



Female Founders: Darlene Markeson of Reveka Skincare on the Five Things you Need to Thrive as a Female Founder.

An Interview with Doug Knoll

Darlene was born and raised in New York. She spent the first half of her life raising a family and working in Special Education. Health, fitness & skincare were passions that she has turned into a unique business providing products that are luxurious & fun to use while supporting healthy skin, body & lifestyle.

Thank you so much for doing this with us! Before we dig in, our readers would like to get to know you a bit more. Can you tell us a bit about your “backstory”? What led you to this particular career path?

I was born and raised in New York; it's a competitive environment where survival of the fittest applies. It's also an area that is rich in business, culture, and consumerism. Growing up in New York provided me with a comprehensive education, outside of any classroom, in marketing and what people want. The fashion and beauty industries were everywhere, and skincare was simply a fact of life that was necessary and had to be taken seriously. Later in life, I met my husband and we moved to South Carolina. It wasn't until my mid to late 40s that I realized my lifetime of investing in expensive skincare treatments was mostly based on lies and empty promises. I became determined to do better. At first, my efforts were simply for personal use. However, the discovery of how effective natural ingredients can be, along with the incredible benefits of magnesium, encouraged me to share my products with others. A decade later Reveka Skincare was born.

Can you share the most interesting story that happened to you since you began leading your company?

I'm not sure there is one story that stands out. I think the most interesting experiences have been the many times I've needed to step out of my comfort zone. I love people, but I'm somewhat of an introvert who enjoys small gatherings. In college, I passed a public speaking course with an "A" because by the end I was no longer hyperventilating! Being a founder has required me to overcome the fear of being center stage.

Can you share a story about the funniest mistake you made when you were first starting? Can you tell us what lesson you learned from that?

Mistakes! There are too many to count! At the time, I'm not sure I saw the humor, but looking back, I can laugh about "volcanoing" soap. This happens when different ingredients decide they don't get along and the soap gets too hot. It started to bubble over the sides of the container uncontrollably and covered countertops and floors with a gooey...greasy concoction! Soooooo... much fun! I have to say, I've learned more from my mistakes than my successes, so it's important to be able to laugh about them and keep moving forward.

None of us are able to achieve success without some help along the way. Is there a particular person who

you are grateful towards who helped get you to where you are? Can you share a story about that?

My husband is a natural born entrepreneur. He invented a machine for the power industry and has had to battle some major giants along the way. He knows what it takes to not only start a business but persevere and stay alive. He saw the business potential for Reveka while I was still considering it a hobby. He's my biggest fan and I couldn't do this without him.

Ok, thank you for that. Let's now jump to the primary focus of our interview. According to this EY report, only about 20 percent of funded companies have women founders. This reflects great historical progress, but it also shows that more work still has to be done to empower women to create companies. In your opinion and experience what is currently holding back women from founding companies?

I believe there should be more entrepreneurial minded individuals in the world. Women are finding their voices in this realm and it's wonderfully encouraging. However, it's a fault of modern society that few individuals, particularly women, venture into creating a company. Our educational system trains us to grow up and find a good job at a good company, but

who's creating these companies? Even the best schools (I attended Cornell University) are devoid of information regarding what it takes to build a business. I believe it should become normal to reach for the stars and our schools should be encouraging this wholeheartedly.

Can you help articulate a few things that can be done as individuals, as a society, or by the government, to help overcome those obstacles?

The obstacles aren't going away. Starting a business is hard...period! It's hard for anybody. You had better expect the obstacles and be ready to do battle. I believe that if someone is driven to build a business, they can do it. There are resources out there to assist, but our greatest resource lies within ourselves. I've met incredible individuals from around the world who have had to overcome severe oppression to achieve greatness and have won. This is America, but nobody's going to make it easy or do the work for you. Frankly, if you're starting out with that mindset, you've already failed. What can we do as individuals? We can shine! Be an example to others. Show them what can be done.

This might be intuitive to you as a woman founder but I think it will be helpful to spell this out. Can you share

a few reasons why more women should become founders?

“Women’s intuition” is a real thing. This is our gift. Women have the innate ability to connect with their audience and understand what’s wanted and needed. This is an important skill when entering a leadership role and growing a brand. I had to go to the mats regarding the launch of our initial soap. I received a lot of blowback, but I knew instinctively what it needed to be, stood my ground, and fought to bring my vision to life. Our intuition is power. This doesn’t mean we shouldn’t listen to opposing opinions, but realize your strength and never compromise your integrity regarding what you know to be true.

What are the “myths” that you would like to dispel about being a founder? Can you explain what you mean?

One myth is that founders are fearless. There’s a saying I love and believe with all my heart, “Courage is not the lack of fear, it’s the ability to move forward despite your fear”. Being a founder is riddled with fears and doubts that are sometimes paralyzing! The reality is, that despite your best efforts, failure is always on the table. Those who succeed are not necessarily gifted with unwavering ability, wisdom,

and clarity of purpose, they're the ones who persevere in the face of adversity and uncertainty.

