

# Entrepreneurship vs Employment

## The Many Reasons Behind the Trend

My recommendation: do not type female entrepreneurship vs. employment into a search engine in hopes of coming up with any ‘answers’. A quick survey among fellow entrepreneurs also delivered varied views on the subject. The topic is written about often; from academic, statistical and personal points of view. Many people, who all have a lot to say. While doing my research, what caught my eye was the following phrase: “... future job growth will be created primarily by women-owned small businesses.”

The predictions of the US-based The Guardian Life Small Business Research Institute’s research suggest that “... by 2018 women entrepreneurs will be responsible for creating [...] one-third of the total new jobs [projected to] be created nationwide in that time frame.” Jobs, or work creation, will come not from the traditional, large corporate, governmental sectors, but from the small and medium enterprises, an increasing number of which are owned and operated by women.

With a background in development work, specifically Women in Development, I and many others know that investing in women is a way to encourage change, and to positively affect the health and welfare of families in developing and transitional economies. It has been a programmatic approach of many developing agencies, not to mention the driving force behind Princess Máxima and her work with micro-credits here, and worldwide. To see the ‘developed’ world present statistics on the potential impact of female-owned enterprises was, well, interesting. In this case, it is women who are investing in themselves and as a result have the potential of significant impact - on their own lives as well as those of others.

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### Jobs vs. Work

If the 20th century is considered one in which people principally earned their income through full-time, permanent jobs, then the 21st century will be one in which self-employment becomes the norm. More and more people are working in non-traditional ways, as temps, part-timers, freelancers or as business owners. There is a shift towards looking for work, as opposed to looking for jobs or careers. And, among female-owned businesses, a resulting shift towards greater self-fulfilment and flexibility.

For many expatriate women arriving in the Netherlands, starting their own business can be a way of overcoming the difficulties of actually being able to find a job here, in a country foreign to them. This was the case for Malinder Kaur who ‘gave up’ the job search in her professional field of finance, and opted to start her own business pursuing her passion for photography. There was no room in the market for jewellery designer Ruchika Handa, who put her creativity to work when she started Laboni, designing and importing handcrafted pashminas directly from the artisans in India. For Katie Miller, starting Katie’s Cookies, was less an option than a ‘now or never’ step towards taking advantage of her arrival in the Netherlands. Ginny Mees tried the job route following her relocation to the Netherlands, but her past entrepreneurship experience got the better of her, and she has ‘not looked back’ since opening La Buena Vida.

In Eowyn Crisfield’s case, ‘breaking free from traditional employment altogether’ came about by necessity rather than choice. Her increased specialization in bilingualism, as a teacher and teacher-trainer, means that there are more opportunities outside the traditional career model than there are

within. Catherine Pawlow left the full-time corporate employment world for one in which she could focus her energy on something she was passionate about, and be in the 'driving seat of a different lifestyle'. Reina Pruijs of Rasberry Craft, also opted out of the full-time corporate employment model and into one that gives her pleasure in what she does; her work.

Speaking for myself, and Noah van Klaveren of Dvoot, no job in the world could provide us with the opportunity of combining our own interests and skills. For Noah it was fashion, design, writing and yoga, for me; with 'a hand in The Hague', it was writing, connecting people and being part of a collective.

### Not Alone

Just as those pursuing the job option require the assistance of employment and recruiting agencies, personal and or career coaches etc., so too do budding businesses. Starting a business requires just as much effort, time and dedication, and external support is just as welcome - and necessary. Sinead Hewson, of TpEBO, who chose the entrepreneur's path over a job after being in the Netherlands for a while, stresses that: "you have to make the effort to make things happen". However, not every entrepreneur needs to reinvent the wheel,

and discover everything on their own. There are experienced individuals, organizations that can assist, direct, keep you on track and support the process. For instance, the Women's Business Initiative International (WBII), which operates from The Hague and includes expatriate and Dutch women, has been a beacon of support to hundreds of female-owned businesses. Suzy Ogé, its founder, has coached, guided and encouraged countless women in their search for the right formula, and the members themselves have served one another well as businesses grew, got started or needed an impulse. It is "hard work, long hours, sometimes sleepless nights", according to José de Boer of Financieel Voorlichtingsbureau de Boer, but in her mind, worth every moment - as being "locked-up in employment is simply terrifying".

The female entrepreneurs mentioned in this article are members of the WBII or participants in CRAVE The Hague: two local initiatives that support, stimulate and encourage female entrepreneurship. Women's Business Initiative International, can be reached at 070 - 358 85 57, [www.wbii.nl](http://www.wbii.nl); CRAVE The Hague can be found on [www.thecravecompany.com/thehague/](http://www.thecravecompany.com/thehague/).



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