From the Desk of the CBWN President:

The Year of the Pivot

Last year, women around the world faced an immensely wide range of challenges. Pivots of varying degrees were necessary across the spectrum of professional and personal preservation, growth, and, in some instances, survival. Sacrifices were made.

Those rejoining the workforce were met with hiring freezes, online interviewing, and a lack of in-person recruiting/networking events, where connections are made more naturally. Many voluntarily or involuntarily exited the workforce, while some re-evaluated their chosen paths. Business owners scrambled to adjust and new ventures saw delays and additional hurdles.

All this blurred more than we ever imagined with the personal side of things. The increasing demands of immediate and extended family care overwhelmed. Self care. What was that again? I longed for the physical and emotional outlets now blocked—the gym, happy hours, date nights, girl-time brunches, and the beloved spa treatments. Do not even get me started on the lack of ability to travel.

Yet, there were successful pivots. Some were huge! Creating new business offerings, transforming existing offerings to a virtual world, and launching new business concepts. Some were smaller; taking stock in personal values and re-aligning varying aspects of our lives. Carving out time for longer walks with the kids. Zooming family and friends to stay connected. Amazing achievements one and all!

I, like many, was ecstatic for those who made big, sweeping, life-altering successful pivots. Yet at times it reminded me of just how much I WAS NOT doing. I went through a rollercoaster of highs and lows. At times I felt I was actually winning in this game of pivots, not just adapting but thriving. There are other times I felt like a complete failure; my inner judge chastising me for not pouncing on business opportunities, reorganizing the entire house, getting in the best shape of my life, or schooling my kids to be next year’s geniuses. Then there were days my life felt like a broken record desperate for a respite—one absent of a kitchen, the call of ‘mommy’, something that needed to be cleaned or put away, or with just enough quiet to have more than 10 minutes of uninterrupted thought.
Then, I finally realized it was those little pivots that I needed to celebrate and embrace. Creativity-fueled, low-effort experiences for the kids went a long way. Revamped on-line girls’ game nights and reinvented date nights served as my rewards. I reveled in the quiet of a simple bath. And throughout all the flourishing, defeating and just boring moments I found my network of family and friends indispensable.

Interestingly enough, I also found meeting new women during this time was invigorating. Sharing experiences, getting ideas from and de-stressing with a group of women who did not know the ins and outs of my life was cathartic. If there was ever a time in my life where I felt the value of women being there for one another, this was it. I will forever be grateful.

What 2021 will bring is uncertain – that much is clear. So whether it is through the Chicago Booth Women’s Network, or an alternate network, I urge you to seek out these opportunities to connect. Make time for them. Share your stories of pivots, no matter how big or small, successful or not. It is an amazing way to give and receive. And as this new year of 2021 progresses you never know when you will be able to give and when you will need to receive.

Happy 2021 with all our best wishes.

Nima Parikh
President
Chicago Booth Women’s Network

Women empowering women for professional success