



Women's Entrepreneurship Survey 2020

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For Women Entrepreneurs, the Shift from ‘Doing’ to ‘Leading’ Is the Critical Step

As their business grows, entrepreneurs also double down on brand storytelling and corporate responsibility

Women entrepreneurs are a rising force in business, bringing new ideas and innovative products and services to every sector of the U.S. economy. Women represent an increasing portion of business owners¹ and of the self-employed², and the number of people employed by women-owned businesses continues to grow³. But entrepreneurs also face daunting challenges. Only about **50%** of new businesses survive their first five years, and only about one-third make it to their 10th birthday (regardless of the owners’ gender)⁴.

Qurate Retail Group has a long-standing commitment to women’s empowerment and entrepreneurship. We offer powerful platforms to foster the growth of brands and small businesses, and we’re proud to create and enable professional experiences and relationships where strong women can build their businesses. Over the past four decades, we have supported the launch of some of today’s most successful women-led brands, and we count many women entrepreneurs among our vendor community. Currently, we are helping approximately 60 women entrepreneurs introduce their brands to millions of consumers by the end of 2020. We discovered these brands through The Big Find, a nationwide search we conducted last year.

Qurate Retail Group understands the passion that entrepreneurs invest in their businesses—

and the dedication and commitment it takes to bring their ideas to life. We believe that successful entrepreneurs have important lessons to share with those who are just starting the journey. In January 2020, we commissioned a survey of women entrepreneurs to learn more about the factors that fueled their success. More than 1,000 women responded, reflecting a representative sample of women-led small businesses across the U.S. in terms of size, business sector, life stage, and other factors.

Through this research, Qurate Retail Group identified three important ways in which women entrepreneurs modify their thinking as their business grows:

- **First**, they pivot from being a “doer”—who gets a venture off the ground—to being a “leader”—who builds a team for long-term growth.
- **Second**, they double down on brand storytelling, reflecting a deeper appreciation of the impact that their origin story and values can have on customer engagement and sales.
- **Third**, they lean into corporate responsibility—i.e., being a company that acts in the best interests of all stakeholders and the environment.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Women-Owned Businesses, Mar. 31, 2017

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Women in the Labor Force: a Databook, Nov. 2017

³ U.S. Census Bureau, Number of Women-Owned Employer Firms Increases, Aug. 13, 2018

⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Business Employment Dynamics, Apr. 28, 2016

Pivoting from ‘Doing’ to ‘Leading’

Regardless of business size, women entrepreneurs agree that choosing the right people and partners has been the most important factor in their growth as a leader. But as their company grows beyond 10 employees, entrepreneurs embrace a deeper appreciation of the value that others play in their growth and, by extension, the growth of their companies.

Only **37%** of women entrepreneurs with 1 to 10 employees felt that choosing the right people and partners was extremely important, compared to **63%** of women entrepreneurs with 51 to 100 employees. Women with larger entrepreneurial

