

woman&home AMAZING WOMEN AWARDS 2021

Introducing nine fabulous females, all of whom have found a way to make life better for the rest of us

It's been a unique and challenging year, so we've never been prouder to showcase the incredible achievements of the amazing women who, in midlife, continue to overcome obstacles, defy expectations and alter perceptions.

Over the next few months we'll be revealing the shortlisted finalists for the Amazing Women Awards 2021.

This month, the featured categories are: Changing Our Country, Smashing the Glass Ceiling, and Brand New Directions. In our July issue you'll meet the women refusing to take no for an answer and the stars who use their platform to raise awareness for great causes, while in August we'll profile the finalists you've put forward as heroes deserving of recognition for their work within communities around the UK. Prepare to be impressed, uplifted and inspired.

EXTRAORDINARY ENTREPRENEURS

*Taking risks in business
to help the economy*

MATCHMAKING MAGICIAN

**Karen Mooney, 60, is the founder
of dating agency Sara Eden.**

Karen worked in Royalty Protection before setting up in 1988, after friends complained their careers left them little time for relationships. With £2,000 of savings and 50 pals as clients, she targeted time-poor professionals looking for love. Today Sara Eden boasts thousands of matches, has 1,000 clients and an annual turnover of over £1.2m.

Karen says, 'I've always believed in balancing profit with providing a good service – part of matchmaking

is considering family dynamics to get the right fit. We have a friendly team – my manager has been with us for 29 years – and we select staff who care and think outside the box. We embrace change too; clients have been telling us that the pandemic has made them think long and hard about their lives and what they really want. Switching from face-to-face interviews with potential clients to virtual interviewing has allowed us to recruit members from overseas as well as the UK. Over the past year, we've had a 60% growth in enquiries, which is amazing.'



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FASHION GURU

Seema Malhotra, 50, is a stylist and owner of Forever Unique.

She started out buying old material at London markets and reselling it. In 2008, she and husband Sandeep established Forever Unique. Her styles have been worn by Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, Lorraine Kelly and Holly Willoughby.

Seema says, 'The biggest lessons I've learned are to trust your gut, invest in people who share your passion and that there's no such thing as a mistake – it's all a learning curve. When I look back to our humble beginnings, as glorified market traders, I see we thrived off the environment. Our garments naturally generated a huge demand. Nowadays those pinch-me moments – when I see our garments on A-listers like Miley Cyrus and the Duchess of Cambridge – remind me how far we've come as a brand.' >>

COMMS QUEEN

Rachel Clacher CBE, 53, co-founded Moneypenny in 2000 and has grown the business to be the world's leading provider of outsourced switchboard, Live Chat and customer contact solutions.

The company has an annual turnover of £50m and won the Queen's Award for Enterprise. Rachel's initiative WeMindTheGap offers placements to young people who have not had the same opportunities as others.

Rachel says, 'Flexibility, empathy, networking and great communication are feminine traits that can be harnessed to make brilliant entrepreneurs, but too often, women are held back by a lack of confidence. If we develop self-belief there will be more of us out there. My mission is to develop the national conversation on social mobility, encouraging every business to create opportunities for young people.'

'If we develop self-belief there will be more of us out there'



SMASHING THE GLASS CEILING

Trailblazing in the corporate world

BRAND DESIGN MATRLARCH

Mary Lewis, 71, is widely considered to be the mother of modern brand packaging.

Thirty-five years ago, she set up her agency Lewis Moberly in her sitting room, and today it designs identities for Waitrose, Moët & Chandon and more. Her many achievements include being the first female president of the global industry association, Design and Art Direction.

Mary says, 'Brand design puts you at the leading edge of social and economic change – you tell stories that give meaning and value to people and the brands they buy. Great leadership is about making people want to do what you want them to do. It involves a sense of humour, interest in people, an

infectious competitiveness and single-minded confidence. The creative industries are typically driven by talent, not gender. There's still work to do, but as men participate in paternity leave, there's a greater understanding of the demands of work and family life.'



