

BE THE NEXT HER

A MODERN-DAY CAREER BLOG FOR WOMEN, BY WOMEN

JANUARY 4, 2019

Rana Florida, CEO, The Creative Class Group + Author of Upgrade



Rana is the CEO of [The Creative Class Group](#), boutique advisory services firm.

What is your morning routine?

I usually get woken up with a karate chop blow to the face; sometimes coming at me from both directions by 1 and 2-year-old feet. I will then untangle my hair from a puppy or cat wrapped around my head for warmth before tiptoeing like a ninja out of bed at 6 am. I will then check and respond to a crazy amount of work emails, both from clients and my team. I'm OCD, so will make sure every bed is made in perfect military fashion, the house in order, and dog, cats, babies all fed and dressed. I'm trying to take 15 minutes each morning to learn to meditate and clear my head before starting the workday.

Tell us about your career path

My parents, first-generation immigrants from Jordan, drilled the importance of education into me and my siblings. They wanted us all to become doctors or lawyers. I was not drawn to either profession, so I went to business school without a clue as to what I would end up doing. I just knew that I wanted to land a high-level corporate job and I did just that, in Washington, DC. I was super excited by my six-figure salary and bonuses but was not happy. I was stuck commuting in traffic all day, I had crazy bosses and no control over my time and schedule.

One day when BMW called to create an ad campaign around my husband's work (Richard Florida and Rise of the Creative Class) I had to think long and hard about leaving the safety net of my steady paycheck and risking my relationship to launch an advisory services company, [The Creative Class Group](#), with my husband. Eleven years later, I'm thrilled that I did. We have such an interesting roster of clients; we work to solve some of the greatest challenges of our time.

What challenges do you or women face in your industry?

Women now make up the majority of the [Creative Class](#), those of us who think for a living, yet our pay still is not on par. When I wrote [Upgrade](#) a few years ago, my research showed that women own nearly 8 million businesses in the US, accounting for \$1.2 trillion of GDP. Over the last 40 years, women have gone from 37 to 48% of the workforce and their participation in the workforce amount to \$3.5 trillion in GDP. But despite all of the women's economic contribution, there are still so few female leaders on boards, as CEO's and in leadership positions. Also, when women decide to have children, many will not return to work, as antiquated policies don't give them enough flexibility and freedom to juggle their careers and families.

What advice would you give to young girls who want to be the NEXT you?

Don't be afraid of taking risk and fail fast and fail often. We are brought up as children to get good grades, get on the right team, and score the winning goal. If we fail the class, we won't get into a good school; if we don't get into a good school, we won't get a decent job; and if we don't get a decent job, we'll be living at home with our mom and dad for the rest of our lives or living on the streets, and everyone will know we're a failure. We set up children and especially girls from a very early age to believe that only success is rewarded. This, however, is very unlike the way we learn.

Girls need to reset their definition of failure. Too many of us view setbacks as something we haven't been able to accomplish, or worse still, as shameful black marks that we can never erase.

For young girls accepting risk takes a severe emotional toll; it causes fear and confusion and it can lead to stress and fatigue. But most successful leaders, thinkers and innovators understand that new opportunities and rewards come only after taking risks. Facebook's motto is "Move fast and break things," meaning, it's okay to take a chance on several things at once. But the harsh reality is that most of us are not rewarded at school or work for taking risks.

Curiosity is stifled in a risk-free environment. If girls are afraid of getting laughed at for their ridiculous ideas or trying new things, then any number of important inventions won't ever see the light of day. Our society and workplaces need to encourage more risk-taking, especially for young girls.

How do you separate work life from your personal life?

There is no separation. The lines are completely blurred. We Skype clients or team members from the airport or FaceTime with shoddy internet connections in hotel lobbies, in airports or from the back of Ubers. Take conference calls with mayor's offices from the playground. Work with team members on research reports while grocery shopping online. We take conference calls with Middle Eastern clients at 8 am and Asian clients at 10 pm. Thank god, [Gymboree](#) has wi-fi, it's amazing what you can get done in 45 minutes of uninterrupted time!

What inspires you?

Travel, work, reading, music, and our babies!

When you're off the clock, what are your indulgences?

Sleep, wine, and finding a few spare minutes to read – in that order!