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Female entrepreneurs: what makes them successful

Veteran researcher Michele DeKinder-Smith provides insight, action steps for business and life

What does it take to make it as a woman business owner? Consumer and business researcher Michele DeKinder-Smith has spent years interviewing thousands of entrepreneurs to find out. The result is *See Jane Succeed: Five Types of Female Entrepreneurs Reveal What it Takes to Win in Business and Life*. In the book, she provides detailed information and advice for all five types of 'Janes' as they strive to build successful companies — and more importantly, meaningful lives.



DeKinder-Smith

For more information about *See Jane Succeed*, visit www.janeoutofthebox.com.

ISBN: 978-1936214020; paperback, 216 pages, Nov. 1, 2009, \$19.95

Here are thoughts from four PWB members who read *See Jane Succeed*:

Roberta Colmer Calabasas, Calif.

See Jane Succeed, written by Michele DeKinder-Smith is an interesting, easy read for women entrepreneurs or those women thinking about starting a business. She clearly identifies five types of women business owners — 'Accidental Jane,' 'Go Jane Go,' 'Jane Dough,' 'Merry Jane' and 'Tenacity Jane.' Through her thorough research, DeKinder-Smith explains the types, charts their assets and liabilities, and outlines a strategic plan for each. She shows how most women go through more the one type as their businesses morph. She concludes with a step-by-step plan for the reader to change her type and better organize her own business and life goals.

The research is excellent, and a clear understanding of each type is presented in a chapter-by-chapter analysis. I found the personal anecdotes and stories very interesting. In fact, I found upon reading the author's brief outline of her own voyage into being a woman entrepreneur that I wanted to read more about her personal business journey.

As a woman, I found reading how the different types all wanted to balance their work and family life relevant to what I have always tried to do. This seems to be one of strongest desires of the many professional women I work with.

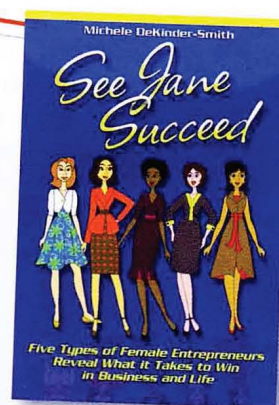
See Jane Succeed is clearly broken into steps. Each type of Jane is described, her method of business operation outlined, her problems and strategies to solve them clearly charted, and clear strategies and answers for each problem are suggested and explored. There is a lot for the reader to use once she identifies problems she wants to correct. I enjoyed the specific use of a real woman's work challenge and then to read how she dealt with it. I always enjoy more first-person stories than charts and graphs; however, I feel that DeKinder-Smith made a real effort to balance the two.

DeKinder-Smith's research expertise is very clear in her presentation of this book. There is significant analysis and research noted to back all of her statements, but adding the personal stories makes this read like less of a textbook for the reader.

Amy Martino, AIA, CAASH, LEED-AP Media, Pa.

See Jane Succeed is the perfect book for women business owners, hard-working women employees, aspiring entrepreneurs and especially young women. The book exemplifies that any woman, by affirming your personality, your strengths and your vision of your life, can 'succeed' with fortitude and creativity. Michele reveals strategies to achieve a balance in life, including home, family and work, which is unique to every woman.

As she describes each type of 'Jane,' she clearly qualifies that the types may characterize merely a phase a woman experiences in the development of her business, which is directly related to a woman's life, goals and circumstances at that time. Michele uses herself as an example. Over 11 years, she began as 'Accidental Jane,' progressed to 'Te-



nacity Jane' and then developed into 'Go Jane Go.'

Michele's insight precipitated self-reflection and the realization that life is ever-changing and evolving. Your actions and response are what makes the difference and influences the outcome. Michele includes action steps for each 'Jane' to facilitate improvements to your quality of life while being true to your personality.

