

Women's History Month Spotlight: Shobha Tummala

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Name and occupation:

Shobha Tummala

Entrepreneur – Founder & CEO of Shobha

What do you love most about being a woman?

I love that I can be both strong and soft at the same time which I attribute to my female ‘super powers’ – innate compassion for others and the ability to multi-task.

Have you had to deal with much sexism in your industry?

I’ve been very lucky when it comes to dealing with sexism, and really haven’t had to deal with much of it. However, I am aware of certain situations in which sexism is known to rear its ugly head – like raising money and selling companies. Those are the type of situations in which people say that women run into sexism. Occasionally, I’ve experienced sexism during our construction projects when we build out our salon spaces, but now that we have done so many, I am familiar with the industry lingo and know what I am doing, so the guys get over it pretty quickly.

Do you belong to any organizations catered to women business owners?

I don’t belong to any specific organizations that are women centric. However, I do have a bunch of informal networks of women that we get together exchange ideas, get support and discuss issues.

Who or what inspires you most?

Both my grandfathers inspire me the most. They educated themselves, built businesses, and went against the grain of the family to achieve it all. I am so proud of them. They forged their own paths and that is so incredibly inspiring to me.

Something about you that would surprise us:

My family and I, including my very active and inquisitive two year old son, reside in Maryland, while my other babies – my three salons and product line live in New York, along with my team.

Advice for women entrepreneurs:

1. Believe in Your Brand: In terms of creating a brand – or more specifically her brand – Shobha knew exactly what she wanted it to be. She was creating her brand based on her needs and personal pet peeves. Tummala says, “You have to believe and be passionate about it before others can believe in it.” In fact, when she first opened Shobha, Tummala was the receptionist in the salon, so she got a chance to not only get to know the clients, but bond with them. Tummala says, “It was probably one of the most enjoyable times in my life because I got to see every day what worked and what didn’t in a very direct way.”

2. Trust Your Gut: Tummala says, “For aspiring entrepreneurs, I can only speak from my own experience, and the one tip I can offer is to trust your gut.” She continues by saying, “You can do a ton of research and analysis, but when it comes to making the ultimate decision, it has to feel good, not only to me, but to my team and our clients.” Being an entrepreneur is challenging, but that’s partly why she does it – Shobha has the ability to right a wrong, change lives, and change the game of an industry!

3. It’s OK to Ask for Help: When thinking about the advice she would give to her young self, Tummala says, “I would tell myself to bring in more people to help me at the very beginning. I was in the business doing everything for almost 3 years before I really brought people in to help me. I was so afraid of failure that I never invested in the company or myself really early on. I wish I had.” It would have made those early years much more enjoyable for Tummala. She says, “Hindsight is always 20/20, but now I understand why they say experience matters. If I started a company, I would go about it very differently in some ways than I did back then.”