

10 Most Successful Women Entrepreneurs of the Decade

By [Kristina Zucchi, CFA](#) | April 05, 2015

Women have been paving the path for [entrepreneurs](#) in every industry for many decades. From Estee Lauder, who launched her cosmetics company ([EL](#)) in the 1940s and Ruth Fertel, who wanted to have the best steak restaurant-- Ruth's Chris Steak House ([RUTH](#)), to feminine luggage tycoons Patricia R. Miller and Barbara Bradley Baekgaard, founders of Vera Bradley ([VRA](#)), to [Martha Stewart](#) with her modern lifestyle tips in the 1980s and 1990s, women entrepreneurs have been able to withstand the economic and business pressures to be the best. Today, the list of women entrepreneurs spans many industries, from fashion to [semiconductors](#), and even more countries.

Below is a list of the top women entrepreneurs who have made a significant mark this decade. This list is in no particular order but strives to recognize women who have built a world-renowned brand through their own hard work and strong drive.

Real Estate, Healthcare, and Technology Gurus:

- [Zhang Xin](#), co-founder of SOHO China (a real estate development firm in China that went public in 2007), has demonstrated a strong ability to drive double-digit growth and profits.
- Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, founder of Biocon, an Indian biopharma company. Kiran began Biocon out of her garage and grew it into a globally competitive company. In 2004, Biocon went public and became only the second Indian company to reach \$1 billion on its first trading day.
- Weili Dai, co-founder of Marvell Technology Group, Limited ([MRVL](#)), is the only female founder of a semiconductor company. As Marvell's President, Dai's drive to grow earnings and revenues has won her numerous awards like the Gold Stevie Award to Woman and Entrepreneur of the Year.

Entertainment and Media:

- Beyonce, the singer-songwriter who started as part of Destiny's Child in the mid-1990s, has become a huge top-selling female solo artist. She has added fashionista to her list of accomplishments, with the launch of House of Dereon in 2004 and [shop.beyonce.com](#) in 2012. In 2014, she was named #1 on Forbes' celebrity list.
- Oprah Winfrey, the media mogul, continues to leave a strong footprint through her media empire, which includes movies like "The Butler." She proves her business acumen by guiding double-digit growth in her [OWN](#) network and demonstrates her passion for educating females worldwide through her support of the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls.
- [Arianna Huffington](#) is the editor-in-chief of The Huffington Post, which she launched in 2005. She later sold it to AOL in 2011, but she continues to guide it and has set her sights on growing the Huffington brand overseas in markets like Japan, Canada, and Europe.

Fashion and Beauty:

- Tory Burch is the CEO of Tory Burch, a US-based clothing and fashion line that she launched in 2004. It has grown to 125 free-standing stores and a presence in 3,000 department and specialty stores. Burch is also a philanthropist who launched the Tory Burch Foundation to support women entrepreneurs.
- [Sara Blakely](#), inventor of Spanx undergarments for women and men, started with only \$5000 of her own money, an idea, and pure drive. Today, 15 years after the company began, Spanx's revenue is approximately \$250 million. And like Tory Burch, Blakely has started a foundation to help women worldwide.
- Leslie Blodgett, CEO of Bare Escentuals, a mineral-based makeup company, took over this struggling company in 1994, paved the way for new marketing and distribution through the QVC channel, and eventually took the company public in 2006. This was followed by an acquisition by Shiseido in 2010 for \$1.7 billion.
- Katie Rodan and Kathy Fields, co-founders of Rodan and Fields, makers of [Proactiv](#), felt so strongly about eradicating acne in all ages, they joined together to develop their flagship product in 1995. Twenty years later, Proactiv has annual sales estimated at over \$800 million, and the makers have taken their dermatologic knowledge that helped them conquer the acne market to the anti-aging skincare market.

The Bottom Line

Women entrepreneurs are historically most known for running fashion houses (Diane Von Furstenberg) or cosmetic companies (Mary Kay), but in the most recent decade, a remarkable number of entrepreneurs have made their marks in other industries like [biotech](#), [real estate](#), and [technology](#).