

WENtrepreneur

HONG KONG'S ONLY MAGAZINE FOR AND BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS



How
'Agentic
AI' is
redefining
business

Entrepreneur of the Year Award

MEET THE WINNER & FINALISTS



3C's
OUR
STRATEGIC
PLAN

Lessons from my Journey

ADVICE FROM OUR FOUNDER



MEET THE INSPIRING LEADERS BEHIND WEN



Empowered Women Empower the World

BE A WEN MEMBER TODAY

- Access exclusive events with Chambers and the Hong Kong government
- Be at the forefront of SME transformation and advocacy in Hong Kong
- Connect with over 200 female-led businesses and engage with 1,600+ subscribers
- Access members-only events, opportunities, and collaborations
- Connect with a vibrant network of women leaders and changemakers
- Learn through exclusive workshops, webinars, and mentorship
- Grow your career and personal brand with tailored resources
- Lead and amplify your voice in our community and beyond



Ready to Rise with Us?

Be part of a movement that uplifts, inspired, and transform
Contact us at admin@wenhk.org to learn more

WENtrepreneur

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Message from our Chairwoman

It is an incredible honour to step into the role of Chairwoman for the Women Entrepreneurs Network (**WEN**). For over 40 years, **WEN** has been a beacon of empowerment, connection, and support for female entrepreneurs. I feel privileged to stand among such accomplished women and to contribute to this extraordinary organisation.

This year, we celebrate a remarkable milestone—40 years of **WEN**. This anniversary represents the strength, resilience, and determination of our members, past and present. Within this special issue, you'll discover inspiring stories of entrepreneurial journeys, our commitment to education, and the unwavering support we offer one another. Above all, it highlights the respect and camaraderie that unite us as a community.

While we honour our history, we also look forward with purpose. This year, **WEN** will focus on key initiatives designed to empower members to grow and thrive. These initiatives, centred on **Capital, Capacity, and Cybersecurity**, will address the critical challenges entrepreneurs face today. For more details, please refer to page 20 of this magazine.

To our members, thank you for your dedication—not only to your own businesses but also to lifting others within our community. To our strategic partners, we deeply appreciate your unwavering support, which allows us to extend our impact even further. And last, but certainly not least, to our Board Members, who give so much to this organisation—nothing would be possible without you.

As we celebrate this milestone, I am filled with optimism. Together, we'll continue to foster collaboration, innovation, and resilience, building an even brighter future for women in business.

Here's to celebrating our legacy and creating new opportunities for future generations.

Tarynn Hatton-Jones



Want to get involved? Email us at admin@wenhk.org and share your editorial ideas for our next issue! We also have exclusive advertising and sponsorship opportunities for targeting our exclusive women entrepreneurial membership database!



Woman Entrepreneur of the Year 2025 *Award*

Congratulations to the
outstanding finalists of the
WEN Woman Entrepreneur of
the Year Awards 2025!

We are thrilled to celebrate
their achievements, vision, and
unwavering determination,
setting new benchmarks for
innovation and leadership
in the entrepreneurial world.
Each finalist has demonstrated
not only exceptional business
acumen, but also a deep
commitment to empowering
others and making a positive
impact in the community.



Join us in congratulating our winner, Amrit Sethi of Excella Travel (HK) Ltd., and our two outstanding finalists, Lorena Fernández Chaves of Vive Hong Kong and Tricia Yap of Limitless. Each of these remarkable women has made significant contributions to their fields, exemplifying the power and impact of female entrepreneurship.



WINNER

Amrit Sethi is the second-generation co-leader of Excella Travel (HK) Ltd., a boutique travel agency originally founded by her father in 1956. Together with her two sisters, Amrit has helped guide the family legacy into a new era—offering bespoke, high-touch travel experiences for discerning global clients. She brings a blend of cultural insight, logistical expertise, and a passion for meaningful exploration. A champion of resilience and reinvention, Amrit is also an advocate for women-led businesses across Asia.

What inspired you to start your own business?

Though I am a second-generation co-leader in the travel agency, working alongside my sisters, I've seen it constantly transform — from flight bookings to visa processing and cruise arrangements. Each wave of change requires reinvention, and at times feels like starting a new business. For me, travel has always been a way to reset, awaken the senses, and escape the “Groundhog Day” routine. It has never been just about destinations, but about connection, culture, and memories that last a lifetime. I wanted to create journeys that go beyond sightseeing, offering experiences that are thoughtful, creative, and tailor-made. My vision has always been to help people create “bookmark memories” — moments so special they remain with them forever.

What has been the most challenging obstacle you have faced?

The Covid-19 pandemic was my greatest obstacle. Borders were closed for three years, and the travel industry nearly came to a halt. Instead of pausing, I looked for silver linings. I designed workshops such as “Dare to Live Like a Parisian Woman,” “Chakra Balancing,” and “Indian Cultural Trail.” These brought vicarious travel to those who were confined to Hong Kong, kept spirits alive, and unexpectedly inspired the growth of my inbound business. That period also taught me the value of resilience and creativity, and how innovation can turn challenges into opportunities.

Did you have any role models or mentors who influenced your path?

My family, business community, and friends have been pillars of encouragement. Their support through turbulent times showed me the true power of community. Volunteering as a guest moderator for Startup Grind also gave me the chance to interview founders from diverse industries. Those conversations reminded me that leadership comes in many forms: vision, compassion, agility, and persistence.

What is the most rewarding part of being an entrepreneur?

For me, it is seeing the joy in clients' eyes when they experience something unique. Curating specialised tours for European law and economics students this year was a proud milestone, as it allowed me to combine cultural insight with academic value. Earning my Hong Kong tour guide licence was another meaningful achievement — it deepened my knowledge of local history and enabled me to design richer, more insightful journeys. The most rewarding part of entrepreneurship is knowing that my work inspires curiosity, fosters connection, and creates lasting memories.

What advice would you give to aspiring female entrepreneurs?

Entrepreneurship is a journey filled with highs and lows. Challenges are inevitable, but they are also opportunities to grow. Learn to adapt, embrace change, and see setbacks as stepping stones that build character. Forge a strong support network — because no one succeeds alone — and keep learning and innovating. Most importantly, celebrate every step, big or small. Success is not only measured by outcomes, but also by resilience, creativity, and the impact you make along the way.



FINALIST

Lorena Fernández Chaves, a Uruguayan entrepreneur, founded Vive Hong Kong in 2015, offering immersive tours for Spanish and Portuguese-speaking visitors. Inspired by her 10,000-kilometer journey across China, she creates personalised experiences that foster cultural connections and cherished memories of Hong Kong.

What inspired you to start your own business?

I founded Vive Hong Kong in 2015 after a transformative trip to China. This 40-day journey evolved into five months of travel, revealing the magic of connecting with locals. My goal was to share personalised experiences that foster genuine cultural connections between the East and West.

What has been the most challenging obstacle you have faced?

Rebuilding our team after COVID has been a major challenge. The pandemic severely impacted tourism, and while pregnant with my second child, hiring tour guides was nearly impossible. Despite these obstacles, I'm fortunate to have built a remarkable team that is the heart and soul of Vive Hong Kong.

Did you have any role models or mentors who influenced your path?

My parents are my biggest role models, teaching me the value of dedication and resilience. My husband has also significantly influenced me with his inspiring work ethic and ability to motivate others, embodying our shared values of hard work and meaningful connections.

What is the most rewarding part of being an entrepreneur?

The most rewarding aspect is witnessing the impact of our work on people's lives. Crafting tours that create moments of connection and cultural understanding is incredibly fulfilling, especially when guests share how they felt immersed in Hong Kong's vibrant culture.

What advice would you give to aspiring female entrepreneurs?

Surround yourself with a supportive network and follow your passion. Embrace challenges as opportunities for growth, and don't fear the messiness of entrepreneurship. Your unique perspective is your greatest asset—use it to create something meaningful.



FINALIST

Tricia Yap is a dynamic entrepreneur and a leading voice in women's health in Hong Kong. With over 20 years of experience, she has built successful businesses focused on empowering women to achieve optimal well-being. Tricia's unique approach combines functional medicine, nutrition, and strength training to help women thrive at every stage of life.

What inspired you to start your own business?

