

# Asking Real Questions, Getting Real Answers And Growing Your Business

BY HILARY FAVERMAN

Little is more empowering than being surrounded by legions of professional women introducing themselves, complimenting one another (both on their business success and on their fabulous shoes), and elevator pitching left and right.

And it's hard — within a culture that prides itself on resilience — to find like-minded women who admit that it's tough to hold all the pieces together but are doing it anyway: women who “get” it, and “get” me. The women at the ninth annual Temech Conference, held last week at Jerusalem's International Conference Center ... they get it. They get all of it.

They get the shared experience of trying to squeeze in a conference call on the way home from the 6-year-old's playdate.

They get the feeling of desperation when, having met a midnight deadline and climbed into bed, satisfied but exhausted, they are woken 15 minutes later by the toddler.

They get brainstorming new ideas with a potential client on Friday morning while watching the challah dough rise, covering the sound of punching down the dough by suggesting a new marketing idea.

They get the challenge of growing a small business while watching their bank account go further into the red, wondering if summer camp costs are going to break them.

A thousand strong from all over the country, speaking English, Hebrew and Hebrish (what — these aren't the three official languages?) these are Orthodox women who have come together to learn, network and become even stronger. I was proud to be among them.

Simultaneously offering a full day of Hebrew and English programs, Temech brought in some incredible speakers.

Rabbi Mordecai Burg, *menahel* at Yeshivat Shaarei Mevaseret Zion, and Rabbi Yisrael Meir Shushan spoke with incredible understanding and reverence. After describing the difficulties they personally encountered on their path to growth, they explained that it became possible to succeed only after finding the right mentors who cultivated self-confidence rather than patronizingly and noncommittally encouraging them to “do better.”

Rabbi Burg regaled us with anecdotes proving that confidence is not an attitude but rather a belief system. Now THAT is an inspirational speaker!

Rae Ringel, president of The Ringel Group, a U.S.-based

leadership development consultancy specializing in facilitation, coaching and training, was *on fire*. After telling us her story (her family is based in Washington, D.C., but moves to Jerusalem for a full year every time one of her four children starts first grade, so each kid can get a basis of Hebrew. Can you imagine moving a family of six back and forth every few years?) Rae talked to us about communication. Now, I figured I might gloss over a good part of her lecture considering I'm a communications professional ... but that turned out to be a big NOPE. In addition to being incredibly warm, open, and entertaining, Rae lectured on how to frame a request that will garner a real answer. She coached us on what qualifies as a real request:

A. WHAT — articulate precisely what you want

B. WHO — specifically state from exactly whom you want it

C. WHEN — dictate by when you want it

D. CONDITIONS OF SATISFACTION — spell out how success will be measured

In order to illustrate her point, she went on to list examples. Even though these might sound like requests, *they're not*:

“I'd like to see you working harder.”

“I'd like you to donate a gift to our organization.”

“Please consider me for a promotion.”

But these are:

“I'd like you to consider a gift of \$2K to my organization by May 1.”

“I'm proposing a 5 percent increase in my base salary by Dec. 31.”

And what do you do when you get a “non-response”? Non-responses are:

“I'll get back to you.”

“Send me an email.”

“Sure, be back in touch!”

Push for a real response, even if that response is a “no.” It's better to get a “no” now than waste three months chasing a response. Social niceties (“Oh! So great to see you! We should have lunch sometime!”) are for social situations, not professional situations. Get the response you need.

Fiona Darmon, SVP of JVP Ventures, a leading investment fund in Israel, gave no “discounts.” Describing her experience bringing Alibaba to Israel and securing a large investment by that company in various Israeli concerns, she showed us how to see the big picture, come at negotiations from “the other side” and create the win-win that is the hallmark of all good business. And she knows what she is talking about.

Fiona coaches women entrepreneurs, from those starting out to those leading multimillion dollar concerns. Her advice and direction was a treat to savor over the coming weeks.

Mrs. Shoshana Chen broke all stereotypes. A dedicated *chassidische* mother and grandmother of note in the community, her other job is senior financial editor for *Yediot Acharonot*, winning the Israel Lifetime Achievement prize for her excellence. Shoshana talked about trends and mistakes, and how businesses triumph or lose depending on the way they react to these typical business processes. Bringing examples to life from leading Israeli corporations, and translating those for us to the practical day-to-day challenges in our own businesses, she gave us tools for those inevitable hard days, but her personal credos and dedication to Torah ideals is what made those concepts real for the women in the room.

Yael Glazer opened by conceding that this was her first public presentation in English and asked for forgiveness if she lost a word here and there. But she didn't — she was spot on and didn't miss a beat. Yael, who was desperate to start a business with zero capital and felt she “only” had talent and ambition to offer, has enjoyed success as a serial entrepreneur, founding two flourishing businesses after a failed stint as an Israeli Dead Sea product salesperson in an American mall.

Yael presented on “How to Become a Professional Juggler.” I was initially suspicious ... what, another session on balancing? But Yael did not disappoint. Her tools were *tachlis* and interactive. Yael clearly keeps all her balls in the air but recognizes that she prioritizes some over others (she calls the critical ones her “glass” balls, because nobody wants to drop a child) and shifts around her priorities constantly. I'm glad that Temech prioritized her, and obviously I wasn't the only one who felt that way since her presentation was packed.

Nirit Cohen blew my mind when she said that there are fewer than 100,000 new salaried jobs this year, but 19 million new businesses have been established! Over a third of the American workforce hold a full-time job PLUS a side business. The world of work is changing — production is changing, services are changing and *we must change with it*.

The entire world of work has evolved — just 10 years ago, co-working spaces were unheard of — and when the concept was introduced, it was dismissed initially with a hearty “That will never work!” Things are possible today that

weren't possible even a few years ago, and there will be things possible tomorrow that aren't possible today.

Hands-on workshops included some “off the beaten track” options that got participants out of their seats and into the action. One workshop challenged participants to build and practice presentations with a focus on raising investment for their businesses. After a rousing workshop with Mila Finkelstein, participants “pitched” their company to real-bank loan managers from Bank Pagi, a leading partner in the conference this year, and the best presentations won hard cash bonuses from the bank!

The Challenge workshop forced each and every woman to think PARTNERSHIPS. Without creating alliances, there is no way to move forward. We traded tips and ideas, details and practices to gather clues to break the code. The clear summary at the end of the workshop was our “homework.” Partnerships are the lifeblood of any business, and now we had real experience in just how to go about building them.

A lean Business Canvas workshop led by Alina Shkolnikov, leader of HP accelerators in 10 countries until recently, drilled down deep into identifying the exact product and target audience your business seeks to reach.

All in all, the day was deeply satisfying — a mixture of hugs, learning, introductions and lunch with colleagues and friends, old and new. We played “business card bingo” as a way to encourage those among us who are too shy to walk up to a stranger and introduce themselves (OK, I'm clearly not one of those people, but there are plenty who are). We enjoyed an elaborate lunch (who can network on an empty stomach?) as well as Miri Israeli's inspiring story and songs — many got up to dance — and then we all rushed to pick up our kids, keeping those glass balls high in the air.



*Hilary Faverman believes in the power and purpose of passionate, clear, invigorating content. It is her conviction that properly fostered business relationships can be genuine, valid and worthwhile. Hilary embraces these values and directs them into producing successful content marketing and media campaigns for her clients at start@HilaryFaverman.com.*