Sandy Eaton directly at sandy@enterprising-women.org**
■ shaun.lowthorpe@archant.co.uk

New forum set up for marine engineering

North Norfolk Business Forum is teaming up with Marine East to establish a new Marine Engineering Forum.

Forum chairman Euan MacPherson said: “As a district with 47 miles of coastline, marine activity and boat building has always been important in North Norfolk, and this is an opportunity for further recognition for a long established industry sector. Coastal energy activity, particularly the construction of the Sheringham Shoal Offshore Windfarm and the likely development of at least three further offshore windfarms in North Norfolk's coastal waters, is providing a significant range of new opportunities for marine engineering businesses. NNBF is anxious to help and encourage these businesses to develop their products and services, thereby creating further employment and economic growth in the area.”

New directory is launched by FDS

Norwich-based Franchise Development Services (FDS) has announced the launch of International Franchise Directory (InternationalFranchiseDirectory.net), enabling franchisors to promote the availability of their Master or Area Development Franchise Rights to the world on just one website.

FDS managing director Roy Seaman said: “This will provide international franchisors with a great opportunity to benefit from the multi-faceted services of Franchise Development Services.”

Consultancy wins longer contract

Norwich-based business consultancy US2U, has successfully extended its contract with KLM UK Engineering, to commence the next phase of its Leadership Development Programme.

The programme, which provides a range of management development services for its staff, is a key part of KLM UK Engineering's HR strategy.

Rachel Blackburn, director of US2U Consulting, said: “It is great to have the opportunity to continue working with such a successful, ambitious company which has a clear vision for the future. “I am looking forward to being able to build on the work that we conducted in 2011.”

Triple award shortlisting

Norwich-based Almary Green Independent Financial Advisers has been shortlisted for three different national industry awards.

The firm of financial advisers, run by managing director Carl Lamb, is in the running to win best small adviser and charity champion in the Professional Adviser Awards 2012; best investment adviser and best retirement solutions adviser in the Money Marketing Financial Services Awards 2012, and new model adviser awards of the Adviser of the Year for East Anglia