

WHEN WOMEN WIN

RANA NAWAS' PASSION PROJECTS

Rana Nawas — president of the Dubai chapter of Ellevate Network, a global businesswomen's network, a corporate veteran, a Feng Shui consultant and a lover of butterflies — has followed her passion to connect and inspire women all over the world.

With a Lebanese mother and Palestinian father, Nawas was educated at Oxford University and Harvard Business School, and is committed to helping women rise in their professional and personal lives. In a recent interview with HOME, she talked about her own rise, empowering other women and what makes her tick.

You have recently switched careers. Please describe your previous career and why you decided to change directions?

My career has been quite varied, and not really connected to my degree in electromechanical engineering. I started at McKinsey & Co. in London as a management consultant. I then moved to Dubai with the intention of working in human rights. I ended up joining a Dubai government think tank to attract foreign direct investment.

That was followed by 13 years at General Electric, the last 11 years of which were in aviation finance. As senior vice president of sales, I have covered fascinating markets including Lebanon, Turkey, and North and West Africa — and I learned numerous valuable lessons.

Along the way, I co-led the GE Women's Network for the region, I had two children, and I became president of

Ellevate's Dubai chapter. We (Ellevate) exist to connect, grow and inspire Dubai's professional women, and we achieve this by hosting two networking events every month. Through our virtual platform, Ellevate members are also connected to thousands of awesome women globally. There are over 50 chapters in New York, Chicago, London, Hong Kong and other big cities around the world.

Through my position at Ellevate, I have a view of most corporations in Dubai; I am extremely surprised by the barriers women face in the workplace. The more women I meet, the more stories I hear.

It's shocking and disappointing — and then I remember that the modern corporate workplace was built by men, for men, decades ago; it's no longer relevant to the way we (men or women) want to live today. I have decided to leave the corporate world and focus on building a platform that enriches and supports women. But the feedback I have received is that men are enjoying the product too — that pleases me!

““

Fail is not the opposite of win.

How can we close the gender gap?

The corporate structure is outdated. It has been changing slowly and will start changing much faster, adapting to the needs of the millennials who are rightly demanding more balance in their lives.

It's impossible to get gender equality in the workplace if we don't have gender equality at HOME: a woman cannot do two full time jobs while the man does one. More men are helping with

children and household chores than ever before — in fact, it has been observed that children (boys and girls) whose fathers participate in household chores have much more equitable gender views.

Gender stereotypes are created in our children's minds between the ages of 5 and 7 — this is where our focus needs to be.

Our end game is to have equal numbers of men and women in leadership positions in government, business and academia. And it's essential that women are paid as much as men for doing the same work. The current gender pay gap is unacceptable. Can you believe that in a recent survey of the largest 350 law firms in the USA, it was found that female partners at law firms are paid 44 percent than their male counterparts?

How would you compare your experience in the corporate world to working for and with women?

Seventeen years of working in the corporate world has been an amazing school; I have learned so much and I am thankful for that. But empowering women, mentoring them, supporting them — these are my passion projects that have a large qualitative impact on me. Women come up to me every day, thanking me for helping them through Ellevate and inspiring them with my podcast, When Women Win.

What if your career was your passion? If you had found joy in the corporate world?

That's the golden egg everybody is looking for — to make your passion your work. I didn't find that in the corporate world, but I don't look at my path with any regret at all. I always kept my passion projects alive on the side. And one must not be naïve either — we do need challenging jobs that pay well.

Working in the aviation and investment sectors is more of a man's world. How did it feel working there as a woman?

I am blessed to have worked so long in the global aviation industry: it's full of brilliant and hard-working people (OK — mostly men!). I had a great time on the customer side — they found me refreshing versus the stale pale males they were used to!

I did face two problems: I was not only a woman but also a very young woman in my role — this made credibility an issue. I had to build trust fast, but once my customers saw how hard I fought for them, they were won over. In fact, one of my customers named an aircraft after me! The other obstacle was that I was paid much less than my male counterparts doing exactly the same job.

Your recently launched podcast When Women Win puts you in contact with many brilliant women. What is it like?

I meet incredible women all the time, so I thought I would capture these diverse, enriching and inspiring encounters for the benefit of others all over the world. My guests are all ordinary women doing extraordinary things, with inspiring stories. They often also give practical tools for other women to use in their professional and personal lives.

Your podcast is called “When Women Win.” What if they fail?

We talk about that, too! Fail is not the opposite of win — it's a step towards it. When Women Win is about celebrating our successes; it's about interviewing women who win and helping listeners win.

Who is your role model?

I had a Victoria Beckham moment, but my first role models really are my parents, as they are extremely hardworking people, strong, positive and optimistic. They were the ones who built up my self-confidence; they taught me by example the roles of men and women.

Today my role model is the everyday working mom. Balancing work and kids is extremely hard, and there are billions of women doing this every single day.

Do you feel that you're a global citizen, or is there something in you that is more oriental?

I am definitely a global citizen. My dad was Palestinian; my mom is Lebanese. I was born in the U.K., and I have spent most of my life in the UAE. There's part of all these countries in me. I have a very strong affiliation with the culture and history of the Middle East and the U.K., and I am very thankful to the UAE since it has been HOME to me and my parents for a long time.

““

An influencer has a very big microphone. A big microphone comes with big responsibility.

You have worked a lot in sales. Why?

Two reasons: I love novelty, and I love people. I thrive on pioneering new markets and products (eg, I closed GECAS' first ever deals in Libya, the Congo and Senegal). Growth excites me. But above all I'm an extrovert who really enjoys connecting with people. I look at sales as relationship-building, so when I walk into an office, it's not about the sale; rather, it's about the person I'm about to get to know.

What is the secret of your high energy level?

I am “dolphin chronotype” who sleeps with half of the brain awake. I do have natural high energy for sure, but the way I magnify it is by doing things I enjoy, like traveling, working for women's empowerment, playing with my kids and staying fit.

As an influencer, what do you think of social media's impact on people?

I don't know that I'm an influencer, but thanks!

Social media must be handled with care, because when you are an influencer, you have a very big microphone — and a big microphone comes with big responsibility.

I'm concerned that a lot of young women are being body shamed by these influencers. Body shaming is unacceptable. It is a real problem; we should be building women's confidence not crushing it.

If there's one thing from Lebanon you'd like to take with you, what would it be?

I would take my jeddo's house from Mounsef. I have very fond memories in that house.

If you had the power to change one thing in Lebanon, what would it be?

Pollution.



““

Body shaming is unacceptable.

HOMIE

THE SOUL OF LEBANON

THE BRAND MASTER
**ALEXIS
NASARD**

FEATURED FAMILY
THE OSSEIRANS

FROM LOS ANGELES
**JOANNA
NACHEF**
1ST MAESTRA
OF THE MIDDLE EAST

ADA
ABOU FARHAT
ACTRESS OF DEFIANCE & ARTISTRY

AMBASSADOR
EDWARD GABRIEL
AMERICAN TASK FORCE FOR LEBANON PRESIDENT
AT THE FOREFRONT OF DIPLOMACY

IDRAAC'S
LABOR OF LOVE
FOR MENTAL HEALTH

HOME

MAGAZINE

“”
**FOR A
 BRIGHT
 LEBANON
 & LEBANESE
 OF THE WORLD**



Available in bookstores in Lebanon and by subscription, delivered to your doorstep in Lebanon and around the world.

admin@pidraya.net

+961 4 522 190