When I wanted to switch from management consulting to health and fitness, I faced rejection from gyms, even the one I trained at. After having doors slammed in my face, I decided to create my own opportunity. Within six months, I co-founded Bikini Fit, the first women's only fitness community in Hong Kong, and I've launched several businesses since.

What has been the most challenging obstacle you have faced?

The hardest obstacle was when my first business partner tried to kick me out and started another venture behind my back. Leaving everything behind was incredibly tough. Additionally, facing the shutdown of gyms during COVID was another significant challenge.

Did you have any role models or mentors who influenced your path?

Absolutely! Fiona Nott, now CEO of The Women's Foundation, helped me find the courage to start. I learned from strength coaches like Andrew Wong Kee and Eoin Lacey. Kimberley Whiley supported me through COVID, while Maaike Steinbach, founder of FemTech Future, continually inspires me in business and motherhood.

What is the most rewarding part of being an entrepreneur?

I am living my passion daily.

What advice would you give to aspiring female entrepreneurs?

Be prepared to go against the grain, take risks, and pay yourself last. Juggle everything and don't undervalue yourself—even when people say you're too expensive. Show them why you are.

**Next year's Award Nominations open
from March 2026**

Lifetime Award Winners: Kim Whiley & Elizabeth Thomson

We are delighted to introduce our new **Lifetime Achievement Award**, celebrating two extraordinary women who with enduring impact, leadership, and dedication have inspired generations of entrepreneurs and transformed our community.



What our members have to say about Kim:

"Kim most definitely fired something within me! I met her through a family friend and I was around 8 months pregnant at the time with my second son. Kim asked me what am I going to do now for work as I haven't worked since having kids. I said I don't know what I can do now with two kids? She told me when she gave birth she was signing contracts and being a major boss babe!! She asked me what I dream about and I told her I had this crazy idea. Kim pushed me to go after my dream and helped me so much with advice in the early days.

Kim is a phenomenal woman!"

KATYA VIRSHILAS, Ballroom Bees

"I have known Kimberly for over 25 years. She has been very hardworking, full of initiatives, productive and organised. She is eager to learn new things and to improve. If she encounters a problem, she just tackles it head on. She sets goals and achieves them. She is a person that makes things happen. She is kind, supportive, helpful and decisive. Due to her leadership skills and her wealth of experience as a business owner, Kimberly is the person I seek for advice. she is a great mentor for business owners."

SUZANNE LIU DUDDEK, CPA, S. Liu & Co.

"'How can I help?' is a phrase I have heard Kim say repeatedly. And each time she says it, whether to me or another woman entrepreneur, I am always amazed at how she continually looks for ways to help. She is there whether it's to pass on advice, a contact, or to be a sounding board to help you feel you aren't alone. She has shown up time and time again for the members of the WEN community. To me, her "how can I help" attitude is what WEN is all about."

MAURA THOMPSON, Sassy

"Kim Whiley has been so much more than a mentor; she was the person who took me under her wing and gave me the emotional support and stability I needed to thrive. Her trusted, honest guidance helped me find my clarity, and watching my growth—from a new entrepreneur to a board member—has been a gift. She is the heart of WEN."

ROWENA GONZALES, Liquid Interiors

"I am deeply grateful to Kim for her unwavering support and dedication to (WEN) and to women in business over the past several years. Through every initiative, conversation, and opportunity, Kim has been a guiding light—uplifting, mentoring, and championing the success of so many women, including myself. Her ability to inspire confidence and foster a sense of belonging is truly exceptional. The progress and growth we have all witnessed and experienced within WEN is, in no small part, due to her passion and vision."

SHARON MCENEFF, T8 Corporate & Business Services



Lessons from My Journey

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

BY ELIZABETH THOMSON

In the 1980s, as a member of BPW (Business and Professional Women), I started my journey with International Corporate Services Limited. I had a vision of working primarily with women-owned businesses, but I quickly realised that there was little information available in Hong Kong on how to set up and run a business, despite the city's reputation as an entrepreneurial hub.

Under BPW's guidance, I organised evening seminars focused on the legal aspects of starting a business. These events, hosted in private clubs, included dinner, drinks, and networking, and were incredibly successful—more profitable than any other BPW events.

As our organising group grew, we approached BPW for some funding to support our seminars, but they declined. This led us to establish **The Women Business Owners Club**, with an Executive Committee of 12 women, including myself as Chair. We expanded our meetings to cover various topics, attracting over a hundred women entrepreneurs each time. Most board meetings were held at my home, making for great networking and bonding moments.

After about ten years, I felt it was time for others to step up as leaders. Though I was asked to resume my role as Chair, I declined, as my business was thriving and required my attention. A few years later, *Kim Whiley* approached me with the idea of relaunching as **The Women Entrepreneurs Network**, which has since blossomed into the vibrant community we have today.

FUTURE IMPACT OF WEN

WEN should become an indispensable resource for all women entrepreneurs in Hong Kong. I envision two distinct sections: one for startups and businesses under five years, and another for senior women entrepreneurs, each with tailored programming to meet their specific needs. **WEN** must be

recognised as a cornerstone of the thriving entrepreneurial landscape, serving as a pioneer for women's entrepreneurship. We should collaborate with banks, law firms, accounting firms, government departments, and universities eager to provide advice and resources. Ultimately, our mission is to help women entrepreneurs acquire the skills and knowledge to grow their businesses and exit with cash in hand, ensuring financial stability for their families.

HOW AND WHY I STARTED MY BUSINESS (1980-2012)

In April 1977, I was admitted as a solicitor and barrister to the Ontario Law Society after earning two law degrees from McGill. I fully expected to spend my career as a lawyer, having never been exposed to the worlds of business or entrepreneurship.

Shortly after my admission, I took what was supposed to be a two-week vacation in Hong Kong to visit my good friend Eric, who had moved there from London, Ontario. His reasoning was simple: after years in university, I deserved a break before settling down to work.

I flew in from New York, enjoying a drink and a smoke in the back of the plane. There, I met a U.S. attorney who had become a successful entrepreneur. He invited me to a birthday party, and during the celebration, he bombarded me with questions. When I jokingly asked if it was a job interview, he replied, "Yes!" That moment marked the start of my unexpected journey.



I became involved in an international bankruptcy case in 1977, which included Hong Kong, the PRC (before it opened to the world), Taiwan, Austria, Canada, and the USA. I was hooked on the international scene; returning to Canada to handle small-town legal matters felt unimaginable.

My second role was as legal counsel for a private bank, which I joined in late 1977. Unfortunately, the bank went bankrupt in April 1980. I saw warning signs but was too young and naive to act. While the men fled town, I stayed out of a sense of duty to ensure our clients were represented in the bankruptcy. This commitment led me to start International Corporate Services Limited from my dining room table to help those who had lost millions.

Initially, I planned to stay for just a year, but my network across Asia, Europe, and North America grew. Even without email or mobile phones, the telex in my kitchen became my lifeline. As demand increased, I hired part-time staff, and soon our apartment overflowed with desks. We eventually moved to a tiny office on Leighton Road, later expanding to Hennessy Road. When we sold the company, thanks to my husband's M&A expertise, we had 65 employees and about 10,000 square feet of space.

Reflecting on my journey, if I were starting today, I would be more strategic and have a clear exit plan. I wish I had envisioned an end game from the beginning. I discovered my strengths in marketing, sales, and business development, and while my legal background was helpful, law was never meant to be my only career. That's how I became an entrepreneur! **W**



ADVICE TO WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

- ✓ When starting a business, create a clear plan for the next 1, 3, and 5 years.
- ✓ Continuously revise and revisit that plan to stay on track.
- ✓ Seek advice and support—don't try to do it all alone.
- ✓ Be realistic about your strengths and weaknesses; fill gaps with expert help.
- ✓ Aim high and think big; focus on growing your business, not just doing the work.
- ✓ Network, network, network—build connections that can support your journey.

Additionally I recommend **Guerilla Marketing** and **The E-Myth**, my favourite entrepreneur books.



ACHIEVEMENTS AND WHAT I'M MOST PROUD OF

I'm incredibly proud of our family's charitable foundation, **The Amber Foundation Limited**, and its impact on the environment through **The Toiletries Project**, as well as supporting EM young women with scholarships and our **EMPOWER** programme. Thanks to the hard work my husband, *Kishore Sakhrani*, and I put into ICS TRUST, we could establish this foundation. For over 20 years, we've organised hygiene kit collections for charities in Hong Kong and beyond. Our son, *James Thomson-Sakhrani*, now leads The Toiletries Project, which began as his Eagle Scout project. We've graduated 200 EM young women and are launching an Alumnae Network to support their careers.