Is everyone cut out to be a founder? In your opinion, which specific traits increase the likelihood that a person will be a successful founder and what type of person should perhaps seek a "regular job" as an employee? Can you explain what you mean?

Founders are by nature the minority. They are generally dissatisfied with the status quo and driven to make the world a better place. It's not an easy path and not everybody is cut out for it. However, I believe many people who should be taking the lead fail to do so in exchange for the security of a regular job. If you have a passion, a purpose, and sticktoitiveness, you should be out there swinging. Create something bigger than yourself!

Ok super. Here is the main question of our interview. What are your "5 Things I Wish Someone Told Me Before I Started" and why? (Please share a story or example for each.)

1 . The "overnight success" story is a myth!

It's estimated that the average business can take up to 20 years before it becomes a household name. That requires an enormous amount of courage, faith, and

sticktoitiveness! Most people quit after 6 months. Don't be like most, hang in there!

2 . It takes money to make money.

One of the scariest things about a startup is the debt incurred to invest in a perfect launch. Manufacturing, marketing, and all the other unforeseen expenses associated with founding a business can be more than a bit intimidating. Expect to have some sleepless nights!

3 . A business isn't built by the support of family & friends.

Familial support is a wonderful thing and can be incredibly helpful in the beginning stages, but it can only take you so far. You need to have a strategy to reach beyond your comfort zone and create fans who only know you for your business. This is what will define your value for the long haul.

4 . More people are cheering for your failure rather than your success.

This sounds incredibly cynical, but it's the sad truth. When someone steps out willingly into the realm of uncertainty, it seems to be the human response of those around them to want to bring them back into what is perceived to be safe and normal. A steady, 9 to

5 job is just that. Risking everything to start a business is more risky than most can face. It's not that they wish you ill, it's more likely that people fear what they don't understand.

5 . Be willing to fail...over and over and over!

It's true what they say, you learn more from failure than success. Be willing to fail and don't be discouraged by it. It's an important part of the process.

How have you used your success to make the world a better place?

I've been told by many that you can't run a business by giving your product/services away. This may be true, but I cannot see the value of denying someone in need because of their financial hardship. I've been gifted with this wonderful business and products that provide true value to people's lives. It's an honor to be able to share with those in need, and as the business grows, I expect to indulge in that honor as frequently as possible.

You are a person of great influence. If you could inspire a movement that would bring the most amount of good for the greatest number of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger.

I've been surprised and delighted at the level of support I've received from fellow entrepreneurs...even those who are considered direct competitors.

Apparently, those who have been in the trenches respect and are excited to encourage others. I love this! My dream would be to foster a movement where startups can reach out to others who have walked the path before them and provide information and encouragement for all seeking the dream.

We are very blessed that some very prominent names in Business, VC funding, Sports, and Entertainment read this column. Is there a person in the world, or in the US with whom you would love to have a private breakfast or lunch with, and why? He or she might just see this if we tag them.

Who wouldn't want to meet Joanna Gaines? Joanna has been a constant inspiration to me. I love how she has built a strong family and business empire while appearing to remain very real. I would love to sit across the table from her and compare notes!

Thank you for these fantastic insights. We greatly appreciate the time you spent on this.

A bout the Interviewer: Douglas E. Noll, JD, MA

was born nearly blind, crippled with club feet, partially deaf, and left-handed. He overcame all of

these obstacles to become a successful civil trial lawyer. In 2000, he abandoned his law practice to become a peacemaker. His calling is to serve humanity, and he executes his calling at many levels. He is an award-winning author, teacher, and trainer. He is a highly experienced mediator. Doug's work carries him from international work to helping people resolve deep interpersonal and ideological conflicts. Doug teaches his innovative de-escalation skill that calms any angry person in 90 seconds or less. With Laurel Kaufer, Doug founded Prison of Peace in 2009. The Prison of Peace project trains life and long terms incarcerated people to be powerful peacemakers and mediators. He has been deeply moved by inmates who have learned and applied deep, empathic listening skills, leadership skills, and problem-solving skills to reduce violence in their prison communities. Their dedication to learning, improving, and serving their communities motivates him to expand the principles of Prison of Peace so that every human wanting to learn the skills of peace may do so. Doug's awards

include California Lawyer Magazine Lawyer of the Year, Best Lawyers in America Lawyer of the Year, Purpose Prize Fellow, International Academy of Mediators Syd Leezak Award of Excellence, National Academy of Distinguished Neutrals Neutral of the Year. His four books have won a number of awards and commendations. Doug's podcast, Listen With Leaders, is now accepting guests. Click on this link to learn more and apply.