

The Growth Zone

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Having it all!

Society doesn't exist - or so we're told. We're just a collection of individuals with our own needs and desires. Certainly, we do express a greater individualism than in previous generations, paradoxically a need served by an enormously powerful, all pervasive consumer goods industry!

But what about the choices we make, do they really reflect our individuality and personal freedom?

Speaking personally, I am confident that I have and do express greater freedom of choice than was possible for many of my predecessors. Today the majority of women choose to work and forge successful careers for themselves. No, I'm not ignorant of the financial pressures to generate income – for many the option of staying at home all day is hardly realistic and for some the arena of work is not a source of joy in their lives.



Many of us see our careers as more than making money, as an opportunity to make friends, a road to personal fulfilment and self expression. Why else would we invest so much of our life in these activities?

But in their desire to prove themselves, in what is often a male-dominated environment at work, how many women are making choices of omission - denying, by default, the possibility of fulfilling one of their greatest dreams - to have and raise children?

Whether you consider it to be fair or not is less relevant than the biological fact: from our late twenties onwards a woman's fertility is slowly but surely decreasing. Yes, it certainly is possible for some women to conceive a child into their late thirties or even forties - in the same way that some women can run a marathon in less than 2hrs 30minutes. However, it's not a gift that is given to all. And the truth is, you don't know whether you can until you try. Yet, juggling careers with relationships, more and more women are delaying the time when they choose to start their family – sometimes leaving it too late. In her book, *Baby Hunger*, Sylvia Ann Hewlett presents data showing that only 14% of the childless women at the top of corporate America actually chose not to have children.

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Where next?

Do you really know what you want more of in life? Perhaps it's easier to identify what you want less of?!

The "Wheel of Life" is a simple but graphic tool to help you identify areas where you might want to make changes in your life. To receive your free copy send me an email at wheel@thegrowthzone.com

Women succeed in the UK?

We're so used to hearing about the glass ceiling that many women perceive as stopping them attaining senior management positions that it's nice to be able to reflect on some slightly more positive statistics.

A recent survey of SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises) in seventeen European countries assessed the number of women participating in the senior management team.

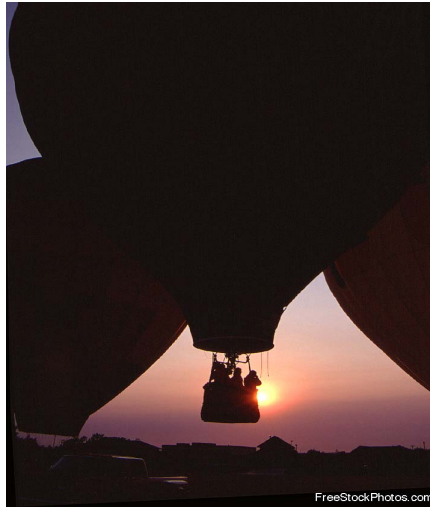
The survey by Grant Thornton (business and financial advisors) revealed that 67% of UK businesses have at least one woman in the management team. This contrasts with The Netherlands, frequently perceived as a country with fewer barriers to women's progress, where only 44% of businesses have a woman in such a senior position. We have no cause to rest on our laurels though,

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Having it all!

For many, the reality creeps up on them. The figures show that only 1% of high-achieving women have a child once they pass 39 years of age.

So what about this ticking clock? Time flows in one direction and although in many cases it is never too late, the opportunity will present itself in the future, there are some choices for which the time is now. Choosing to have a child may be one of those choices for you. If so, make it a positive one. Don't decide that you're not sure but you might not be able to later so let's try now just in case... that's hardly the choice I'm seeking to encourage!



The wider question for each and every one of us is, what choices are you making by default, by not taking the time to actively plan and to choose? Is there a dream slipping through your fingers while you are focussed on a different area of your life or career? That dream could include a relationship, children, travel, a totally different career, relocating to live in a different area... only you can know what your own dream is. Unless we open our eyes to see the full richness and balance of our whole lives, we may be giving up the opportunity to "have it all".

Is there anything we can do about this? Certainly! Make the commitment to stop and reflect on your choices in life.

1. Set aside some time this weekend and make a list of the things that you value in life. Yes, I know you plan to be busy but be honest, when are you not? Your list might include things like family, career, success, love, achievement, balance, making a difference, financial freedom, having fun, control, independence, creativity... your list will be unique to you. Don't stop until you have at least ten.
2. Then choose just four which are the most important to you. What does your list look like – are you surprised or is it as you knew it would be?
3. How do you find those values in your daily life, at home, at work, at play? Where do you direct your energy? In general, people who invest time and energy in expressing and experiencing things they value highly, enjoy a more fulfilled life. If there is something that is high on your list but in which, in reality, you invest little time or energy to make it happen, should you be surprised to find it unfulfilled?

"Having it all" is more attainable than most of us dare to believe but it rarely happens by accident. What would you like to create more of in your life?

This moment deserves your full attention, for it will not pass your way again.

Dan Millman

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as in Ireland, 72% of organisations have appointed a women to the most senior positions.

These figures are encouraging but still mean that across the sector there are 33% of companies which don't have even one woman appointed at senior management level. Now I'm not arguing for positive discrimination here but the fact is that women do make up a little over 50% of the population even if their percentage in the workforce will vary from sector to sector. If one third of companies are failing to recruit skills from this pool are they selling themselves short? Perhaps it's time to look again at recruitment procedures.

We know how organisations like B&Q or Nationwide are succeeding in a competitive market by actively recruiting older staff in a job market that has traditionally been oriented towards a younger age group – perhaps the lesson to learn is to actively seek your staff from the widest pool of skills available to you.

Don't just follow the pack, dare to be different!

It's never too late to become what you might have been!
George Elliott

Margaret Collins
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Your life, your time, your choice!

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