Do You Have What It Takes?

Entrepreneurs face many fears and challenges

What are you waiting for? You have great ideas and as an engineer, you know how to keep learning and adapting your skills to the marketplace. You have watched everyone around you become successful entrepreneurs, yet something is holding you back. Is it the fear of risk or, worse, the fear of failure? Many entrepreneurs don’t start their first venture until they are older, have a home, and a family. Women tend to avert risky ventures and will sacrifice a potentially prosperous future for a failsafe path that seems more stable. What does it take to become an entrepreneur, and what is the mindset that one needs to finally take the leap and start a new venture?

In this issue of IEEE Women in Engineering Magazine, we talk to women who have taken on the entrepreneurial challenge and succeeded. Having supportive families that stand beside their wives, daughters, and mothers while their loved one embarks on the entrepreneurial trek makes a tremendous difference. These energetic women have taken their ideas and turned them into real products and applications to benefit humanity. They are role models for all of us who have ever dreamed of leading our own companies and developing leading-edge technology.

IEEE Women in Engineering (WIE) can give you the network you need to connect with the experts in technology and business and introduce you to other individuals who have gone through the same fears and concerns while starting out on their own. How do you get funding? How do you write a business plan? What are the pros and cons of getting venture capital funding for your company? You supply the ideas and ask the questions, our IEEE community will supply the answers and help get you going.

I always say that WIE is pronounced “We,” because it takes all of us, women and men as a community, to make global change happen. One man who understood this better than anyone else was Jack Sherman. Jack was a WIE Affinity Group chair. Yes, a man, leading a group of men and women to help develop supportive and healthy work environments, reaching out to youth, showing them the wonders of engineering, and supporting young women to pursue science and technology careers. We learned so much from Jack and all of the IEEE was deeply saddened by his passing. When someone asks “Why would a man be an IEEE WIE member?” Jack’s legacy and spirit will continue to be our shining example of just how much can be accomplished to change lives when men and women work together. We are fortunate to share his story in this issue of IEEE Women in Engineering Magazine and grateful to his family for allowing us to interview them for this article.

In this issue we also interview a leader in Internet safety. Linda Criddle’s book, Look Both Ways, offers all of us a common sense approach to keeping our private lives private and our family safe on the Internet.

We continue to promote our members’ accomplishments and profile their work in our “WIE from Around the World” section of the magazine. I enjoy hearing from members and am always surprised when someone writes to me and says, “I don’t think I’ve done anything worthy of being highlighted in the magazine.”

I have not met an IEEE professional or Student Member that does not have an inspirational story to tell. Please do send in your biographies and let us help you realize just how much you have accomplished and how your stories can help others traveling along the same path.

In the last few issues, I have tried to incorporate more humor in the magazine, while I infuse a bit of technology history into the story. “The Good, the Bad, & the Ugly” column tries to show not only the real-life challenges we face everyday but also tries to present a lighter side balanced with humor.

We enjoy hearing stories from our WIE Affinity Groups all around the world, while we share the different perspectives of our members. You will meet a young lady from Pakistan and have the opportunity to compare her cultural experiences to those of your

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own. It is important for us to understand how the political and socioeconomic infrastructures of a country affect the education and opportunities for women and young girls. The solutions and methods we devise cannot be a “one-size-fits-all” approach. As engineers and researchers, we know that we must do a thorough and detailed investigation of the foundations of any problem before we propose new solutions. It is time we serve our members around the world with the same consideration and attention to bring about innovative change to improve the quality of health, education, and happiness for them and their families.

—Karen A. Panetta
Editor-in-Chief
IEEE Women in Engineering Magazine

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