SPOTLIGHT

TARYNN HATTON-JONES

WEN is shining a spotlight on Members who have had great wins, overcame obstacles, used innovative approaches or made other strides as an entrepreneur and who are ready to share their tips with you!



BURNT ORINGE INTERNATIONAL LTD.
sourcing agency to the world

Business Nature: Procurement Company Specialising in FF&E

Business Start Date: 2009

Best Achievement to Date:

Surviving global financial crisis, pandemics, geo-political issues and trade wars, whilst raising a family and enjoying every minute.

One Thing to Do Differently:

Believing in myself earlier

www.burntoringe-intl.com



nearly destroyed it. This taught me the importance of staying agile and ready to pivot; flexibility and quick thinking are essential for survival and success in business.

What is the next step for your business?

Integrating AI into our processes to enhance furniture procurement for clients and factories. We're investing in our own AI system, which we believe will revolutionise interactions and set a new standard for efficiency in our industry.

What makes **WEN particularly special to you?**

WEN stands out for its supportive female entrepreneurs—non-judgemental, receptive, and eager to help—making my journey easier and fulfilling.

Considering the current and future trends among women entrepreneurs, how do you envision **WEN evolving, and what's next for the organisation?**

WEN will evolve by expanding resources, embracing digital transformation, and fostering inclusivity to meet the needs of women entrepreneurs. We'll enhance mentorship, connect members to global opportunities, and promote sustainability.

Our focus remains on empowering women, amplifying their success, and building a thriving, innovative, and supportive entrepreneurial community for the future.

As the Chairwoman of **WEN, what message would you like to convey to emerging entrepreneurs?**

Entrepreneurship isn't easy, but if you don't try, you'll never know your potential. Believe in yourself and tap into the support our **WEN** community offers.

What are your observations regarding women using technology in business, and what recommendations do you have for them?

Women are embracing technology to innovate and scale their businesses. My recommendation: stay curious, invest in learning emerging tools, and leverage tech to enhance efficiency, reach global markets, and drive impact. **W**

Can you share your entrepreneurial journey with us?

As a former banker, the 2008 Lehman Brothers collapse revealed my entrepreneurial spirit. Calm under pressure, I used my retrenchment package to launch Burnt Oringe International, initially an organic bedding company that evolved into something entirely new.

How do you define and measure success in your business?

Success in entrepreneurship differs from that in the corporate world; sometimes, mere survival is considered an achievement. For me, it's about balancing meaningful projects, happy clients, and a fulfilled team.

What have been your biggest lessons learned along the way?

The world can change in an instant. My business emerged from a global catastrophe, and ironically, COVID-19

TOP TIPS

- **Adaptability is Your Superpower**
The business world is unpredictable; success relies on your ability to pivot and navigate challenges, rather than avoiding them. Stay flexible!
- **Build Strong Relationships**
Your network is your net worth. Build relationships with mentors, peers, and clients; trust is essential for personal and professional growth.
- **Focus on Progress, Not Perfection**
Perfection can paralyse you. Take small steps, launch imperfectly, and learn as you go. Keep moving!

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The Power of Networking: A Full-Circle Journey

BY CHRISTA NUIJS



Seven years ago, still recovering from a divorce and a daunting career gap, I would never have imagined where a simple part-time role would lead me. But sometimes the most transformative journeys begin with the smallest steps, and mine began at **WEN**.

Like many women re-entering the workforce, I felt overwhelmed by the prospect of rebuilding my professional identity from scratch. The corporate world had moved on without me, and I questioned whether I still had something valuable to offer. Luckily, an opportunity arose, and I began working as a part-time administrator at **WEN**. What I thought would be a step back into traditional employment turned out to be something far more profound.

Working within **WEN** wasn't just about managing schedules and posting updates, it was about witnessing daily the incredible power of women supporting women. I watched members celebrate each other's victories, offer genuine advice during challenges, and create opportunities that extended far beyond formal networking events. The energy was infectious, and I found myself not just administering the network, but becoming deeply inspired by it.

That inspiration sparked something I hadn't felt before: entrepreneurial ambition. Surrounded by women who had dared to build their own businesses, I began to see my own potential differently. The skills I was using to support **WEN** weren't just job functions; they were valuable services that other non-profits and female founders desperately needed.

The transition from employee to entrepreneur felt natural within the **WEN** ecosystem. When I launched my sole proprietorship, I wasn't starting from zero. The network I had helped nurture now nurtured me in return. Recommendations flowed freely, and the majority of my early clients came directly from **WEN** connections who had seen my work firsthand and trusted my capabilities.

As my client base grew and my confidence soared, I realised I had outgrown the limitations of working alone. The collaborative spirit I witnessed at **WEN** inspired me to seek business partners who shared my vision. Together with two other entrepreneurs, we co-founded The Right Mix Ltd., transforming from a solo venture into a comprehensive creative branding and marketing agency with a mission to support female founders.

And now, as I'm about to enter into a board position at a network community of professional women in Norway, my relationship with **WEN** has come full circle beautifully. One of the key takeaways I have from this journey is that networking isn't just about collecting business cards or making strategic connections. It's about finding your tribe, people who see your potential even when you can't see it yourself, who celebrate your successes as their own, and who create a foundation of trust that transforms professional relationships into lasting partnerships. **W**

To the next 40 years!



CHRISTA NUIJS
Co-Founder & COO

The Right Mix Ltd.

WEN SOCIALS[☆]



The Art of Entrepreneurship

explored how to sustain the entrepreneurial spirit and leverage the resources available to drive success. Keynote addressed by **Hester Spiegel**, who shared invaluable insights on accessing capital - knowing how and when to secure funding, and understanding when it can truly benefit your business. Her advice was practical, actionable, and inspiring for all who attended.



WEN SOCIALS





Introducing **WENStart**



Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

In today's fast-paced business landscape, the journey of an entrepreneur is often fraught with challenges and uncertainties. For women, these challenges can be amplified by societal expectations and limited access to networks. Recognising the unique hurdles faced by women entrepreneurs, the Women Entrepreneurs Network (**WEN**)'s **WENStart**, a six-month Mentoring & Coaching Programme designed to foster both business and personal growth for aspiring entrepreneurs and startups within the **WEN** community.

OBJECTIVES OF **WENStart**

The objectives of the **WENStart** programme are multifaceted, focusing on creating lasting connections and providing practical support. Here's what participants can expect:

1. Building Long-Lasting Relationships

The cornerstone of **WENStart** is the mentor-mentee relationship. The programme encourages participants to work collaboratively, fostering connections that can last beyond the duration of the programme. These relationships are built on trust, respect, and mutual interests, creating a supportive community of women entrepreneurs.

2. Navigating Challenges

Starting and growing a business comes with a myriad of challenges, from financial management to market positioning. Mentors will provide guidance and support to help mentees navigate these hurdles, offering insights drawn from their own experiences. This support can be crucial for young entrepreneurs seeking to overcome obstacles with confidence.

3. Knowledge Sharing

In the fast-evolving world of business, staying informed about industry trends and best practices is essential. Through knowledge sharing, mentors will help mentees understand market dynamics, ensuring they are equipped to make informed decisions. This exchange of information can empower mentees to innovate and adapt in a competitive environment.

4. Skill Development

Leadership, communication, and decision-making are critical skills for any entrepreneur. **WENStart** places a strong emphasis on developing these competencies. Through workshops, one-on-one sessions, and feedback from mentors, participants will enhance their abilities, preparing them for the demands of entrepreneurship.

5. Networking Opportunities

A strong network can be a game-changer for any business. **WENStart** encourages mentors and mentees to share their networks, facilitating connections that could lead to new opportunities, partnerships, and collaborations. This expanded

THE GENESIS OF **WENStart**

WENStart was created with a clear purpose: to connect young, ambitious entrepreneurs with experienced business leaders who can offer valuable insights and support. The programme is tailored for entrepreneurs with less than five years of business experience—whether they are just starting out or looking to scale their existing ventures. By facilitating meaningful relationships between mentors and mentees, **WENStart** aims to create a nurturing environment that promotes learning, growth, and empowerment.

network can open doors that may have otherwise remained closed.

