

# DARE Q & A with: Genevieve Bos



*Genevieve Bos has started and sold multiple venture-backed and privately held corporations in the technology and media sectors. Today, she is CEO of IdeaString – an online collaboration and ideation platform that transforms employees and your entire network into innovators to deliver valuable business insights and sustainable innovation. She also co-founded, built and then successfully sold the media property PINK magazine ([www.LittlePinkBook.com](http://www.LittlePinkBook.com))– think “Fortune meets Oprah.” Under her leadership, readership of the print publication grew to over 650,000 and won multiple national industry awards. Now the website continues to positively impact millions of professional women.*

*Earlier in her career, she founded multiple technology companies and specialized in developing international sales, distribution and marketing teams in Europe, Asia and the Middle East while based in the USA and Switzerland. Bos has created profitable partnerships with hundreds of influential decision-makers with over 100 of the world’s top companies. Also a sought-after expert and speaker on professional success and entrepreneurship as it relates to women in business, she is featured by numerous media outlets, including Forbes, CBS, NBC, CNBC, and more. She sits on multiple company boards including BLINQ Media, MLC Media, TripLingo and DueProps.*

**Q: What is the most challenging thing you have ever had to do?**

**A:** Working in Asia, Europe and the Middle East for my start up software company as a 26-year-old. I knew at the time that I had a great handle on my product and the opportunity for the major corporations that were interested in our technology, but I had no experience doing deals. But I jumped in with both feet. The first thing I did was call around and identify people who could help. Then I created a personal board of directors to help me navigate the waters by region and country.

I found highly experienced people, mostly men because I could find few women, who helped me understand what I should expect, how I should dress, how to carry myself and how to manage my customers both personally and professionally. It’s no secret that women across the globe don’t have many of the same opportunities as women in the USA. In fact, in the Asian and Middle Eastern countries I did business in, the men there had never worked with a woman as an equal dealmaker in their lives. This was an enormous challenge but also a huge opportunity. And as luck would have it, I was coached on how to make the most of it. For instance, a year before I was to do business in Japan, I was fortunate to meet a dynamic woman in New York City who was the President of the Japan America Society. She was a 6 ft. tall beautiful (*continued*)

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**A:** (cont.) blonde who was hard to miss and grew up in the country when her dad was the CEO of IBM Japan. She specialized in helping senior executives and government officials do business in Japan. She contributed her time to me since we met at a women's economic conference and became friends. Then a year later she spent many hours on the phone helping me to craft my visual brand, to only wear "auspicious colors," and teaching me the importance of being aware as much as I could be on how I moved my body and wore my facial expressions and even my tone of voice, pitch, and rate.

It turned out that the effort of *My Fair Lady*, the Japanese version, became hugely successful. The chairman of a huge Japanese company heard about me, wanted to be in the meetings, and chose to personally host me on multiple occasions for a multi-million dollar deal we were negotiating. This was a huge honor for our company and as a result I was able to secure our company the resources we needed to make our deal

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successful. Also, I had the added benefit of getting pretty good at singing karaoke with my Japanese business partners and learning about the different types of sake.

**Q:** Where did you get the courage and confidence to do this thing?

**A:** My sense of adventure, natural curiosity about people and love of travel very quickly outweighed the fear. In conjunction, I surrounded myself with really brilliant, experienced people who were willing to support me every step of the way. I felt so very supported and in turn do my best to support others when they go through big career jumps.

**Q:** What is the biggest mistake you have ever made? What did you learn and how did you recover?

**A:** For years, I was afraid to show that I did not know a thing. I was afraid that if I asked too many questions, people I worked with would think I was a fraud. I spend so many years hiding in plain sight and later I found out it's called the imposter syndrome. It's the feeling that you are not good enough, smart enough, capable enough to achieve higher levels. I finally joined the Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO), where I was surrounded by hundreds of hugely successful entrepreneurs, mostly men, who talked openly with me about their vulnerabilities. I finally realized that acknowledging what you are great at and not so great at is a huge strength, and in fact is the basis for empowering yourself and others to achieve. When I think of all the incredible wasted stress I had worrying; it was less time I could be focusing on what was most important.

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**Q:** If you had a young woman you cared deeply about entering the workforce today, what single piece of advice would you have for her?

**A:** My advice to any young woman who has passion for achievement and learning and would like to get the most out of her career is to surround herself with a personal board of directors who will help her get to where she wants to go, and to be open and very real about her strengths, what she wants to work on, and to think about how to simply be adventurous and enjoy the journey. Also, to read Becky Blalock's book! I wish I had this sort of tool earlier in my career; even now, it reminds me of things I should be doing more often.

**Q:** How did you make the leap from middle to senior executive leadership in your company?

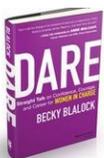
**A:** I worked in business development and sales and quickly realized that I had a very strategic brain and was able to contribute my ideas to upper management and was promoted to manager. Not long after, I ended up starting my own company with a few partners and this put me in charge of global sales, marketing and PR. I really had to learn on the job.

**Q:** What advice do you have for building self-confidence?

**A:** It's really more of being open about what you are good at and what you want to work on in your life. Be clear about the fact that you are a unique, important gift and have talent for the world. You can leave it so much better off than when you arrived. It's not just about you, it's about the contribution you make to others every day. Sometimes getting your mind off "you" and focusing on who you can be of service to with your unique gifts is a great way to build self-confidence.

**Q:** What do you fear most today?

**A:** Not keeping a sense of wonder – I want to keep asking more "why" questions versus depending on what I already know. As an entrepreneur, my business and investments are so much more about questions and having the patience and curiosity to wonder and not let life as I know it dictate actions. The pull of the past or what has always worked is such an easy and tempting way to think – but it's vital to continue to foster the contrarian and knowledge-seeking part of myself, and to stop in the business of life and pay attention.



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