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ADDIDI  
INSPIRATION AWARD  
FOR FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS  
2009

NEWS RELEASE

ADDIDI INSPIRATION AWARD FOR FEMALE  
ENTREPRENEUR IN HISTORY

THE ENTREPRENEURS AND  
THEIR MODERN DAY CHAMPIONS

ENTREPRENEUR :  
BEATRICE GORDON HOLMES (1884 - 1951)

Britain's first female stockbroker, Beatrice overcame a poor background and lack of education to head her own finance company, find international fame as a stockbroker, found a number of enduring professional women's associations, and become the only woman to appear before the government's Bodkin Committee on share-pushing. Often finding herself a lone figure in the city, she ignored the prevailing men's club culture and pioneered the idea that women had a distinctive contribution to make to the world of business. She dedicated much of her energies to the suffragette movement and to promoting women in business, as well as initiatives to improve mental health.

CHAMPION :  
JUDY GIBBONS on Beatrice Gordon Holmes

Judy is a partner at Accel. She serves as CEO of Mippin, and is also on the board of Autoquake and a board advisor to WeeWorld.

"I love that Beatrice did it on her own. She wasn't born with a silver spoon in her mouth. In that generation and even now, some remarkable women broke through, but very often you do find that they had the advantage of a high-class education and a social network of contacts. She didn't. The male culture too made her always an outsider, but rather than be overwhelmed by the social etiquettes of the day, she didn't assimilate. She did it without the clubs, without the advantages of that network, and she was probably twice as good.

"She also acknowledged that women are equal, but different. Too much of the argument is often taken up with 'equal', and it's taken us a long time to recognise that 'different' is good. But Beatrice realised that this was what made the contribution of women distinctive. And right from the get-go she did things to help other women. She has a fantastic legacy that can be seen in all the organisations she left behind.

"And she travelled, and she read, and she loved fabulous clothes. She sounds like a very social person, with a rounded life - a real adventurer."

ENTREPRENEUR :  
ELEANOR COADE ( 1 7 3 3 - 1 8 2 1 )

A deeply religious woman from a simple Exeter family, Eleanor took over a struggling artificial stone business and turned it into the most successful of its kind. Pioneering new manufacturing techniques, she gained royal appointment as well as great financial success, and transformed both the economics and practice of classical architecture. She is credited with elevating craft items to artistic status, and with a talent for marketing and PR, her stone became internationally famous, decorating everything from chapels to palaces, and used by almost every recognised architect and designer of the day.

CHAMPION :  
LISA TSE on Eleanor Coade

Lisa is a creative businesswoman and designer, and founder and CEO of the Lisa Tse Ltd design agency.

“When you look at what Eleanor achieved in her time, and what women want to achieve today – not much has changed. She had a vision and she decided to dedicate her life to it. She recognised that she had this one particular speciality and experience, and she ran with it. Nobody else in her industry was as successful, and especially being a woman in that time, it was a very rare success.

“Eleanor was also one of the first women out there who branded herself. She was aware of the ‘brand’ and how to put her own stamp on everything she did. She named the stone and the company after herself and then promoted it through her own life and hard work and networks, so that the two became synonymous and stood for quality. That was a very innovative and visionary thing to do and is one of the elements that set her apart from her counterparts.

“She used her naturally female skills to collaborate, to negotiate, to manage relations, and it speaks volumes that she had such prestigious supporters.

“Most importantly, Eleanor changed the whole landscape of her industry. She made a creative contribution to the world that wasn’t just about numbers, but shaped an entire culture, and the future we inhabit.”

ENTREPRENEUR :  
HESTER PINNEY ( 1 6 5 8 - 1 7 4 0 )

One of ten children from a highly patriarchal family, Hester defied male influence and a lack of education to establish herself first as a successful lace trader, then as the family banker, and ultimately as a publicly renowned financier. Against the social norms of the day, she did business in the male dominated spaces of taverns and coffee houses, and thus was at the heart of the birth of the modern financial system. Always mindful of her family, she rescued her brother from a sentence to death, she paid for the education of many younger Pinneys, and she was responsible for a huge part of her family’s social and financial ascent.

CHAMPION :  
CLAIRE BRYNTESON on Hester Pinney

Claire is Founder and Director of Buy:Time, a lifestyle management and concierge business. She is also a speaker on work/life balance on TV, radio and in international press.

