

# HOW TO BE AN ENTREPRENEUR FOR THE (MUSLIM) WOMAN

When I first stepped into the real world at 18, I decided to take an unconventional path—being an artist. For the duration of my university career, I embraced the life of an artist.

One of the biggest hurdles I went through was from the Muslim community. One of the biggest obstacles was trying to get through to my community is that a woman can be something other than what is defined for her.

Think we are past these types of conversations? No. I don't believe so.

Our community is a long way from practicing the empowering guidance that our faith teaches us. Islam teaches an individual to be independent, powerful, strong on a moral, political, intellectual level. But we've missed a lot of it in our lives.

In this post, I really want to focus on independence. Not in the I-don't-need-a-man rubbish, but to dig deeper on helping woman free themselves from all types of constraints, to do what they love, to blend the ideas of making money and doing work that has meaning.

I want this to be a quick start guide on how anyone can get started today and gain a little freedom to living their dream life. It's also my attempt to have the Muslim communities around the world start to actively use the word "entrepreneur" in our vocabulary. I believe it has the power to solve many of our major systemic issues in our community.

I receive e-mails from talented women, Muslim or not, about how to start up their own ventures or to think entrepreneurial about their own abilities. I'm so humbled that people want to know what I think and decided to write a post devoted to this topic entirely.

## What is an entrepreneur?

There are a lot of definitions for this. The best, in my opinion, is someone who solves problems. Very vague, I know. But consider a small business owner or a lifestyle business owner, who just wants to make money to

support their family(we are all in this category), they simply look at the market and provide something they know the market needs. No fuss. An entrepreneur is someone who spots an opportunity, tries to solve the problem and is incredible resourceful. It's the art of doing more with less. They know it's a risk but they carefully calculate it. They also have this need to change the world. It's the art of doing more with less.

### **Why be an entrepreneur?**

More and more Muslim women should be their own entrepreneurs. This doesn't mean you shouldn't have a job, but to balance having kids, marriage and a career, it's inevitable that you are going to make sacrifices. In my understanding, you can't have only 2 of the 3 and do it well.

I suggest women opening up their own businesses. I had one sister contact me about opening up an organic homeschooling business since she had a degree in education. What a perfect way to be at home with your kids!

In Islam, we don't compromise on things like family. It's so highly discouraged to push off things until your 30s(and even that's considered late). So I've thought about the many ways us modern Muslim woman can have what we want and balance our obligations.

Having your own business(web-based) helps solve this problem because you can do it from home, while on the road or in another country.

### **My Story**

#### *Holstee Manifesto!*

Entrepreneurship is a passion of mine and I was kind of forced into it because I knew of no other way to do what I love to do and make an income from it. I had been a freelance writer and artist making money but it never satisfied my need to build things.

Unless you want to spend your life slaving away for someone else, running a business is the only way to be free. I tasted freedom before I had it, so now I know for sure its what I want. I realized the only people who work are those who can't create things of value-or who don't want to. In that case, they have to sell the only thing of value they have, time, for money. My time means more to me than money, so this was another reason to take up the entrepreneurial path. And to be honest, most people will have to in the future. North American culture pre-industrial revolution consisted of

self-employed people, not job-dependent people. Most people living in 1850 weren't working 9-5 for someone else. As the industrial revolution began, it pulled people from their self-sustaining lives, forced them to work, made compulsory schooling law. We have Andrew Carnegie and Henry Ford to thank for that!

Right now, I believe things are going back to the way it used to be. There just aren't enough jobs for people and if there are either technology will wipe them out, companies will downsize or people will end up working for pennies. Just today, there was a report from **Associated Press** saying that 80% of US Americans are on welfare, in a jobless state or near poverty. Do you believe Google will be hiring people in 20 years to write code for them? Think again?

Another reason for entrepreneurship is based on empowerment. Instead of always sticking your hand out waiting for somebody to give you work, the best thing is to just create opportunities for yourself and be proactive. Create a door for yourself. Take what you know and find a way to help people with it.

Keeping with this line of thinking, the best book to read (inspirational and incredible) is *Linchpin* by Seth Godin. I'd HIGHLY Recommend it.

### **Few Other Suggestions:**

- When you start, **get a full time job doing anything**. You need something that will pay the bills. It's too stressful if you are trying to pay the bills with an untested system. People tend to say, if you are a real entrepreneur and you believe in what you are doing, you'll bet everything. This is not good advice if you are starting because it's not a smart decision, it's a risky decision. Second, your start up is likely to grow faster if you do it because you LOVE it. Your mindset has a lot to do with it. You need to constantly be in a state of flow: you love where you are and love where you are heading.
- **Network**- Find where other start ups, entrepreneurs, business-minded people are and hang out with them. You need to be around these types of people. Cut everyone else off who isn't feeding you and supporting you. It doesn't mean you hate them, it just means you need to focus.
- **Your business will grow to the extent you do**: Which means you

need to constantly read—not just on your market but in terms of personal development

- **Find a mentor**- someone who ideally has done what you've done and is successful.

At the end of it, I just decided that I wanted to be an entrepreneur. You just gotta decide and run with it.

## **Need Inspiration?**

### **Working will not make you rich by Bishop Renato**

From a spiritual perspective, he makes the case that for anyone to prosper they must use their God-given talent.

### **Rich Dad, Poor Dad(CHANGED my LIFE) by Robert Kiyosaki**

Very well written book about on basic financial education most of us were never taught. I can not recommend this book enough. In fact, I'm going to make my future children read it(in shaa allah). He goes through his life, how he was taught about wealth(by his poor dad) and the true path of real wealth and freedom(by his rich dad). It's also a metaphor of the different types of thinking that exist and how you can go about changing your attitude and knowledge base in order to change your reality.

Another great video, I'd listen to **Jason Nazar** from **Doc Stoc**—he's really good at helping people starting figure out what to do. You should listen to his **21 Golden Rules Of Entrepreneurship**. He's funny and entertaining. Don't worry about being bored. He goes through ALL the basics below under the header: quick overview.

## **Quick Overview**

### **First you need to consider:**

1. What is your product or service?
2. What is its unique value proposition- What makes it different or better. Not that it's the first of its kind. What makes it better?
3. What's the Market Opportunity. What problem do you solve?
4. How large is the market(How much money is spent in your category)
5. How fast is the market growing?

6. Who are your competitors.
7. Who are your customers
8. How do you make money?
9. Who is the Management team?
10. What is the Strategy? What's the long term goal in 10 years?
11. What are the 3,6,9,12 month milestones?
12. How do you sale/market your product/service(How do you get people to buy it)?
13. How much capital do you need/intend to raise?
14. What are the projected financials for the company?
15. What is the preliminary valuation of the company?

I'd create this in another document. If you want to get a 1 page full overview of your business plan, go to [LeanCanvas.com](http://LeanCanvas.com)(from the lean start up movement) and sign up.

Lastly, **Standford Business** has some of the best videos on the web for starting a business. For start ups, go to **DocStart TV**.

### **Quick Tip:**

Check out if your local city has free business consultations to help people starting a business. Generally, they might be 30 minute sessions and free.

### **Note**

Also, this is a slow process. Have a lot of fun. I'm far from having kids or being married but I didn't know a lot of this when I started in 2011. My first start up failed and I ended up learning A LOT. My second start up is launching Fall 2013(the launch page will be up soon for people to get on the waiting list. Stay tuned)

### **My Favorite Verse**

That man can have nothing but what he strives for; That (the fruit of) his striving will soon come in sight" Quran [53:39-40]