6. Objective Feedback

Constructive feedback is vital for growth. Mentors will provide objective insights into areas for improvement, helping mentees refine their business strategies and approaches. This feedback loop is essential for fostering continuous improvement and development.

THE STRUCTURE OF WENStart

The WENStart programme is designed to be flexible and responsive to the needs of individual entrepreneurs. Here's how it works:

Application Process

Interested mentees will submit an application form detailing their business, vision, goals, and specific areas where they seek support. This information is crucial for matching them with the right mentors who can offer targeted guidance.

Mentor Matching

Once applications are received, the WENStart team will reach out to potential mentors whose expertise aligns with the needs outlined by the mentees. This tailored approach ensures that each pairing is beneficial and relevant.

Coaching Support

In addition to mentorship, WENStart offers the opportunity for mentees to be supported by an International Coach Federation (ICF) certified coach. This coaching component is designed to help entrepreneurs explore their goals, identify obstacles, and develop strategies for overcoming challenges.

Focused Areas of Support

The programme recognises that each entrepreneur's journey is unique. Mentees may require assistance in various areas, such as streamlining processes, creating business proposals, or budgeting. Mentors will provide practical advice, share templates, and offer insights based on their experiences.

Call to Action for Women Entrepreneurs

WENStart is not just about receiving guidance; it's also about giving back. The programme invites experienced women entrepreneurs within the WEN community to step up and volunteer their expertise as mentors. By sharing their knowledge and experiences, these mentors can play a pivotal role in shaping the next generation of women leaders.

Early Registration Encouragement

As WENStart prepares for its next mentorship cohort, early registration is encouraged for mentees. Signing up early not only ensures a smoother matching process but also allows participants to engage with the programme more fully from the outset.

CONCLUSION

WENStart is more than just a mentoring programme; it is a movement aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs to thrive in their business endeavours. By fostering meaningful connections, providing targeted support, and facilitating skill development, WENStart is poised to make a significant impact on the entrepreneurial landscape for women.

As we embark on this exciting journey, we invite aspiring entrepreneurs to take the leap and apply for WENStart. Together, let's build a vibrant community of women who support and uplift each other in the pursuit of their dreams. Join us in shaping a brighter future for women in business! **W**

Testimonials

"My most memorable moment is having those, what my coach would call the aha moments. It's when everything makes sense. You're kind of joining the dots of, like, your ideas, your experiences, and it's all coming to a moment where they're explaining something."

CHERISSE

"The most memorable or the most useful moment for me was when my mentors told me to approach entrepreneurship with courage and focus and to be courageous enough to understand which client fits your requirements."

SMRITI



For those interested in joining as a mentor/mentee - reach out to **admin@wenhk.org**

Mentorship registration deadline: 9 December 2025

From Tea Ladies to Trailblazers:

How Hong Kong's Women have Transformed Business and Society

If you strolled the bustling streets of Hong Kong in the 1960s, you'd likely see nimble-fingered women sewing by hand in crowded factories, or perhaps pouring tea in the city's colonial gentlemen's clubs—definitely not sitting at the boardroom table or at the bar. Public life, like business, was dominated by men: women were often relegated to support roles both at work and at home. But over the next sixty years, these women quietly, then boldly, reshaped their city. The story of business for women in Hong Kong is every bit as dynamic, dramatic, and cosmopolitan as the city itself.

BY SHARON MCENEFF

The 1960s: INVISIBLE ENGINES

Hong Kong's economic miracle began on the backs of its industrious women. In the 1960s, the city was a manufacturing powerhouse. Female workers made up the vast majority of garment and toy factory labour. Long hours, tough work, and tough management were standard. Few could imagine a woman running the factory, let alone opening her own business. Social life mirrored professional barriers. In Central, gilded plaques marked the entrances to exclusive social clubs like the Hong Kong Club or the Jockey Club. These bastions of old colonial power didn't admit women as members—their wives and daughters might attend an annual ball, but the real networking and deal-making was strictly clubmen-only.

The 1980s: CRACKS IN THE GLASS

Fast forward to the 1980s; the city was booming. Skyscrapers were climbing higher, but women's business prospects were still running on tradition. Most women continued to cluster in clerical, administrative, and low-wage service jobs. Ambitious young women might join big corporations, but rarely broke into leadership circles. The phrase "old boys' network" was said with a sigh of resignation—it was both a reality and an unwritten rule. That exclusion extended to immigration law. If a foreign businessman brought his family to Hong Kong, his wife (never his unmarried partner) and their children could get dependent visas—provided their marriage certificates and bank statements withstood the scrutiny of stone-faced colonial immigration officers, unless

The phrase 'old boys' network' was said with a sigh of resignation—it was both a reality and an unwritten rule.

you were British. But while these wives could enjoy the city's social life, taking a job of their own required navigating a bureaucratic maze and (often) sacrificing their dependent status. The barriers were wall-like, and many simply didn't try.

Clubs Open Their Doors—and Old Order Shifts

While Hong Kong cheered its capitalist miracle, women looked for inroads to the heart of power. The city's social clubs were more than a pastime - they were where business relationships were sparked and nurtured. It wasn't until the late 1980s and 1990s that a long campaign by women (and a nudge towards modernity) forced many such institutions to open their doors. The Hong Kong Jockey Club, one of the city's oldest and most influential social institutions, began to admit women as members in 1996 - a revolutionary move at the time. This shift was about more than cocktails and horse races: it meant women had new access to the informal, but critical, networks that drove business deals and professional advancement.

The 1990s: BUILDING MOMENTUM

Hong Kong in the 1990s was lurching—from colonial crossroads to a Chinese city of the future. Women, too, were crossing new frontiers. More accessed local universities or studied abroad, and joined the city's banks, law firms, and ad agencies. A handful became pioneers, starting chic boutiques in Central or founding companies on the newly energetic tech scene. Immigration rules, however, creaked on. Notably, British passport holders could work in Hong Kong without requiring a dependency or separate work visa until 1997, enjoying a freedom not extended to most other nationalities. Dependent visas were

At a Glance

1960s

Women vital in factories, invisible in boardrooms or business clubs.

1970s-1980s

Most opportunities in low-wage work; dependent visas only for married wives, no work rights; clubs shut to women.

1990s

More women pursue education; a few start their own businesses; cracks appear in club doors.

Late 1990s

Clubs like the Jockey Club and Hong Kong Club admit women.



still strictly for legally married spouses and children under 18. Wives could live in the city, but working was generally off-limits unless they braved the separate work permit process—a step few took. Meanwhile, clubs began to see more female business leaders, their presence slowly shifting the city’s culture. Social rules and networking rituals were evolving. The Hong Kong Club, after years of debate and a little public embarrassment, opened its doors to women members in 1997. As more women entered these storied institutions, they found not only business opportunities, but a chance to shape the rules.

The 2000s: BREAKING STEREOTYPES, CLAIMING SPACE

Enter the 21st century: Hong Kong reached new heights of global chic. Women were stepping onto centre stage - sometimes literally (Hong Kong’s pop divas and business tycoons alike were now household names). The legendary Nina Wang, who turned Chinachem into a property juggernaut, became an icon of female entrepreneurship. Around this time, more professional women and expats began arriving - not just as spouses, but as the main breadwinners.

Visa policies were slower to catch up. Unless you were in a sector with critical shortages of skilled professionals such as teachers and doctors, dependent spouses still found themselves largely unable to work, with exceptions only for those persistent enough to secure their own work visas. However, grassroots groups and international business chambers began to lobby for change, highlighting the waste of talent that resulted.

The 2010s: FLOURISHING IN A WIRED WORLD

A revolution took place as smartphones and WIFI swept across

the city. Suddenly, women - whether trailing spouses, career professionals, or local entrepreneurs - could build businesses online. The rise of e-commerce was a game-changer, allowing countless women to launch ventures from home or coworking spaces, unconstrained by the limitations of traditional office hours or old-school clubs.

Government and NGOs started offering support: networking events, mentoring schemes, even seed funding for female founders. The Women’s Foundation and global initiatives like SheEO provided safe spaces for ambition and innovation. Immigration rules finally relaxed: as of 2006, dependent spouses of employment visa holders could work without getting separate permits, and recognition of different family structures slowly grew.