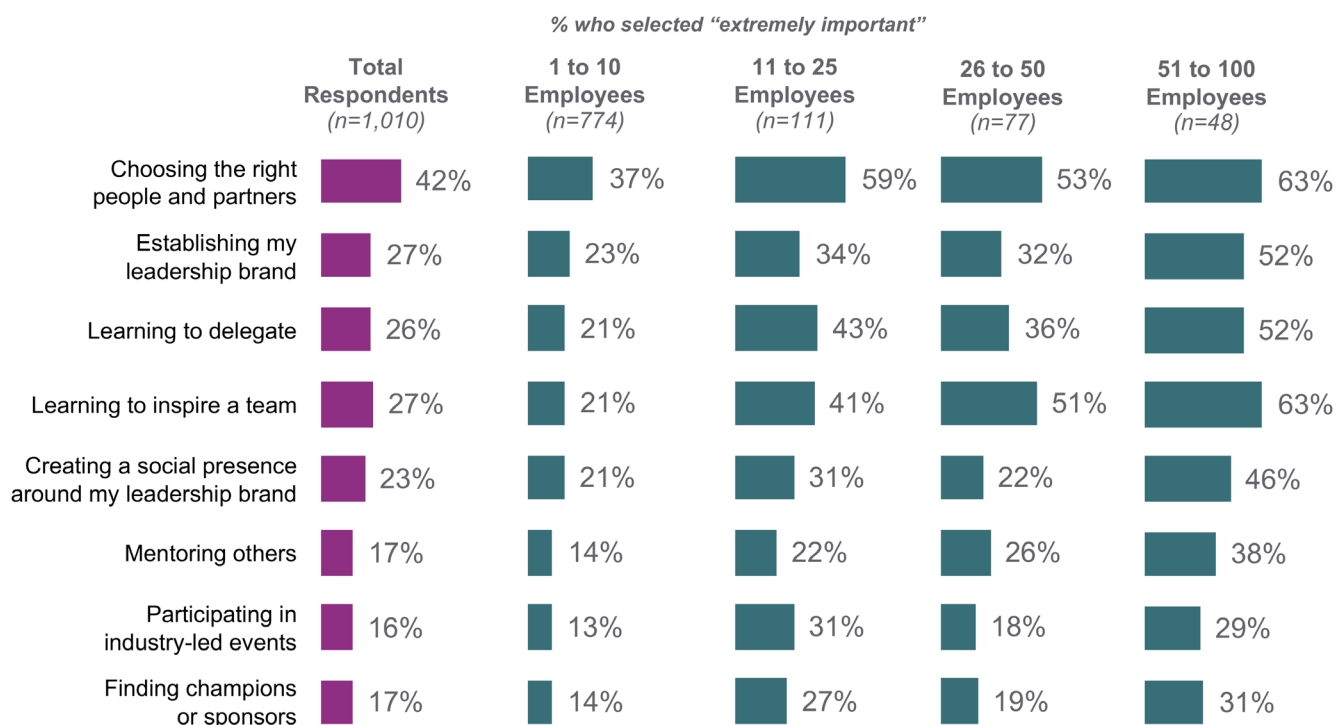
businesses also placed much more emphasis on learning to delegate, inspire a team, and mentor others.

When women with 1 to 10 employees were asked to select a quote that best captures their business experience, the largest group (**37%**) chose Amelia Earhart’s action-oriented “The most difficult thing is the decision to act.” Women with 51 to 100 employees, however, were attracted to a more collective theme—the largest group (**38%**) chose Helen Keller’s “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

37% “The most difficult thing is the decision to act.”
- Amelia Earhart
1-10 employees

38% “Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.”
- Helen Keller
51-100 employees

HOW IMPORTANT WERE THE FOLLOWING FACTORS IN YOUR GROWTH AS A LEADER?



MINDSET CHANGE #1: PIVOTING FROM 'DOING' TO 'LEADING'

Similarly, the most popular leadership styles for women entrepreneurs evolve as the business grows—expanding from visionary leadership (driving progress and change through inspiration and trust) to also include coaching leadership (helping others grow by recognizing their strengths, weaknesses, and motivations). For entrepreneurs with 51 to 100 employees, the most popular choice of leadership style flipped from visionary when they launched their business (38%) to coaching today (42%).

Even the way that women entrepreneurs define what a “leader” is changes as the size of the workforce increases—the goalposts change.

When asked to identify the milestone at which they truly became a leader, women with 1 to 10 employees were most likely to say it was *when they made their first sale or signed their first customer* (30%). Women with 11 to 50 employees felt it was when they *grew their team* (26%), while women with 51 to 100 employees said it was *when they made their first deal (secured funding, established a partnership, etc.)* (31%).

AT WHICH POINT DID YOU BEGIN TO TRULY FEEL LIKE A LEADER?

51-100 employees

When I made my first deal (secured funding, established a partnership, etc.)