“I’m just so impressed by Hester. Her sheer achievements and abilities are outstanding even for today. The financial world is still male-dominated, but to go into the financial markets when it was brand new and actually advise people at a time in which it was just beginning, is incredible. But Hester recognised possibilities, and she made them happen. She didn’t have the education, but her social skills and her networking really took her forward. That’s a huge message to people now: to focus on your strong points and not let the uncontrollable get you down.

“She’s still such a relevant role model. Like so many women today, she felt the tug of her family, and she was torn, but what is amazing is that she found the balance. She didn’t ever not do what she wanted to do, but she managed to do it while still respecting and looking after her family, whose lives she changed for subsequent generations. But then it was never about only enriching her own life. She took people with her.

“She loved her business, she loved the independence that through it she gained, and she enjoyed the benefits of her success socially. She sounds like a top bird.”

ENTREPRENEUR :  
ROSA LEWIS ( 1867 - 1952 )

A scullery maid at the age of 12, Rosa recognised early that the kitchen could be the key to a different future. She worked tirelessly, with infamous charm and raffish wit, to rise through the ranks and become a successful hotelier, and one of the greatest society cooks in England. Admired and patronised by Edward IV, she established a highly successful catering business and rescued the Cavendish Hotel from her debt-ridden husband, turning it into the country's favoured society destination. When war struck she transformed the hotel into a social first aid centre. In the process, she sacrificed much of her personal wealth, but retained her spirit, plenitude of friends, and Edwardian glamour until the end.

CHAMPION :  
SALLY PRESTON on Rosa Lewis

Sally is a qualified food scientist and Founder and MD of Babylicious Ltd. She previously worked at M&S and is a mother of two.

"Rosa typifies the can-do attitude of so many incredible woman – just because something wasn't usual didn't mean she couldn't do it, she was determined, she worked hard, she acquired skills, and she innovated her own twist on her industry to make herself modern and relevant.

"But it was an incredibly tough world, particularly coming from a household where boys were given all the glory. Rosa however wouldn't let men control her. She decided young that this was not it, there was more to life, and so she challenged the status quo, yet somehow in a way that didn't rile people. Quietly, she got on with her own mini revolution.

"And throughout, she remained very close to her femininity. She was the hostess with the most. She combined femininity with the grittiness of business in a way that's so pertinent. Today, the power suits and shoulder pads of the 80s are gone, we know you can get the same outputs using the softer skills that women have. But Rosa realised this way back then.

"When the world changed with the war, she had to adapt. She sacrificed commerciality for compassion, and she lost money, but it would probably have fulfilled her. As always, she went for it, and I bet she had a ball."

ENTREPRENEUR :  
MARGARET HAIG THOMAS, VISCOUNTESS RHONDDA  
( 1883 - 1958 )

Daughter of first Viscount Rhondda, Margaret was born into a life of wealth and privilege. Stifled however by her existence, she took a job as her father's secretary, quickly, learning the business skills lacking in her education to ultimately become director of 33 companies. After her father's death, Margaret faced stiff opposition but continued to increase her success, becoming one of the first five women members of the London Chamber of Commerce. A militant suffragette, she was arrested and imprisoned, to her financial detriment she privately subsidised the feminist Time and Tide, and she used her every success to campaign for women's rights, founding a number of ground-breaking organisations that endure to this day.

CHAMPION :  
SHÁÁ WASMUND on Margaret Haig Thomas

Shaa is a respected online strategist. She has worked with the government social networking phenomenon Bebo and is Founder of Smarta.

"The natural way of looking at things is to say that those who come from nothing have somehow done better than those who have come from privilege because they've had to fight against the odds, but Margaret is a different story. In the context of the time in which she lived, and with the high society she was surrounded by, there was such an easier route for her. She didn't need to go against the mould and speak out for women, she had everything to lose, but she had the courage of her convictions.

"She ran multiple businesses hugely successfully - and through that women like Margaret made so much possible for women to-day - but even when one of her businesses turned into a loss-making venture, she stuck to her principles and didn't compromise on what she believed in.

"The feminist movement was the single most important aspect of her life. It was what it was all for. Of course she wanted to be successful, but more than that she wanted to change things for other women, particularly those who weren't as privileged as she was.

"Ultimately, Margaret could have done nothing, but instead she made a choice to make a difference."