Today: THE FUTURE IS (ALMOST) HERE

Fast-forward to present-day Hong Kong, and women are everywhere: heading banks, running startups, leading creative agencies, and sitting (finally) at the bar as well as the boardroom. Clubs and chambers of commerce not only admit women, but sometimes feature them as presidents. Women’s business forums are well-attended and covered in the press. Visa policies are more inclusive, and support for female professionals is at an all-time high. However, challenges remain—a stubborn gender pay gap persists, senior management is still male-heavy, and cultural obstacles, while crumbling, haven’t vanished.

From tea ladies to trailblazers, the women of Hong Kong have claimed their seat at the table—sometimes by pulling up their own chair. Their journey is far from finished, but their impact is written across the skyline and in the spirit of Asia’s world city. **W**

2000s

Female founders build iconic businesses; expat women arrive as professionals, not just spouses.

Mid 2000s

Dependent spouses allowed to work; cultural networks strengthened.

2010s

E-commerce revolution, more support for female entrepreneurs; greater inclusivity in visas and business spaces.

Today

Women are visible at all levels, though some barriers persist.

Capital, Capacity, Cybersecurity: A New Era for Women Entrepreneurs



As we embark on a new year for the Women Entrepreneurs Network (WEN), we are focused on equipping our members with the tools to thrive in an evolving business environment. For 2025–2026, we have introduced a strategic plan centred on the 3C’s—Capital, Capacity, and Cybersecurity. These topics have been chosen for their relevance and impact, addressing the key challenges and opportunities entrepreneurs face today.


At **WEN**, we treat the organisation as we would our own businesses—having a clear plan ensures we deliver value and purpose. The 3C’s provide a framework to help our members grow, innovate, and succeed in a competitive market. While these initiatives will take centre stage, we will continue to host all our other events, maintaining a comprehensive calendar of education, networking, and collaboration.

THE 3C’S ARE DESIGNED TO EMPOWER MEMBERS TO UPSKILL IN CRITICAL AREAS:

CAPITAL	CAPACITY	CYBERSECURITY & TECHNOLOGY
<p>Develop the confidence to pitch, secure funding, and structure your business for growth, scalability, or resale. Accessing the right resources at the right time can open doors to remarkable opportunities. To support you, we’ll host in-depth discussions with the HKTDC, HK Science Park, venture capitalists, angel investors, banks, and crowdfunding strategists. These sessions will equip you with the insights and tools to navigate your investment journey confidently and effectively.</p>	<p>Master the art of scaling your business by expanding operations, onboarding talent efficiently, and optimising processes with tools like AI. Building capacity is the foundation for sustainable growth. We’ll connect you with headhunters and HR leaders to learn how to identify and attract top talent, while experts will guide you on optimising staff performance, fostering company culture, and ensuring long-term retention.</p>	<p>In an increasingly digital world, safeguarding your business and leveraging the right technology are critical for long-term resilience. We’ll engage with government officials and military personnel to underline the importance of cybersecurity. Additionally, industry-leading security experts will provide actionable advice on protecting your business, securing sensitive data, and staying ahead of digital threats.</p>

This approach combines actionable insights with expert guidance, ensuring you’re equipped to excel in these key areas. Over the coming year, we’ll provide regular updates on AI and its role in the 3C’s. Alongside our **AI 101 Series**, we’ll still be running our Circle events, mentorship programme, business retreat, various lunch & learns and our usual networking events.


At **WEN**, we are committed to empowering members to stay ahead of the curve, navigate challenges with confidence, and embrace opportunities for growth. Through the 3C’s and ongoing learning initiatives, we are shaping a future where women entrepreneurs thrive through innovation, collaboration, and resilience. **W**



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WEN'2026 Calendar of Events



CAPITAL	CYBERSECURITY		CAPACITY
Q4 2025	Q1 2026	Q2 2026	Q3 2026
<p>NOVEMBER</p> <p>SOLO SISTERS: RUNNING & GROWING YOUR SOLO BUSINESS</p> <p>CONNECT & COLLABORATE</p> <p>XERO ESSENTIALS: A QUICK START FOR BUSINESS OWNERS</p> <p>LUNCH & LEARN: THE POWER OF VIRTUAL ASSISTANTS</p> <p>DECEMBER</p> <p>MINGLE & JINGLE: A FESTIVE NETWORKING SOIREE</p> <p>HOW TO KEEP BUSINESS RUNNING DURING THE HOLIDAYS</p> <p>CROWDFUNDING MASTERCLASS WITH LIFT WOMEN</p>	<p>JANUARY</p> <p>WEN 101 SERIES: AI 101</p> <p>WENSTART 2026</p> <p>THE ART OF PUBLIC SPEAKING</p> <p>2026 RESET RESILIENCE</p> <p>FEBRUARY</p> <p>YEAR OF THE FIRE HORSE: FENG SHUI & ASTROLOGY OUTLOOK 2026</p> <p>ENTREPRENEURS DAY - HKTDC</p> <p>CNY NETWORKING</p> <p>MARCH</p> <p>LUNCH & LEARN: TECHNOLOGY</p> <p>40TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER</p>	<p>APRIL</p> <p>AI TECH SUMMIT - HKCEC</p> <p>EXPERT CHAT</p> <p>VIBE CODING</p> <p>MAY</p> <p>NEW TECHNOLOGY TRENDS</p> <p>JUNE</p> <p>AI FOR BUSINESS - REVIEWED</p>	<p>SEPTEMBER</p> <p>LUNCH & LEARN: AI FOR HR</p> <p>HIGH PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP TRAINING</p> <p>POST SUMMER RESET</p> <p>2026 GALA</p> <p>Q4 2026</p> <p>OCTOBER</p> <p>HOW TO RECOGNISE TALENT FAST</p> <p>NOVEMBER</p> <p>FAST AND EFFECTIVE ONBOARDING</p> <p>PRESENTATION SKILLS WORKSHOP</p>

Disclaimer: certain events are currently in development. Details for these may change without prior notice.



Your AI Workforce Has Arrived:

How 'Agentic AI' is Redefining Business

The conversation around artificial intelligence has moved from the theoretical to the tangible.

We've entered the "agentic era", where AI is no longer just a tool for analysis but an autonomous "agent" that executes tasks, makes decisions, and collaborates under human guidance. This isn't a future concept; it's a present-day reality creating a new competitive landscape where companies are building a hybrid human-digital workforce.



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The Shift to Scaled Deployment and Real ROI

The agentic shift is happening at scale. A 2025 Google Cloud report reveals that 52% of organisations using generative AI have already deployed AI agents in a production environment. These aren't isolated experiments; 39% of companies have launched more than ten distinct agents across their business.

The results are compelling: 74% of all organisations see a positive return on investment (ROI) from their AI initiatives, a figure that jumps to a staggering 88% for early adopters who strategically invest in agentic AI. The highest returns are seen in customer service, marketing, and cybersecurity, where agents are automating workflows and freeing up employees for higher-value work.

AI Agents in Action Across Industries

Pioneers are already demonstrating the power of this new paradigm. Biotech firm Moderna is democratising expertise, with employees creating over 750 custom AI agents to accelerate everything from clinical trials to legal reviews. In finance, JPMorgan Chase is building foundational intelligence to automate complex, multi-step financial tasks, from client service to risk management. Meanwhile, the manufacturing sector is creating "smart factories" where AI agents enable autonomous operations, using predictive maintenance and AI-powered quality control to boost productivity by up to 30%.

The Need for Organisational Rewiring

Capturing this value requires more than technology; it demands a

fundamental “rewiring” of the organisation. This means redesigning core workflows and, critically, fostering a new alliance between HR and IT to manage the new hybrid workforce. Success is overwhelmingly tied to C-suite sponsorship, with 78% of organisations with strong executive backing reporting positive ROI.

The Future of Work and Skills

This transformation is reshaping the skills needed to succeed. The demand for technical skills like “AI and big data” is surging, with workers who possess them commanding wage premiums of up to 56%. Paradoxically, as AI handles more routine cognitive tasks, uniquely human-centric skills like creative thinking, leadership, and strategic oversight are becoming more valuable than ever.

