



2inspire Inspirational Woman: Susanna Halonen, The Happyologist®

Susanna Halonen has mastered the science of happiness both literally and personally. She left an unhappy corporate life to complete a Masters of Science in Applied Positive Psychology and to become a qualified life coach. She quit pessimistic thinking and trained herself to become an optimist. Along the way, she coined the title 'Happyologist®'! Learn more about her journey with our interview with Susanna.



Please tell us what is a typical business day for you?

I don't really have one day that's the same! Some days are filled with coaching client calls, others I designate fully to writing new content – such as new inspirational talks, new articles, new online courses or my next book. Then there are the days when I'm delivering workshops or talks to clients so I'm fully focused on them. I always also fit in some social media interaction so that I continue to inspire people daily. Then of course there is all the other things that come with running a business – like PR, marketing, administrative tasks and finances. I tend to also designate half days or full days for them. I try to multitask as little as possible as I find I'm most productive when I fully immerse myself in one or two things.

What made you start the business and how did you get started?

I was in the corporate marketing world originally but I didn't feel it was right for me. I didn't feel fulfilled and felt like there was a values mismatch with the company I used to work for. I also knew I wanted to do something more meaningful. When I read Shawn Achor's book, *The Happiness Advantage*, I knew that's exactly what I wanted to do: to help people to become happier. That epiphany, combined with a very transformative coaching session, helped me to realise I wanted to combine positive psychology, the science of happiness and human performance, with coaching to help people to achieve that.

After that, I took little steps forward to test the waters and with each step I felt surer that this was exactly what I wanted to do. After 18 months of researching, planning and educating myself on the side, I left my corporate job to go do a Masters of Science in Applied Positive Psychology. I took the intensive one-year route and started to build my business on the side. Once I completed my Masters, I had already built a following and started a clientele list. This enabled me to go straight into my business full-time after I finished my studies. That's how I became the Happyologist.

What would you say has been your greatest accomplishment in the business world to date?

This is tough – there are so many I'm proud of! I'm going to be cheeky and I'm going to have to share three.

1. My book *Screw Finding Your Passion: It's Within You, Let's Unlock It*. I'm so proud of sharing this important message that you don't need to find and follow one passion in order to be happy. Instead, you can learn to live your whole life with passion and find a much more fulfilling type of happiness like this.
2. Doing the 'Art of Happiness' talk at TEDxBrighton for an audience of 1250 people. I was so in my element I absolutely loved it. I was so humbled by the positive feedback I received afterwards about the way I bridged my multi-cultural upbringing with practical happiness lessons.
3. Being a bestselling guest speaker at The School of Life London and The School of Life Antwerp. I love delivering my habits, happiness and passion workshops to their audiences and get such a high from working with people who are so driven to create positive change in their lives.

What has been your biggest challenge in business so far?

Figuring out how to do it all! When I set up my business, I naively got super excited about all the fun work I would be able to do through my coaching, workshops, talks and writing – yet I slightly forgot to think about all the other things that comes with running a business! To say the least it has been a long learning process (and still is) when it comes to prioritising effectively and getting everything done without working around the clock. In

fact, the more I started to restrict the hours I worked, the more I started to achieve in those hours. Funny that, isn't it?



What are your future plans for the business?

I have three big priorities right now: create and sell more online courses as I only have my habits one on offer right now; write my second book as I'm about to sell it to a publisher; and, last but not least, to deliver more inspirational talks as they are not only fun to do but also enable me to help a lot of people in one go whilst also being great publicity for me.

If you had to do it all over again, what would you do differently?

Oh boy where do I start! There have been so many massive learnings throughout the years – and some I do believe I had to learn in person. I wouldn't change things massively because I do believe everything happens for a reason, but I suppose these four things would be on the top of my mind as my best learnings:

- Have a signed contract with every talk/workshop/coaching client. That means everyone is clear on the Terms and Conditions, cancellation policy and payment terms. I did struggle with some of these things in the beginning so I would recommend newcomers to have this in place right from Day 1.
- Make anything you can automatic. For example, people can see all the details about my coaching packages on my website, and if they decide to buy they immediately pay, view and accept the T&Cs, and then get access to my calendar to book their first session in. This is all done with zero effort from me and it enables me to focus my energy on what truly matters: delivering the transformative coaching sessions.
- Learn to say no. Again and again. There are going to be so many tempting offers and so many people telling you what to do and how to do it. In the end, however, you know what you'd rather not do so don't. It's your business so you should run it how you want to run it. That way you will also clear your calendar to the things you actually want to say yes to.

Why is it so important to inspire young women in particular to follow their dreams?

I think it's important to inspire everyone to follow their dreams! In today's world it's hard for us to go after what we want because we lose sight of our own dreams. We get strongly influenced by what we think the society tells us we should do, and also by the desire to please people. We don't want to let our partners, family or friends down, and sometimes going after our dreams makes us feel that way. Which is bonkers!

In the end your loved ones want you to be happy. They want you to go after your dreams, not theirs. Sometimes we just need to remind ourselves of that.

What advice would you give to somebody who wants to start a business in your industry?

It doesn't matter what industry you're in, take a step-by-step approach to starting a business. Rather than diving in head first into the deep end, take small steps forward in the shallow water. That way you keep your security net whilst also starting to explore this new idea you have. Then, once you're sure you want it, and you want to make the switch, make a plan and stick to it.

Start by reading everything you can about the industry you're curious about. Connect with people in it and invite them for coffee. Take weekend training courses in it. Go to industry events. Then, when you feel sure, commit to making the switch. For me, after doing introductory training days for both coaching and positive psychology, I signed on to do them fully. I did a six month coaching accreditation to gain the skills to coach and I did a 12-month full-time Masters of Science in Applied Positive Psychology. I also signed-up to an incredible online business school called B-School (by Marie Forleo), which really helped me to get my head around the business side of things.

What or who inspires you in business and why?

I'm most inspired by people who have worked hard to make their businesses succeed sustainably (rather than overnight success stories). Marie Forleo is definitely a big inspiration when it comes to the business side of things. On the other hand, I love Shawn Achor for his beautiful, positive energy and how he uses that to share his happiness message in the corporate world. After all, he is the one who inspired me to get into the field!

What is your favourite inspirational quote?

This is a quote I found somewhere online but it wasn't attributed to anyone so not sure whose it is. But I love it so much I got it printed on my Oyster card holder so whenever I take the tube in London I'm reminded of it. Here it is:

"And every day, the world will drag you by the hand, yelling, " This is important! And this is important! And this is important! You need to worry about this! And this! And this!" And each day, it's up to you to yank your hand back, put it on your heart and say, "No. This is what's important."

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