31%

11-50 employees

When I grew my team

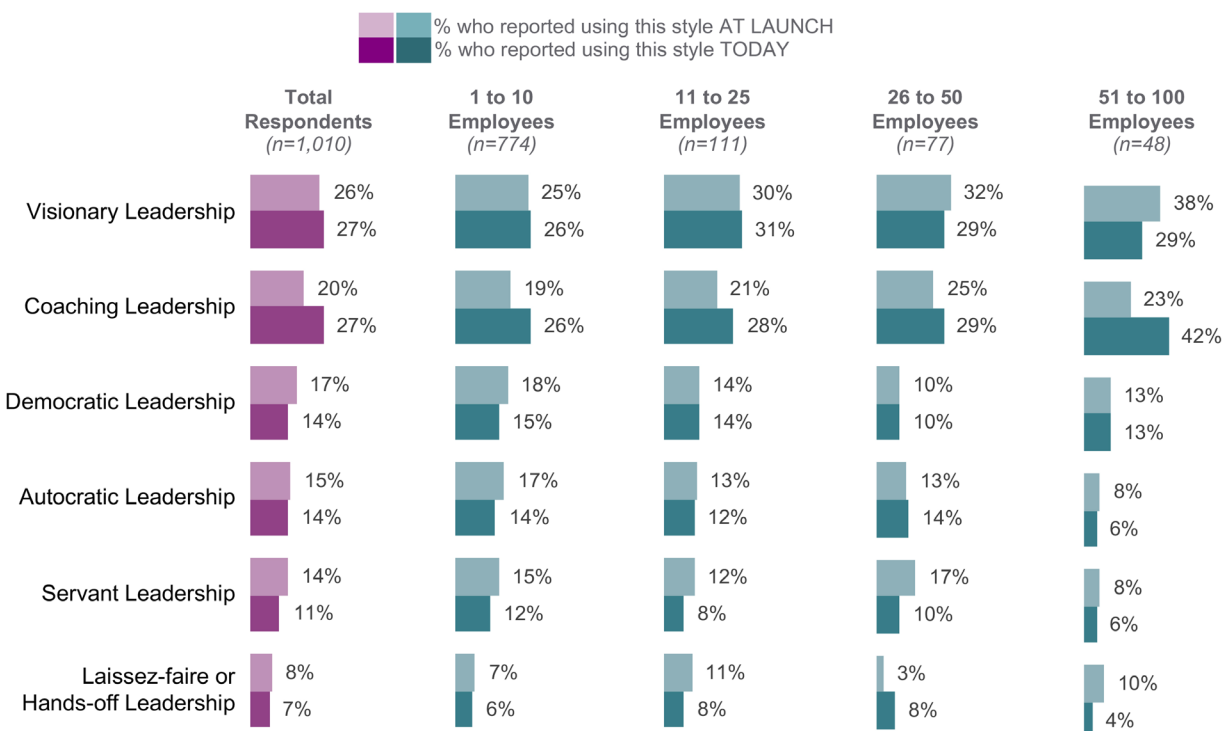
26%

1-10 employees

When I made my first sale or signed my first customer

30%

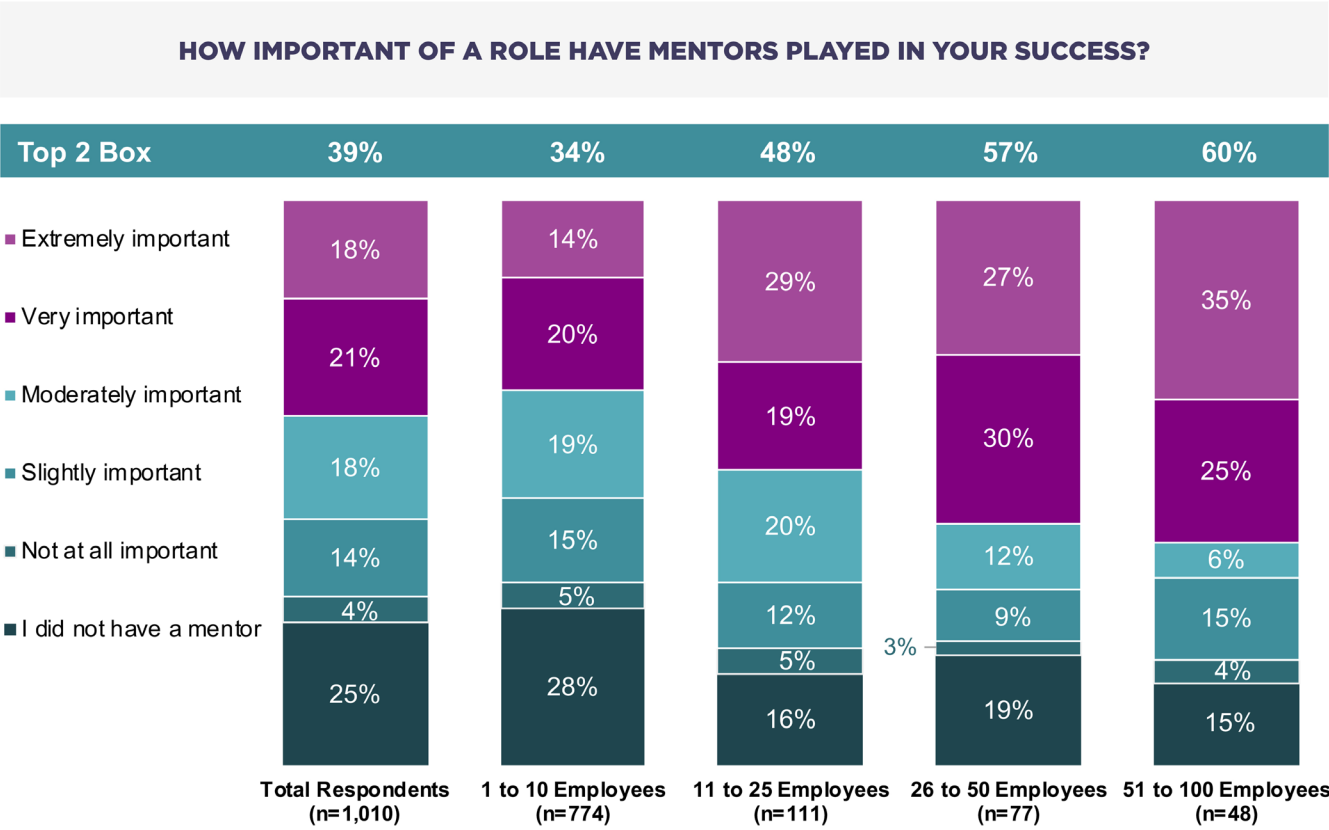
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE?



MINDSET CHANGE #1: PIVOTING FROM 'DOING' TO 'LEADING'

Views on mentorship also undergo a transformation. The perceived value of a mentor soars as the number of employees rises. In fact, **28%** of women with 10 or fewer employees said they did not even have a mentor, and only **34%** agreed that mentors were very important to their success. Among women with 51 to 100 employees, **60%** felt that mentors were very important.

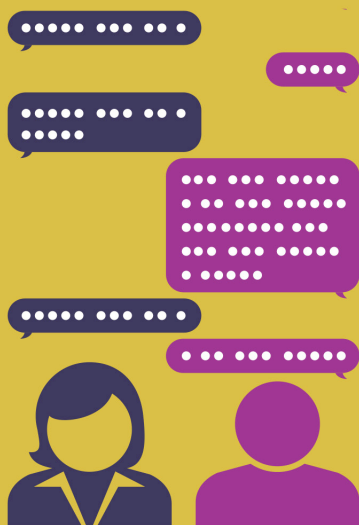
Among women entrepreneurs who value mentors, the top qualities they seek in a mentor are availability and transparency (selected by **49%** and **48%**, respectively), and the topics on which mentors are most helpful are growing the business and growing as a leader (identified as very important by **30%** and **29%**, respectively).