The agentic enterprise is here. Leaders who act now to develop a coherent AI strategy, transform their organisational structures, and invest in a dual-pronged talent strategy will not just survive the disruption—they will define the next era of innovation and growth. **W**

MEET THE EXPERT



SAPTARSHI MUKERJI
Technologist & AI Leader

Saptarshi Mukerji, a technologist and AI leader with 19+ years of experience, drives global digital transformation as Co-Founder and CTO of SAP Alliance and Curiominds. Formerly Chief Data Officer at HSBC and leader at IBM, Infiniti, Spark NZ, and Infosys, he advances human-centered, ethical, and agentic AI — reshaping industries through innovation, empathy, and intelligent automation.

“As AI handles more routine cognitive tasks, uniquely human-centric skills like creative thinking, leadership, and strategic oversight are becoming more valuable than ever.”

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WEN SOCIALS



Expert Chat Event

Four inspiring women held an Expert Chat session at Cafe8 in a small round table discussion. Our 4 experts; **Joanna Hotung**, Director from Hotung Mills Education Foundation discussed 'What are the matters that you consider when setting up your business' with a view to selling it one day. **Sharlene Jacquier**, from Joint Dynamics discussed 'Managing Staff through Transitions and Tough Times', **Shea Stanley**, from Little Steps Asia discussed 'Navigating social media trends in 2025', and **Elsa Law**, from Elsa Law & Co. Solicitors discussed 'Common legal issues that a business owner encounters when running a business'.



Connect & Collaborate

A fun evening of drinks, laughs, and meeting new faces.



Join us for the **Connect & Collaborate** happening every month, open to members and non-members.



Empowering Connections

Our Chair and Vice Chairperson attended the **SC WIN Community Networking Event** on 21 October 2025—an inspiring morning dedicated to meaningful connection and collaboration. The session fostered valuable dialogue among accomplished female founders and industry partners, promoting shared learning, strategic insight, and the celebration of women's leadership across diverse business sectors.

Game Plan: 2025!

Our board meeting solidified our vision and key initiatives to drive us forward. With a dynamic team behind us, we're also thrilled to welcome Michelle to the admin staff as we bid a fond farewell to the amazing Bec.





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Why Financial Literacy isn't Optional for Women Entrepreneurs Anymore



Over the years, I've spoken to many businesswomen in Hong Kong—smart, passionate, hardworking women who are brilliant at what they do. Yet when it comes to finance, many quietly admit: “I just go with my gut,” or “Numbers aren't my thing.”

They're not alone. A 2025 QuickBooks/Intuit study found that 42% of small business owners had little or no financial literacy before starting out. Even with accounting software, many still rely on manual spreadsheets or scattered tracking systems that make it hard to see the big picture.

One client once told me, “I'm confused, but committed.” Her business was growing, but she had no clear view of her costs, cash flow, or break-even point. She wasn't sure if her pricing made sense or whether she could afford to keep going. Together, we built a budget, set up a forecasting tool, and reviewed her monthly reports in plain English. In just three months, she went from financially foggy to financially focused—making decisions with confidence.

Here's the truth: understanding balance sheets, income statements, and cash flow isn't optional anymore.



When you understand your business numbers, you unlock more than profit. You gain clarity, control, and confidence. You can spot problems early, test ideas with less risk, and plan for growth. It's like moving from flying blind to piloting with full instruments.

FINANCE 101 WITH WEN HONG KONG

That's why I teamed up with the Women Entrepreneurs Network Hong Kong (**WEN**) to launch **Finance 101**, a practical six-part online workshop designed for women who want to master their business finances.

We covered multiple subjects over the six weeks including:

- ✓ **Intro to Finance & Financial Statements** – Understand what your reports are telling you.
- ✓ **Budgeting & Forecasting** – Replace guesswork with planning.
- ✓ **Financial Ratios & Business Health** – Learn to measure profitability and strength.
- ✓ **Financing Your Business** – Explore bootstrapping, loans, and funding options.
- ✓ **Managing Cash Flow** – Keep your business liquid and sustainable.
- ✓ **Live Integration Panel** – Apply your learning with expert insights and Q&A.

READY TO GET CLARITY?

The major takeaway from presenting this course is:

1	Understanding cash flow is as simple as understanding what comes in and what goes out of the business
2	You do not just need to do an annual budget, but you need to tweak it often through it forecasting
3	Preparing your P&L, Cashflow and Balance Sheet should not be an annual event but should be reviewed regularly, at least monthly
4	Having an up-to-date cashflow will enable you to pivot and react to conditions that affect your business, large and small

If you're a woman running a business - new or established - but still feel unsure about the finance side, you're not alone. [W](#)



This **Finance 101** series was created to help business owners feel clear, capable, and in control.

If you want access to the recordings then reach out to admin@wenhk.org

MEET THE EXPERT



SHERRYN HANCOCK

Virtual CFO, Personal & Divorce Finance Coach & Mentor

Sherryn helps business owners and professionals take control of their finances with clarity, confidence, and direction. With over two decades of experience spanning corporate finance, SME advisory, and strategic planning, she partners with entrepreneurs and growing businesses to make smarter financial decisions, manage cash flow, and plan for long-term success.



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WEN SOCIALS [☆]

Meeting Steven Bartlett!

WEN members got to attend the Steven Bartlett show together, soaking up insights, inspiration and a whole lot of shared energy.



Women in Business Mastery Retreat

This event was held on February 8-9, 2025, at Auberge Hotel, Discovery Bay. The weekend retreat covered business plan refinement, expert talks, group discussions, and networking. Participants stayed overnight to deepen connections with fellow entrepreneurs while focusing on business goals and preparing for a successful 2025.

Change who invests, Change what gets invented

Angel investing? Isn't that for millionaires? Not anymore.



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Hester Spiegel is an entrepreneur, investor, and speaker. She opens doors for women ready to shape the future - through ventures they build, and ventures they back. She is co-founder of Epic Angels, 'Angel Investment Network of the Year - APAC', and creator of Ladies Who Launch, the accelerator for professional women starting something of their own.

www.linkedin.com/in/hesterspiegelvandensteenhoven

For long, angel investing has been a closed circle - male-dominated, elite, and hard to access. But the landscape is shifting. Today, more women are stepping into investing, not just to grow their wealth, but to fund the kind of future they want to see.

At Epic Angels, we've built the largest all-female angel network in Asia-Pacific and Latin America: 700+ women across 37 countries. Together, we are changing who invests - and with that, what gets invented.

FOR WOMEN CURIOUS ABOUT INVESTING

You don't need millions to start. Many of our members made their first investment with as little as USD 1,000. Some began with ETFs and are now building portfolios of startup investments that combine financial returns with meaningful impact.

Yes, angel investing is risky. Most startups won't make it. But if you back the right ones, returns can be substantial - up to 25x. And beyond numbers, you're fuelling innovation: startups solving problems in health, sustainability, and society.

If you've ever thought, 'I want to invest, but where do I even start?', Epic Angels gives you access to vetted deal flow, education, and a supportive community of women walking the same journey.

FOR ENTREPRENEURS LOOKING FOR CAPITAL

We know how hard it is to raise funding - in particular for women founders. Epic Angels actively invests in early-stage startups with strong, diverse leadership, and scalable business models. With over 42 investments to date, and adding new investments every month, we bring not only capital but also networks, expertise, and a community of women who want you to succeed.

WHY IT MATTERS

If nine out of ten investors are men, then nine out of ten decisions about the future are made without women at the table. That's why Epic Angels exists: to unlock women's wealth and direct it toward innovations that matter.

Because when women invest, they don't just chase returns - they back the change they want to see.

WEN | NEWS

EVENTS | PARTNERSHIPS | SPONSORSHIPS



Power Positioning Workshop

24-25 September 2025

This workshop ignited enthusiasm on 24-25 September 2025 at Ernst & Young, Quarry Bay. Attendees transformed their skills through dynamic sessions, unleashing their professional potential. With limited spaces, it became the must-attend event for those ready to elevate their entrepreneurial journey and connect with like-minded innovators!



Historic Singapore Gathering

11 September 2025

WEN's First Singapore Event dazzled on 11 September 2025 at The Singapore Edition Hotel Café. Launched by **Maura Thompson** and **Kimberley Whiley**, attendees networked and shared insights, creating a vibrant atmosphere of collaboration and inspiration. This exclusive event marked a significant milestone for women entrepreneurs in the region!



