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Lauren Maillian Bias: Cracking The Female Entrepreneur Code

I recently caught up with Lauren Maillian Bias, who is the author of the new book ["The Path Redefined: Getting to the Top on Your Own Terms"](#). Bias is the Founder and CEO of Luxury Market Branding, a strategic marketing and branding consultancy where she brings her firsthand knowledge, expertise and passion for marketing to her clients. She is also the Founding Partner and Director of Operations for Gen Y Capital, an early stage venture firm. Prior to Luxury Market Branding, Lauren was the Proprietor, Creator and Chief Operating Officer of Sugarleaf Vineyards, the only African-American owned and operated winery in Virginia. The Winery became an award winning brand under her leadership within five years and was sold in 2011.

In the following interview, she talks about how female entrepreneurs can compete with men, how she balances her business and person lives, how to reinvent yourself after a startup failure, why you need to live life on your own terms and gives her best entrepreneurship advice to you.



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Dan Schawbel: What is it like to be a female entrepreneur trying to compete in a man's world? Is it easier to stand out?

Lauren Maillian Bias: Being a female entrepreneur is all that I know how to be. Working hard, and working hard at being my very best at everything that I apply myself to has always been ingrained in me from the time I was a child. I've always motivated and challenged myself; ultimately I've been competing to become a better version of me day after day for as long as I can remember. When it comes to being a woman working in industries that are primarily male, it's all about results and impact on the bottom line. No one gets to keep their place if they aren't pulling their weight. I try not to look at it as a gender competitive landscape as much as I do a multi-faceted learning experience that has shown me how to adapt and "know my audience" (more on that in my book). I wouldn't say that I am a woman in a "man's world" – let's clarify exactly what that means, but for all intents and purposes, it isn't easier to stand out simply because you're a woman. You stand out naturally when you consistently exceed expectations, whether you are a man or a woman. Women who consistently exceed expectations and have other roles in life such as mother or wife, and in my case, being a single-mother, stand-out because it's remarkable that the juggling act can be so graceful.

Schawbel: How do you balance your time between your business, advising companies and your two children?

Bias: I really believe in work-life integration (it has an entire chapter in my book) because there is no way to balance it all. It is all hard and purposeful work that I value and enjoy, and my happiness and success barometer relies on the interdependence of every facet of my life. I am also very transparent about who I am and what my priorities are – that may mean telling a company I'm advising or a client that I'm unavailable at a certain time because I have one of my children's milestone moments on my calendar, conversely it may mean having to work longer hours than I would like to when I'd rather be spending leisure with my children. I am honest with myself about what my non-negotiables are and I do not allow myself to break those. Ultimately, knowing that I inspire my children and that I am their role model and inspiration (according to them!) makes it all worth it.

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Schawbel: When a startup fails, how does an entrepreneur go about reinventing themselves?

Bias: Reinventing yourself obviously requires resilience. More importantly, reinventing yourself involves honesty, transparency and excellent communication. In fact, if you ask any well-respected CEO or venture investor if they would invest in the founder of a failed company again, most will tell you yes without hesitation based on how the entrepreneur handled themselves and the situation. After failure and the accompanying humiliation, when the dust settles, no one really cares about what happened – it's an event that lasted for a blip in time when viewed in hindsight, but everyone will care about how you handled the situation when most people thought you were at your lowest low – it speaks to your character, integrity and intelligence.

Schawbel: What does living life on your own terms mean to you?

Bias: To me, living life on your own terms means that you have clearly defined what success looks like to you and how you're going to achieve it. It means that you're maximizing your full potential by leveraging your strengths and living with a sense of purpose and pride without allowing anyone to derail your vision. When you live life 'on your own terms' you want more for yourself than anyone else ever could. You set the bar of achievement and excellence for yourself based on what optimizes your satisfaction in life. You run your own race.

Schawbel: What are your top three tips for aspiring female entrepreneurs?

Bias: I speak a lot about this in my book, but, embracing failure would be the first step because there is so much to be learned about both the experience – professionally what you would and wouldn't do in that situation if it presented itself again, and personally – what your values are, what keeps you grounded, who your friends are and how to trust your intuition. Ask yourself, "is it worth it even if I fail?" every experience I've taken advantage of has always been worth it even if I had failed because of the knowledge I gained.

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Second, “be more hungry to succeed, than thirsty for attention” – theoretically this means to work hard and work smart, work so hard that you attempt to, or do, outwork everyone else, and when you do, always be prepared for the opportunities that will present themselves. Hard work does in fact pay off, and oftentimes, it accelerates that trajectory of your career, be prepared to excel and accept opportunities for growth that align with your purpose and passions.

Lastly, get comfortable with being uncomfortable. Push yourself outside of your comfort zone to gain valuable insight and perspective and learn from the challenges of navigating unfamiliar territory. It keeps you nimble. You’ll learn a lot about yourself and what you want your professional interests and life’s legacy to represent. Most important, learn to embrace your perceived insecurities, they are most likely the qualities and characteristics that make you unique and give you the leverage to standout and succeed on your own terms.

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