

Her American Dream: How Sharleen Ravishankar Moved To The United States In Her Thirties To Help Her Family Business

An Australian promising woman entrepreneur and President of world-renowned Manor Estate Wines is now disrupting the US market .

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The number of women who should become founders depends totally on themselves and their ambition. Women should be what they want to be.”

Sharleen Ravishankar

[Ravishankar](#) is originally from the country of McLaren Vale in South Australia, she never expected to end up in New York City and showcase her regions finest wines. The Manor Estate wine brand all begun in Australia in the world-renowned McLaren Vale Wine Region some decades ago. It begun as a passion project of her father Peter Cap who has a background in Organic Chemistry, viva culture and the love for wine which was the perfect catalyst to the creation of Manor Estate Wines. Decades later this vision and passion project came to fruition with many

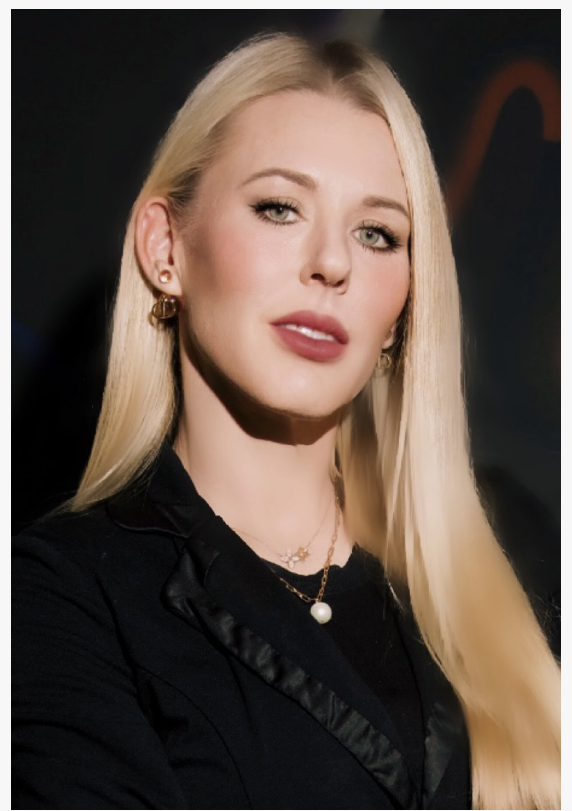
achievements including the “Secret Wine Garden” Manor Estate’s local cellar door where regular tastings and wine events are held including being the shoot location for the Manor Estate Wines “TV Series” “Wine Secrets”, which was screened on Australian television. In addition to local distribution of Manor Estates award-winning wines, Manor Estate began exporting to the USA with a focus on New York where it achieved dominance in the Australian Wine category against well-known brands that are well established in Australia.

[Liana Zavo](#): Thank you so much for doing this! Can you share the most interesting story that happened to you since you began leading your company?

Sharleen Ravishankar: When arriving into New York filled with enthusiasm, the nurturing culture of the city soon became apparent and it became obvious that the people had an innate desire to help a newly founded start up. The person that first helped get the company started arrived into New York penniless and is now the owner of a hospitality empire. It goes to show that beginning as a start up can turn into an empire and that is how many successful companies were started in New York. By pure coincidence we learnt that relationship building would be a fundamental foundation of our business moving forward. By building relationships, celebrity endorsements

were attained without the need to ask when showcasing our wines at various locations. It was only a matter of months until the Manor Estate product was placed and proven amongst New York's finest luxury and fine dining venues. Within the first year, venues such as New York's top steakhouses, rooftop bars, cigar lounges and 5 star hotels had placed Manor Estate Wines. The brand's unique sparkling wines had been rated amongst the highest rated in its category within the USA by Wine Enthusiast magazine including world renowned celebrities who were amongst the clientele of Manor Estate wines.

LZ: Ok, thank you for that. Let's now jump to the primary focus of our interview. According to this EY report, only about 20 percent of funded companies have women founders. This reflects great historical progress, but it also shows that more work still has to be done to empower women to create companies. In your opinion and experience what is currently holding back women from founding companies?



Sharleen Ravishankar President of Manor Estate USA

SR: Women may believe that they are exploited due to being a woman. I believe in myself as a person and that I deserve whatever I can create as myself. I avoid any labels and focus on my skillset and what I can bring to the table. I am my best asset. The world today is all about equality, if women do not believe they are a minority and believe in themselves as who they are or want to be they will no longer be pigeonholed. If women believe in themselves first and are the experts of their own domains any labeling will be disregarded. My thinking allows me to forget that I am a woman and that I am in fact a unique person. The key to being a woman is realizing I am a person first and not attempting to masquerade under a banner of a so-called group label which is a foundation to my success.

LZ: This might be intuitive to you as a woman founder but I think it will be helpful to spell this out. Can you share a few reasons why more women should become founders?

SR: The number of women who should become founders depends totally on themselves and their ambition. Women should be what they want to be. The pendulum has now turned, and many governments are now helping women meet their goals such as implementing gender equality on boards. Primarily, it all goes back to if the woman wants to be there and has the confidence and drive to do so. If you don't have the skill you should not be in the position. Irrespective of the reasons why there should be more women founders, certain skill sets are required for certain roles.

LZ: Ok super. Here is the main question of our interview. What are your “5 Things I Wish Someone Told Me Before I Started”

SR: If you are genuinely passionate about what you are doing you live and breathe your business day and night and success will be inevitable, but.... Don't ever expect success. Don't ever expect to be a 9-5 person. Don't ever expect to not have roadblocks. Don't ever expect a normal family life. Don't ever expect free time. Being realistic the above five points will happen though they can be eased. Things such as finding a mentor to discuss insights and success, being able to accept failure and take it as a learning lesson, understanding that decisions will not always be popular, that it is lonely at the top and that you need a skillset around you to help build your success.

Businesses entering the US market or any market require resilience and persistence. There is nothing more empowering than finding that one thing at which we are good at. Sharleen believes that if we can help empower women or any person to find that one thing then any woman or any person can be a founder with the right inner enthusiasm and goal.

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