PUBLISHING PIONEER

Kate Wilson, 56, co-founded Nosy Crow, an award-winning independent children's publisher, in 2011.

Starting with a handful of books 10 years ago, Nosy Crow now publishes 120 titles a year, generating £22m in 2020. It's known for its innovative approach, including its Stories Aloud initiative, which provides free audio versions of all its picture books. Its list has a wide appeal that challenges stereotypes, and it works in partnership with the National Trust and the British Museum.

Kate says, 'In Nosy Crow, we have been able to build an organisation from scratch and, being an independent company means that we're not in thrall to corporate finances. I love being able to do what we think is the right thing. We published *Coronavirus: A Book for Children about Covid-19*, illustrated by *The Gruffalo* illustrator Axel Scheffler, as a free e-book three weeks after the first lockdown. It's been viewed millions of times and there's now a print edition. We are passing the profit from that to NHS Charities Together. We think hugely carefully about the messages we are giving to children – books are powerful because they shape minds!'

CLARITY SUPREMO

Michelle Vickers, 56, is CEO of the Head & Neck Cancer Foundation, and has had a stellar career in not-for-profit organisations, including Sport England and the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society.



'Go somewhere that deserves to have you on board'

Her innovative leadership has created a culture of equality, and she continues to change lives, fundraising for pioneering treatments.

Michelle says, 'I never thought I'd have a senior role, not because of my capabilities, but because I believed, as an Anglo-Indian woman of colour, it wouldn't

be allowed. Things have changed, but unconscious bias still exists, as does the glass ceiling. If one exists in your workplace, make sure you've done everything to ensure you're brilliant at your job – find a business mentor, for example. But, if nothing changes, go somewhere that deserves to have you on board.'

WORDS: STEPHANIE CLARKSON. PHOTOS: JENNY SMITH, LEWIS MOBERLY, MONKEY KINGDOM, SAM FROST

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LEARNING CAMPAIGNER

Kate Griggs, 55, founded Made By Dyslexia, a charity that transforms perceptions around the way we value people with the condition.

Through its partnership with Microsoft, the organisation has made training for teachers available across the globe, and supporters include Sir Richard Branson, Keira Knightley and Jamie Oliver – all of whom are dyslexic.

Kate says, 'I'm dyslexic, as is my husband, so we weren't surprised that our son was too. However, I was shocked to discover that in 30 years, nothing had changed in the education system. Dyslexia doesn't have to be a barrier to achievement – 40% of self-made millionaires are dyslexic! Our charity offers free training for teachers. We are also working to show business leaders how the specific skill set dyslexics possess can benefit a workplace.'



ARTS CHAMPION

Supriya Nagarajan, 55, founded Manasamitra with the dream of taking South Asian art forms to new audiences in the UK.

Working with diverse groups, including refugees and people with mental health issues, she collaborates with schools and community groups through initiatives such as her 100 Human Voices project.

Supriya says, 'Since the pandemic began, we've proved that we cannot live without the arts. Art sustains us and has the power to change lives. Through my Women Composer Mentoring Project, I'm mentoring a group of young women from minority backgrounds, and it has been fantastic to help them create their own platforms to bring creativity and joy to people through artistic expression.'



CHANGING OUR COUNTRY *Working to make our lives better*

'Why wouldn't we want women of every colour rising through the corporate world?'

EQUALITY WARRIOR

Ann Cairns, 64, is global chair of The 30% Club, which lobbies to get more women into top corporate jobs.

The initial target of 30% has now been achieved in the UK and Ann, who is also executive vice chair at Mastercard, has set her sights further, adding ethnicity targets to the task.

Ann says, 'We're a country with a great education system, great talent and equal amounts of women and men graduates. Why wouldn't we want women of every colour and background rising up through the corporate world? Across the top FTSE 350 companies, we have 34% representation in the boardroom, so we've now moved to executive level. My other mission is Girls4Tech, which aims to keep girls studying science and technology. Tomorrow's world will have many jobs in tech industries, so we need girls to keep up their STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects.'

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