

What Does it Really Take To Be A Powerful Business Women in China?

By Dr Marina Nani

Marion Tjin-Tham-Sjin, 45 years old, lives in The Netherlands and takes her inspiration from Jack Ma, founder of Alibaba, 'a self-made man with a crazy idea (at that time), who had the guts and persistence to make it happen' Marion says. The daughter of a Chinese father and a Dutch mother, her feelings for her Chinese roots became stronger and stronger after her father passed away in 2003. The loss of her father in combination with her extensive experience as an export manager, her love for China, the fact that the Chinese economy is the fastest growing of Asia, and her International Business Management degree build up her professional confidence to found her own company. Her business, Splendid China, with offices in both Shanghai and The Netherlands, helps European entrepreneurs export their products and services to China.

Export to the biggest market of the world- challenge or opportunity?

'Most of all it was my father who inspired me. But I also saw many business people returning from China, stating that it is impossible to do business in China, stating that all Chinese are liars. Of course this is not true! So it has become my mission to show that you can do business in China! In fact, with a market of 1.4 billion people the business can be really well, once you understand the cultural differences and are willing to adjust to the market.'

The cultural differences between Europe and China are huge! Of course, the language is a barrier. Not speaking the language, makes you "blind and deaf" at the same time when you enter a foreign country. Research has shown that finding a trustworthy partner is also very difficult for Europeans. In a country so big, like China, where do you start? 'The internet is also not helpful in this case, if you can't write or read Chinese. So this is what we do! We help overcome all these cultural differences, help you find the right partner, distributor or customers

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and even continue relationship management afterwards.' Marion says.

'It all comes down to one thing: localize! If you want to do business in China you have to be there! And we are there for you. With our office in Shanghai we can be anywhere in China within a few hours. The Chinese partners, distributors or customers can call us in their own language in their own time zone. They can also visit us and find us on the Chinese social media. This all helps them trust us, and therefore trust you. If you need to build up that trust yourself it would cost you much more long flights to China and much more money. Not mentioning the fact that you have to have knowledge of the market in order to know where to go. But we also help you to be present on the Chinese social media so the Chinese can find you!'

In general many industries are very interesting for China, as long as the products and services are of high quality, innovative or rare in China and are something they have a demand for: chemical industry, energy, high-tech & ICT, horticulture, water.

'Since my mission is to help as many people as possible we are not disclosing any industry but at this moment we are strong in agriculture & food, build & design, life science & health, tourism and the pet industry.' Marion comments.

What are the challenges?

'There are still a lot of prejudices against China. Luckily I am invited to speak at many events in The Netherlands and through the years I noticed that the image of China is slowly getting better, more in balance. Especially young people tend to see the opportunities rather than the difficulties. So this is a good trend!

Since we are doing well helping the Dutch companies who want to export to China, the next thing is to expend our services to the UK: helping UK companies to export their high quality products and services to the biggest market of the world! This is the new challenge for 2019!

What is the key to business success for women?

'If you go to China, you will notice that men and women are maybe not equal, but yet are equally ambitious. Of the high end jobs and business owners, 51% is female. So to me personally it doesn't matter if you are a man or a woman. Hardworking, sharing and collaboration is the key to success!

But it is true that women are less visible. So in order to get to know each other, to be

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able to share knowledge and networks and maybe even to collaborate in the future you have to get out there! And women's networks are just one of the possibilities to do so.' Marion says.

Contributing to the Powerful Business Women Network, Marion believes that 'It is important to support each other and why shouldn't we? There is no reason not to support each other, is there? That is one thing we can surely learn from men: they always support each other!'