

The sky's the limit for women in business



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Special to QMI Agency

I moderated an all-female panel in April for FEI Canada (Financial Executives International) on capital market innovation.

We covered a lot of ground: The rapid growth of crowd-funding, evolving regulatory changes for financial institutions, the increasing popularity of “idealabs” for

getting 24-hour approval on potentially game-changing ideas inside large organizations, and the emerging use of analytics to offer mass customization.

The three panelists were brilliant, intense and more than willing to share advice with the next generation. Both the panel discussion and the Q&A that followed provided ideas for young women who aspire to leadership roles in the business world of 2020 and beyond.

Stop seeking permission

“I’m worried that my daughter is the only girl in her media studies class. Is there any hope for her?”

Gayemarie Brown, national innovation manager

for Deloitte Canada, observed: “I have never before had so much optimism for the generation that I am seeing every day, either at schools that I visit during innovation panels or as a judge for start-up challenges. “Innovation is the great equalizer inviting us all to the table. Digital doesn’t care if you are male or female. Innovation doesn’t care either.

“We must stop seeking permission and just keep jumping in the game or creating our own game. Be proud and optimistic for your daughters. If your daughter is the only girl in her class, in her organization or in her business ... she can kick ass!”

Start investing early

“What is your best tip for a wannabe entrepreneur?”

Teri Kirk, founder and CEO of The Funding Portal Inc., said, “The best way to learn about owning and operating companies is to invest in them. Even if you don’t have any money, start a paper portfolio. The process of picking and following companies, whether a consulting company, boutique or tech start-up, will help you refine your goals. Seeing yourself as a shareholder and investor is powerful. Practicing with other companies is the best path to securing funding for your own.”

Don’t limit yourself

“How can women get senior positions in the financial sector?”

Jennifer Witzel, senior vice-president of Global Taxation, Bank of Nova Scotia, told us her own story.

“It isn’t a coincidence that my most significant career progressions have occurred since my daughter was born. My daughter (now nine years old) has always inspired me. She dances in ballet class on Saturday mornings, and then trades her leotard for hockey equipment to join her otherwise all-boy team for a game in the afternoon. She throws herself into everything she tries, instinctively pushing

herself to learn, create and connect.

“What is remarkable is that she doesn’t think this is unusual. My daughter doesn’t limit herself, and I try to follow her example.”

You become what you think about

When I speak globally about my research on accomplished women and their financial success, the question I am asked the most often by younger girls and women is “What do you think I should be doing to make sure I get the next job in my career path?”

I tell them what has worked for me: If I want to progress in my job or in my life, I force myself to think clearly about what I want and then I visualize a successful outcome. Remember, you become what you think about.