

The Sydney Morning Herald

Business Workplace [Careers](#)

This was published 9 years ago

Women need to learn how to brag, says Springboard Enterprises' Kay Koplovitz



Nassim Khadem

Updated May 18, 2016 – 3.37pm, first published at 1.14pm

Women need to learn how to talk themselves up, says Kay Koplovitz, the first woman to serve as network president in US TV history.

"I don't think it's a matter of confidence; it's a matter of [women] not wanting to brag about themselves," she says.



US media veteran Kay Koplovitz is the founder of Springboard Enterprises, a body that invests in female entrepreneurs. PAUL JEFFERS

Koplovitz's US-born company, Springboard Enterprises, aims to help startup women in high-growth industries access venture capital.

A large part of this is about teaching them to be "better promoters".

"We want to make sure that our [female] entrepreneurs are delivering messages that will be positively received," she says. "To do that, they must be explicit about their qualifications."

When Springboard launched in Australia four years ago, there was almost no early-stage funding.

"There was some angel investment, but not enough," says Koplovitz, who is travelling the nation this week promoting Springboard's programs and seminars for local businesswomen.

"There has been a change in the Australian market. We've seen an improvement in amount of capital for [female-led] startup companies. But it's not enough yet."



In 1998, then US president Bill Clinton appointed Koplovitz to chair the bipartisan National Women's Business Council. AP

Clinton appointment

Koplovitz is a pioneer in US cable TV. In 1977 she founded the USA Network, as an all sports service, Madison Square Garden Sports. It became the number one ranking cable network in primetime viewership, a title it held for over a decade.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton appointed Koplovitz to chair the bipartisan National Women's Business Council. This ultimately became a platform for her to co-found US-based Springboard Enterprises in 2000.

"I used the [Clinton] appointment to really look at the funding landscape," she says. "It was a time when huge amounts of money was going into venture capital, but under 2 per cent of that money was going to women-led businesses."

In the US, she says women that have come through its program have an 83 per cent success rate in raising capital. These women have collectively raised about \$7 billion, and 11 sharemarket listings have been launched.

Going global

She says about one third of Aussie women participating in her organisation's programs over the years have headed to the USA and raise capital.

"For those who want to go global, we help take them global," she says. "But we also want to develop an Australian financing market for them."

This is done, she says, by teaming up locally-based female-focused angel investor networks such as Scale Investors.

Since Springboard's Australian launch, 26 women have participated in the program. After completing the, about 70 per cent have been successful in raising capital, she says.

Overall, about \$68 million has been raised to date by local companies, with another five companies set to complete their first significant rounds of venture capital financing (Series A funding) this year.

Koplovitz, who in April 2014 sat on the 10-member board of Time Inc (the publishing arm of the world's second-largest media company Time Warner Inc), says throughout her career she's helped ensure women are not overlooked when there's jobs available.

But she says much more needs to be done to lift women into boards and senior management positions.

While she does not support quotas, she says if companies are failing to meet minimum diversity targets - recent [Workplace Gender Equality Agency data shows many Australian companies actually went backwards](#) - they should be made to answer why.

"The regulatory agencies have to get on this issue," she says. "If they [companies] don't perform against them [voluntary targets] they have to be held accountable."



Nassim Khadem is Deputy Editor, Business. Nassim reporting on tax and regulation. Connect via [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).
