



Global entrepreneurship

Yeba Olayé: portrait of a Solvay alumnus who became an inspirational entrepreneur ...

WOMAN & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Interview

WHAT WAS YOUR LEARNING EXPERIENCE AT THE SOLVAY BRUSSELS SCHOOL?

Being a student at the Solvay Brussels School was exciting, enriching and demanding at the same time. **It shaped my mind** and approach to work. I studied together with people from everywhere and from different background. These were the best years where I met lifetime friends I still evolve together with...and developed a very powerful network and the [Solvay Connect](#) initiative will allow to strengthen the network further.



HOW DID THE SCHOOL HELP YOU IN BUILDING YOUR FUTURE CAREER?

Studying at Solvay has certainly been **the best education I could ever dream of** to start any 'business' career. It did not only help me to acquire strong hard skills and business knowledge, it also shaped my mind in the best way possible. I learned to think Big, to innovate, to work hard and in teams in order to build my own vision.

The School prepared me to become **a real problem-solver**. My career in Consulting was actually a logical step after Solvay: willing to bring added value and creative solutions when facing new business challenges.

AND YOU CAME BACK TO THE SCHOOL?

Indeed, more than 10 years after I graduated, I decided to come back to Solvay as a 'post-graduate' student and followed the program "*Création & Croissance*" from [Solvay Entrepreneurs](#). I needed an environment that would help me challenge my business model and strategy with fresh ideas and innovative approaches and at the same time, connect me with the right people, coaches and network.

At Solvay Entrepreneurs, I did not only find the answers to my questions, I worked with very efficient **coaches** (an Expert in the Fashion Industry, a serial entrepreneur specialized in Digital marketing, the Head of the Delvaux's Belgian manufacture, and many more...). I could even test my project in front of potential investors. Solvay gave me the keys to start and launch my business.

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WHEN DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME AN ENTREPRENEUR?

I think I have always wanted to become an entrepreneur, already in those years where it was not as 'sexy' or attractive as today. **It became obvious when I was studying at the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management.** Some peers were dreaming about becoming CEO or big partners of top tiers Consulting firms, other like me, **wanted to be different...** find their own way, their own idea and turn it into a successful story. I am just at the beginning, but definitely on the right track.

HOW IS THE ENTREPRENEURIAL LIFE AS A WOMAN?

It is about **juggling**. I started actually working on this project when my second son was born. It was challenging but still, I felt it was the right time to pursue this dream.

When you are a woman **it is more challenging to focus 100% of your time on your project** (and probably you don't want to sacrifice everything for your project). So you have **to allocate your time** properly and be better organized...and in a sense, it gives you more 'off times' where your mind is solving some issues, finding creative ideas and developing concepts you drafted few days earlier.

Being a woman entrepreneur **is often about trusting your gut feeling**, developing your **intuition** and **anticipating** properly the next steps to take the right decision.

But men or women entrepreneurs are facing the same challenge: you need a clear vision, a strong determination, be willing to work hard, learn to be flexible and to permanently solve issues.

WHAT ARE THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

The positive aspect of entrepreneurship for me is that **you get the chance to start from an idea and to realize it.** You are driving your own project and achieving yourself every day. It is very **rewarding**.

The negative aspect is that it can be **lonely**. There are so many things you need to do and not enough time in a day, ...It can be **stressful** as it remains a trial and error exercise till you find your 'magic combination' (product-service / brand/ market).

WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO YOUNG WOMEN WHO WANT TO BECOME ENTREPRENEURS?

You need **motivation, discipline, integrity and focus to become an entrepreneur.**

It is a 24 hour/ 7 days a week **commitment** (on and off). You need to find your own way. You need a real Purpose, a reason that will remind you, when in doubt "why" you started all this.

And next to that, you need a strong - not to say unbeatable – plan (you will update it along the way of course). **Knowing that it could take years to build your business**, think of yourself as a 'CEO' first and be prepared. Then find the best partners, coaches to challenge your ideas or decisions...and follow your intuition.

Most of the time, you will have to **be tough and assertive**, but remember that it is a journey where you will push your own limits to become the best version of yourself, self-confident and convinced that 'You can achieve anything'. ...and while doing, **don't forget to enjoy life!**



Yeba Olayé was graduated from the Solvay Brussels School in 2003 with a degree in Business Engineering.



Learn More [about Yeba-essentials](#)

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