Empowering Business Retreat

8-9 February 2025

The Women in Business Mastery Retreat 2025 was a resounding success on 8-9 February at Hotel Auberge, Discovery Bay. Participants refined their business plans, engaged with inspiring speakers, and connected with fellow entrepreneurs. This transformative weekend fostered collaboration and growth, setting the stage for a thriving year ahead!

WEN Lunch & Learn:



SEO in the Age of AI: How to Get Found Fast

Join website strategist Elle Kwan to learn quick, effective SEO tips—like keyword strategies, image optimization, headline writing, and staying ahead with AI—so your dream clients can easily find you online.

Speaker:
Elle Kwan,
Founder, Elle Kwan Studio

Thursday, June 05
12:45 - 2:00 PM, Online

www.wenhk.org



SEO Success Unlocked

5 June 2025

The **WEN Lunch & Learn: SEO in the Age of AI** captivated participants on 5 June 2025. Led by expert **Elle Kwan**, attendees discovered powerful strategies to enhance online visibility and optimise search results. This engaging session equipped entrepreneurs with essential tools to ensure their dream clients could find them fast!



Mentorship: Unlock your Potential

Whether you're just starting out or ready to give back. This **6-month mentoring programme** connects less experienced entrepreneurs with established business owners and an ICF-certified coach, forming a powerful trio designed to foster growth, confidence, and meaningful relationships.



From Voice to Pitch

28 May 2025

WEN members explored how to speak about their work with clarity and confidence, guided by storytelling strategist **Imogen Short** and leadership coach **Gina Marescia**. Through hands-on exercises and expert feedback, participants crafted authentic elevator pitches rooted in their values and voice.

Unlock Your Business Potential with T8 Corporate & Business Services!

Are you an entrepreneur striving to elevate your business? At **T8 Corporate & Business Services**, we understand the unique challenges you face. That's why we're dedicated to providing you with comprehensive solutions tailored to your needs.

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People:

The Overlooked Challenge of Entrepreneurship



The essence of being an entrepreneur is to creatively disrupt the status quo.

This means stepping into a world of uncertainty and being resilient enough to keep the tripod of **MARKET**, **PRODUCT**, and **TEAM** aligned—an essential key to success.

MEET THE EXPERT



FLORE CASSIN
Executive Coach

Through a career in management consulting within Accenture and Capgemini, and as an international HR Executive within Boston Consulting Group, she has built a deep understanding of challenges individuals and teams come to face in rapidly changing and highly demanding environments. As a coach, working in French and in English, she helps clients get clarity, build influence and lead with purpose.

Of these three, the team is the most complex. Some may believe that hiring well, paying well, and treating people kindly is enough. By doing so, they unconsciously push the people challenge to priority #2. In reality, people make or break startups and are the leading reason why they fail. Fixing or adjusting a product's design can be complicated, but it's usually achievable within a predictable timeframe. Fixing people issues, however, is far more complex. It can take much longer than expected and have significant repercussions on the team.

Over my 30+ year career as a management consultant, HR executive, and now executive coach working with numerous entrepreneurs, I've encountered the people challenges they face. I've identified four key priorities to address them – and an acronym to remember them, **PLUSS**—and four enablers to support the journey.

**PLUSS = Purpose
Lead
Team Up
Scale Sustainably**

Priority #1

P for **PURPOSE**

People take a leap of faith when joining a startup. You may not yet have a brand, an established business, or visible success—so they need to believe in something. A clear purpose helps align values, foster shared goals, clarify priorities, and encourage collective focus over personal agendas. It also helps uncover and amplify team strengths. Every team member should be able to articulate why the team exists and what it's working toward.

Priority #2:

L for LEAD

Whether your background is in marketing, sales, tech, or business, as a founder, you must also become a people leader. The people you hire choose you before they choose your venture. You become their role model. You need to navigate between altitude and detail, trust and delegate, and inspire through motivational questions and genuine care. Leadership isn't automatic—it requires personal development. It can be lonely, so seek out mentors, coaches, and emotional support.

Priority #3:

U for TEAM UP

Your goal is to build more than a collection of individuals—you want a team that delivers what no one could alone. Understand team dynamics. Help the loud voices collaborate with the quiet ones. Ensure everyone knows each other's strengths and can embrace change at the right pace. You're doing well when your team feels proud to work for you and your venture.

Priority #4:

SS for SCALE SUSTAINABLY

Startup gurus often recommend staying lean, and chances are you'll be understaffed. You must manage workload effectively and spot early signs of burnout. Put the right support structures in place—processes, workflows, and learning sessions—to help industrialise operations and build lasting capabilities. Managing change, adjusting, and pivoting are strengths that must be cultivated.

Now that priorities are established, you need some wind in your sails, i.e. some enablers—without them, even the most visionary and motivated entrepreneur risks stalling.

Enabler #1

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Mistakes will happen. Failure is inevitable. Is it safe to talk about them? Do you share your own? Can your team disagree without making it personal? Establish rituals that foster a psychologically safe environment—it's essential.

Enabler #2

SELF-REFLECTION

As your business evolves rapidly, your team must adapt. Developing a habit of self-reflection helps avoid dead ends in product development and interpersonal relationships.

Enabler #3

COMMUNICATION

Create regular, protected time to share business updates, express gratitude, and answer questions. This builds trust, prevents rumours, and helps the team stay focused.

Enabler #4

STRONG HR PROCESSES from Day One

HR isn't something to postpone until you've scaled. From the moment you hire, meet the basic needs of your employees: give feedback, review performance, reward fairly, offer career perspectives, and allow for time off. Toxicity can spread quickly when rumours about pay or promotion arise. Don't be afraid to ask: "What's one thing I could do differently to help you thrive?"

Once you have a team, your success rests in their hands—so be strategic in how you build and lead them, and you'll turn your ideas into a thriving business. **W**



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Fundamentals Workshop

MEET THE EXPERT



ANUPAMA PODURI
Founder, Marketing Strategist

With over 20 years of experience collaborating with organisations and agencies across B2C and B2B industries, Anupama has driven successful brand launches, including Schneider Electric Ventures and Reliance Jio (India's telecom giant), as well as mobile apps. Her expertise spans go-to-market planning, paid/owned/earned marketing, digital demand-generation campaigns, and consumer journey mapping grounded in data analytics. She specialises in translating insights into actionable strategies for startups and entrepreneurs ready to scale with precision.

In May 2025, the **Marketing 101 Fundamentals: Insights to Action** series provided a transformative experience for female entrepreneurs, equipping them with the tools to convert marketing strategies into measurable results. Held online on May 7 and 21, this two-part workshop addressed the chaos of daily operations and growth, helping participants refine their marketing strategies, identify audience targeting gaps, and build scalable systems tailored to their business needs.

PART I: CLARITY

The first session, titled **Clarity**, focused on understanding the crucial elements of audience engagement. Attendees were introduced to a **Battle-Tested Buyer Persona Framework**, designed to help them grasp audience behaviours and target them effectively. By mapping the customer journey, participants learned to transform casual visitors into loyal superfans through conversion-driven pathways.

To enhance their content creation skills, the workshop introduced a streamlined **five-step content planning process**. This method empowered participants to craft engaging posts that resonate with their audience, even amidst tight schedules. By focusing on clarity, attendees were able to cut through the noise of trendy marketing tactics and hone in on what truly works for their businesses.

PART 2: EXECUTION

The second part of the series, aptly named **Execution**, shifted the focus to high-impact application. Participants learned how to select the right platforms for maximum return on investment (ROI), avoiding the common pitfall of spreading themselves too thin across multiple channels. The workshop demystified the complexities of paid advertising and email marketing, equipping attendees with insights into leveraging AI tools like Google Performance Max and Meta Advantage Plus.

To ensure effective optimisation of campaigns, simple data-tracking techniques were introduced, enabling attendees to manage their marketing efforts like seasoned professionals.

