

A photograph of two women in a professional setting, likely a meeting or office. The woman on the left is seen in profile, smiling and looking towards the right. The woman on the right is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. They appear to be engaged in a discussion. The background is softly blurred, showing what might be a window or a wall with some architectural details. The overall lighting is warm and professional.

Women entrepreneurs: finding the funding

The long-standing gender gap in entrepreneurial funding is narrowing, as venture capitalists and angel investors wake up to the potential in female-led businesses. Nevertheless, accessing that capital can be a tough and time-consuming process. We teamed up with Anne Ravanona, Founder and CEO of Global Invest Her to look at ways to find the right funding to take your business to the next level and become part of this important new wave of female entrepreneurship.



WE Can Network

The funding checklist

Raising funds takes time. That's time away from your customers, your staff and the day-to-day running of your business. With this in mind, Anne Ravanona says it is important to ask yourself a number of questions before you start examining the various funding options.

“Entrepreneurs need to ask themselves: ‘what is the potential for the business?’ Certain investors will only want a business that is going to scale up to a \$1bn company; others operate at a lower scale.”

Anne Ravanona
Founder and CEO of Global Invest Her

✓ 1 Do you need funding?

This sounds counterintuitive: doesn't every business need funding? However, if you can sustain and grow the business without it, you may have more chances of attracting funding at a later date rather than going through multiple rounds. There is a right time to look for funding and it needs to be done from a position of strength.

✓ 2 Getting your business ready

“To raise money effectively, the business needs to be ready. That means identifying a real problem for a significant number of people and developing a tangible proposition to solve it. You will need ‘skin in the game’, with your own money at risk. The appropriate point to seek funding will depend on the type of business, but in all cases a venture must have ‘traction’. It can't be a side project”, says Anne Ravanona. Expect any investor to do their due diligence. You need to be clear with them about why you are seeking funding and how that funding will be used. That means understanding the type of business you want to create and how fast you want to grow. Build clear milestones for the next 12-18 months: funding may come in tranches when you have hit certain milestones.

✓ 3 Get your pitch perfect

You need to champion your business, selling the problem your business solves and why there is a market for it. You need a forensic understanding of the figures you're projecting and the key assumptions behind those projections. Investors want a story, so don't bore them, give them the detail they need and sustain your enthusiasm.

✓ 4 What type of funding do you need?

There is a huge array of funding sources. However, you need to be targeted in your approach, depending on how much you need, over what period and how the investor wants to be repaid, which could be from the future growth in the business via an equity stake, or directly through a loan. You will also need to decide how much control you are willing to cede to your backer.

✓ 5 How to structure your funding?

Many people don't have a choice of funding. However, it is important that the type of funding works for you and your business. As such, look at the targets placed on the business in exchange for funding. Are they realistic? At the same time, it is important to have an effective personal relationship with your backer. You will need an honest dialogue through good and bad times.

Ask the experts:

Anne Ravanona Founder and CEO of Global Invest Her

Her advice on fundraising for your business, the common pitfalls to avoid and the power of self-belief.



“Women don’t tend to scream about themselves, but they have to push beyond their confidence levels and sell their business with passion and conviction.”

Anne Ravanona
Founder and CEO of Global Invest Her

What are your two pieces of advice for Women Entrepreneurs seeking to win funding?

Anne Ravanona: “Funding takes time and energy, so make sure you ask for enough. Women tend to ask for less, which can trap them into multiple funding rounds, so don’t under-sell. Recognise that women can be more careful and risk averse and try to balance out that trait. At the same time, don’t take investor feedback too personally, but pay attention. It can help you in the future.”

What are the common pitfalls to avoid?

AR: “I often see businesses asking the wrong investors at the wrong time. You need to consider who might be interested in your sector. Think about what they will get out of it and the type of companies they have backed to date. The situation for women is improving, but don’t underestimate the bias. Men-only businesses still have an easier time of funding. Equally, make sure you don’t underestimate the time and energy it takes to raise money. It can take three to six months to raise a significant amount and an investor will need to do their due diligence on your business. They will be looking for every skeleton. In certain jurisdictions the process goes faster, but be prepared for a long haul.”

How important is self-belief in business?

AR: “You have to get investors excited about the vision of the company and where you are going to take it. There is a story-telling aspect to it. Women don’t tend to scream about themselves, but they have to push beyond their confidence levels and sell their business with passion and conviction.”

FUNDING STAGES AND SOURCES

- ▶ **Early stages** Bank loans, credit cards, family and friends, your own savings
- ▶ **Stage 1** Crowd-funding, angel investors, government grants
- ▶ **Series A funding** Venture capitalists will get involved when investors need £750,000 to £1m; family offices; dedicated funds; private equity.

Ask the experts:

Catherine Abonnenc, Vice-President Women Business Angels

Her list of funding advice for women entrepreneurs and the common pitfalls to avoid.



“To raise funds, or negotiate a deal or contract, you have to inspire trust. How can you inspire confidence without being self-confident?”

Catherine Abonnenc,
Vice-President Women Business Angels

What are your two pieces of advice for Women Entrepreneurs seeking to win funding?

Catherine Abonnenc: “**Be concise:** explain how your project addresses a problem, on the short and long term and who your audience is. Describe the market and make sure to introduce your team.

Plan ahead: you should be able to look five years ahead and know how and why you will have succeeded in creating a resalable activity. It is also important to describe your key development steps and provide serious and achievable benchmarks.”

What are the common pitfalls to avoid?

CA: “Underestimating the time required to raise funds. Being alone, without a team. A lack of flexibility and not taking into account remarks and questions to enrich one’s thinking and develop one’s project”.

How important is self-belief in business?

CA: “For life in general, it is key. To raise funds, or negotiate a deal or contract, you have to inspire trust. How can you inspire confidence without being self-confident? But be careful, too much self-confidence can kill an investor’s confidence. You have to be able to listen, to evolve and question yourself in order to be able to develop your project properly.”

A list of funding advice

- 1** — Keep in mind that **fundraising is not a universal panacea** and does not have to be a necessary step for all projects
- 2** — **Self-financing** remains the way forward.
- 3** — **Bank loans** are sometimes difficult to get but you should always consider them
- 4** — **Grants, bonuses, competitions, can be of some support**
- 5** — **Crowdfunding** can effectively contribute to the early stages of the company, for example, to test a product at its launch
- 6** — Raising funds from **business angels** or from seed funds that will become **shareholders** of your company can make sense to ensure **the rapid development of an innovative project in a large market**, two or three years after the company’s creation

With special thanks to Anne Ravanona
and Catherine Abonnenc for their contributions.

About The WE Can Network

The WE Can Network by AXA is a community created to provide Women Entrepreneurs with sharp business insight, inspiration for personal growth, and opportunities for network-building, so they can better grow and protect their business, themselves and their family.

ABOUT ANNE RAVANONA

Anne Ravanona is Founder & CEO of Global Invest Her a platform and online community for early-stage women entrepreneurs that demystifies funding and helps them get investor-ready, to get funded faster. She is an international speaker and a women's advocate with over 22 years experience in global business.

ABOUT CATHERINE ABONNENC

Catherine Abonnenc is Vice President of the Women Business Angels Network (FBA), the only female business angels network in France and the number one in Europe. The network brings together nearly 150 members and encourages women to be part of the business angel adventure to support talented and daring entrepreneurs.

Find out more tips to grow your business and connect with women entrepreneurs on the [WE Can Network](#).



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