As a business owner, I pondered which 'Jane' I was. Reading the book at times was like reading my astrological horoscope or a Chinese fortune cookie. Initially, I found myself focusing only on my current 'type' and 'prophecy.' As I read further I realized that every 'Jane' was similar to a horoscope. If you read all of the horoscopes for every sign, they can almost all equally be applied to your life. Michele's descriptions of all the types of 'Jane' and her action steps are good advice and recommendations to adjust your life to your goals. If you categorize yourself as one type, you may miss the other helpful reflections and perspective. In addition, Michele includes a step-by-step plan for changing your type, which is empowering.

See Jane Succeed eloquently expounds on the realization that in order to build or grow a business (or scale down a business for lifestyle reasons), there are distinct decisions, repercussions and actions a woman makes that are influenced by her personality and her point of time in her own life's journey. It is this dynamic that I could personally relate to. Like Michele, I started out as 'Accidental Jane' and moved onto to be 'Tenacity Jane,' but innately I am 'Go Jane Go.' I, like Michele and many women, have struggled with the balance between work and family and have made adjustments in work to try to accomplish an equilibrium. As I read the book I had the realization that perhaps the 'Go Jane Go' I was when working for others is the next 'Jane' for my business.

There was only one thing I did not particularly like about *See Jane Succeed*. At times, I felt Michele was self-promoting her website. To ascertain which 'Jane' you are, you are directed to her website to take the

'which-Jane-am- I' assessment test. Although I was often tempted, I managed not to succumb. Even though it was another resource for information, I would have recommended that the "test" be in the book as an appendix.

Cindy Cepko, MIRM, MCSP, CGP Paupack, Pa.

This is one of the most informative and entertaining books I've ever read. *See Jane Succeed* by Michele DeKinder-Smith is a MUST READ for any women thinking about starting her own business, one who already owns her own business or for those with businesses who want to market their product to women.

First things first, you must take the "Which Jane Are You?" assessment at www.janeoutofthebox.com. Go ahead. I'll wait. ... What a great tool to have. No matter if you are an 'Accidental Jane,' 'Go Jane Go,' 'Jane Dough,' 'Merry Jane' or 'Tenacity Jane,' this book serves as a tool to help propel women to focus and fully utilize their full talents and tap into the richest part of themselves to achieve and support their ideal lifestyle.

Michelle DeKinder-Smith has interviewed over 1,500 women and identified these five types of women entrepreneurs. She has done the research and has the answers. Not

only does she have the answers, she has the information to help you utilize your full talents to be a better businesswoman. This book will help you discover why you started your own business in the first place, what makes you passionate about the business you started and the unique challenges you experience. What is different about this book is that at the end of each chapter, there are fully outlined, easy action plans with strategies to help guide you toward a "joyous life and profitable business."

Finally, women have first-hand knowledge as to why they feel the way they do, think the way they think and act the way they act. As I'm reading this book, I am reflecting and thinking of women I have met who fit each of the 'Jane' types, and how much I may be like each of the types or not like some at all. It is a very emotionally charged book.

If you are seeking life balance, this is the book to read. Keep reading and re-reading.

**Anne Viricel, Ph.D.
San Bernardino, Calif.**

See Jane Succeed by Michele DeKinder-Smith is a how-to guide for female entrepreneurs based on anecdotal research and the author's 20 years of industry experience. The

book's advice relies on the reader's ability to fit into one of five specific business types ('Accidental Jane,' 'Go Jane Go,' 'Jane Dough,' 'Merry Jane' and 'Tenacity Jane').

I reviewed the matrix of characteristics and immediately realized I fell into multiple categories. Undaunted, I read the five descriptions, related challenges and associated action steps, and became more confused as to what type of Jane I truly represent. Specifically, the Jane characteristics were not in alignment with the Jane descriptions — at least not for this Jane.

If, however, the reader accepts the premise that being a specific kind of Jane is both situational and evolving, the concept works. You simply identify the situational characteristics (versus the individual ones) and follow the associated action steps, which are very straightforward and easily adaptable to a variety of industries. DeKinder-Smith stresses the fact that the book's aim is to provide self-awareness, which she identifies as the launching pad of a successful career. This Jane feels she did increase her own entrepreneurial self-awareness, has found a helpful resource in *See Jane Succeed* and recommends others give the book an open-minded try. **BW**

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