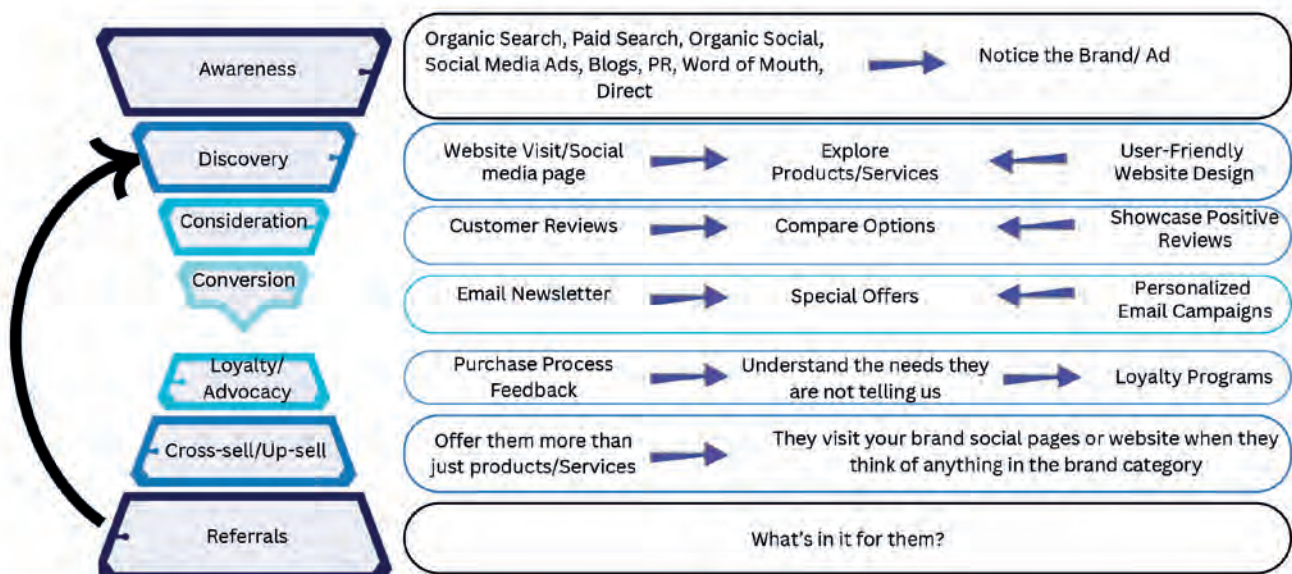
Attendees left the workshop with a comprehensive toolbox, including a Buyer Persona Builder, SEO Audit Cheat Sheet, Content Calendar Template, and KPI Tracker. These resources empower women entrepreneurs to execute smarter marketing strategies, connect with a community of driven peers, and confidently translate their marketing plans into sales. **W**

Key Takeaways

The workshop provided several key takeaways that participants could immediately implement:

- **Debunk Myths, Know Your Audience**
Utilise the Buyer Persona Builder to target effectively and cut through trendy noise.
- **Map Journeys for Impact**
Design clear customer pathways that convert strangers into loyal superfans.
- **Plan Smart Content**
Employ a five-step process to create authentic, problem-solving content.
- **Maximise Ads with AI**
Use tools like Google Performance Max to optimise ad spend efficiently.
- **Drive Action with Benefits**
Craft content that highlights “What’s in it for me?” to enhance engagement and sales.

CUSTOMER JOURNEY STAGES - ACTIVITIES, OBJECTIVES



Sustaining Growth:

How WEN Thrives Through Diverse Funding

The Women Entrepreneurs Network (WEN) has been a vital support system for women in business since the late 1980s. Founded by Elizabeth Thompson, who was passionate about empowering women-owned businesses, WEN was created to address the lack of accessible resources for entrepreneurs in Hong Kong. Recognising this critical need, Elizabeth started hosting seminars in private clubs. These gatherings quickly transformed into intimate meetings that not only covered legal frameworks but also explored the real challenges of running a business.

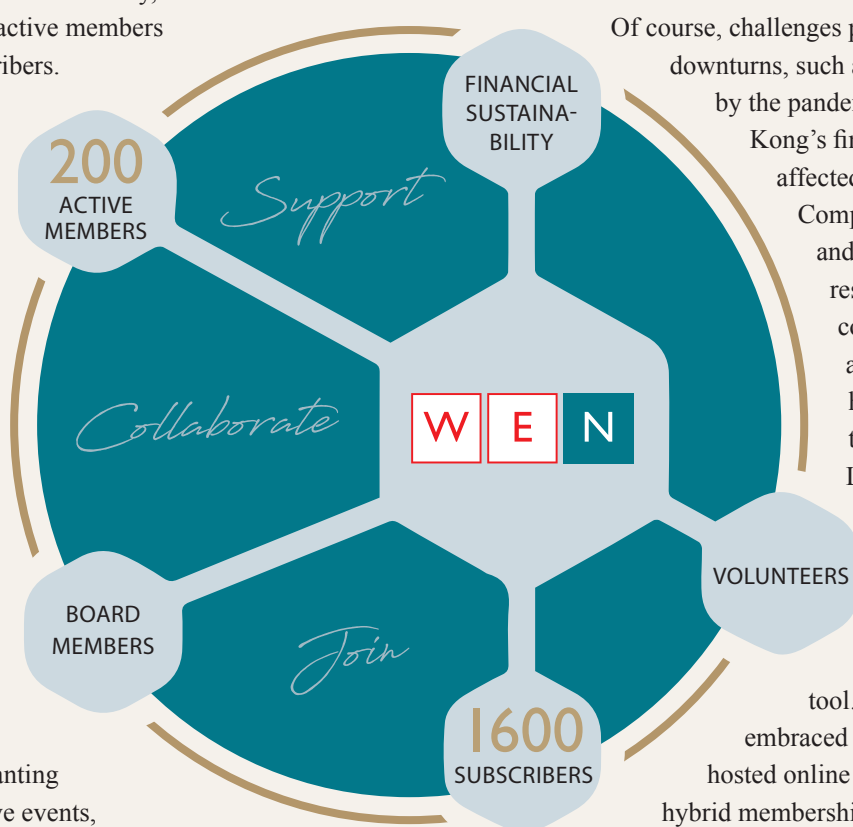
In today's technological age, WEN has expanded its reach, connecting with a wider community of women entrepreneurs across Hong Kong and beyond. Currently, WEN proudly supports over 200 active members and more than 1,600 subscribers. Maintaining this vibrant network is no easy task, but thanks to our dedicated board members—each bringing years of business expertise and passion—we continue to grow, evolve, and empower women in business.

Financial sustainability has always been a balancing act for WEN, which relies on a mix of funding sources to keep its mission alive. Our annual membership fees provide a key stream of income, granting members access to exclusive events, mentorship, and valuable resources. Events and workshops also play a significant role, generating revenue through ticket sales, participation fees, and sponsorships. Additionally, WEN actively seeks support from local businesses, multinational corporations, law and accounting firms, and banks that advocate for gender diversity.

Behind the scenes, WEN operates with lean efficiency. Much of the work is powered by volunteers, with a gradual transition to part-time and full-time staff as the organisation grows. Strategic partnerships with co-working spaces, universities, and event venues help reduce costs, while in-kind contributions

from professionals offering legal, accounting, and marketing services allow WEN to maintain high standards without inflating its budget.

This multi-pronged approach to funding and cost management is key to WEN's sustainability. Diversifying income sources ensures stability, especially in uncertain economic climates. Community engagement is another pillar of resilience, with members and board members actively involved in fundraising, resource-sharing, and volunteering. Measuring impact is equally important; by demonstrating tangible outcomes, WEN continues to attract support from funders and partners who believe in its mission.



Of course, challenges persist. Economic downturns, such as those brought on by the pandemic or shifts in Hong Kong's financial landscape, have affected fundraising efforts. Competition with other NGOs and networks for limited resources also demands constant innovation and adaptability. Yet WEN has proven its ability to thrive. The annual Gala Lunch, for example, is more than just a celebration—it's a showcase of member achievements and a powerful fundraising tool. The network has embraced digital transformation, hosted online events and adopted hybrid membership models to stay relevant and accessible in a changing world.

Looking ahead, WEN is focused on adapting to new realities. Plans are underway to expand regionally, invest in technology, and build financial resilience. The call to action is clear: support, join, or collaborate with WEN to help empower the next generation of women entrepreneurs.

We've weathered economic storms by staying agile and community focused. Our strength lies in our people. That strength continues to shine through every member, every event, and every story of success. **W**



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