

Pioneers Insights: How Israel is Fostering Female Entrepreneurship

Vienna, March 22nd, 2018 - With the recent Booking.com Booster Lab in Tel Aviv, for which Pioneers Discover drove the process of startup selection as well as developed and managed the content, showing all-female startup accessibleGO as a winner of a €25,000 grant, we hear their thoughts on juggling family and founding and dive deeper into the Israeli female entrepreneurship scene.

According to the Startup Nation Finder, of the 4,247 founders of technology companies founded in Israel between 2014 and Q3 2017, 3,802 were male and only 445 were female. This is also a country with one of the highest birth rates in the developed world, with a high expectation to raise a family.

The founders of accessibleGO are both parents. But with their success, they have shown that motherhood need not be a barrier for female entrepreneurs.

“Israel is a very family-centred country,” says co-founder & CEO Miriam Goldman. “It’s a very important part of the culture. But you can juggle. You have to figure out how to manage your schedule...We formed our company in September and I went on maternity leave at the end of February. I was maximizing every day until I gave birth.”

“But after that she did take a real, proper maternity leave,” adds her co-founder c. “Having a baby is the most amazing thing in life and I told her not to be sorry about that. We’re both efficient, driven project managers, and when it comes to maternity you have 8 months of planning to get it right!”

Israeli female entrepreneurs are showing that such things are no barrier. Orit Hashay, who developed automated bra recommendation platform Brayola, raised money for the company while 6 months pregnant and launched it 4 weeks after giving birth. She has raised several million Dollars since. Another pioneering woman is Sigal Bareket, who founded mobile advertising tech company Taptica in 2012, now listed on the London Stock Exchange.

Things are clearly happening, albeit slowly. Much of the growth in female startup success in Israel can be attributed to the establishment of a women’s ecosystem and community, for example non-profit organization Yazamiyot. Yazamiyot has grown to include around 3000 members and run programs such as Google Campus for Moms, a startup school for women on maternity leave.

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“It’s not about getting together and talking about the glass ceiling,” says co-founder Hilla Ovil Brenner. “It’s about giving women tools. This was the need we saw and that’s why we started.”

While she’s another to have convinced investors while pregnant, she says more women in the room would make a difference to dealing with preconceptions around, for example, a pregnant woman’s ongoing commitment to her startup. However, only around 14% of partners in Israeli VC firms are women.

“Most investors are men, and people invest in people who are similar to them,” Brenner continues. “Getting more women investors is chicken and egg, but we need more of them. The more women investors there are, the more investments in women there will be – that’s how it’s going to work.”

And she’s not just talking about VC funds hiring more women investors. It’s also about successful female entrepreneurs choosing to stay involved in the ecosystem.

“A lot of my female friends who have successful companies and a lot of money are not becoming investors. Meanwhile, a lot of my male friends who sell companies automatically become investors. A woman friend of mine just sold her company for \$100m, and she’s thinking ‘I’ve made my money.’ We’re not seeing enough serial women entrepreneurs and investors.”

Another strong community of women is she codes, which is specifically for software engineers and thus addresses the high-tech imbalance. It now numbers 10,000 members, and has the goal of seeing 50% female software developers in the high-tech industry within a decade. she codes has received a government grant to support it as it runs free events and courses all over the country.

As one notices in Israel, everything is about moving forward and getting the next thing done. The country’s female founders are no exception to that.

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Note to the Editors

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About Pioneers:

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