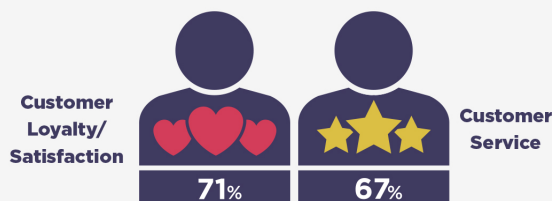
Doubling Down on Brand Storytelling

Across all business sizes, there is broad agreement that brand storytelling matters—two-thirds of women entrepreneurs said it is vital for their customers to understand the origins of their brand and their brand values. An even higher portion (**75%**) agreed that they and their brand must be authentic. Entrepreneurs most commonly defined brand authenticity as honesty/integrity (**21%**), innovative products (**14%**), special products (**13%**), or quality products (**12%**).

82% of women entrepreneurs say talking directly with customers is very important



Portion of women entrepreneurs who selected these as one of their top two sales drivers



67%

of women entrepreneurs believe brand story is very important

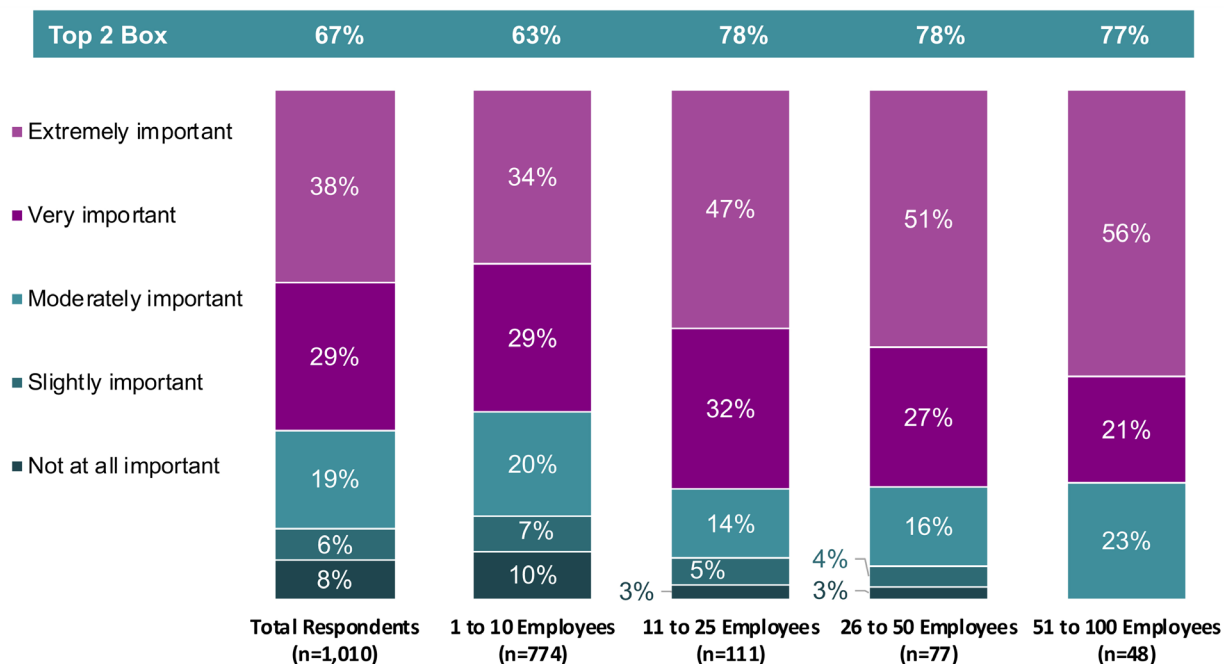


Women entrepreneurs view themselves as the most effective spokesperson for their brand, with **43%** ranking the CEO/Founder first among options that included customers, employees, industry experts, and the news media. In addition, **58%** said that they act as an influencer on behalf of their brand. It is no surprise, then, that a strong majority of entrepreneurs (**82%**) said it is critically important to talk directly with customers and get their feedback when launching a business.

Owning their brand narrative and interacting directly with customers allow women entrepreneurs to leverage their own personality, values, and vision as business assets. Not only can these be powerful differentiators for many customers, but transparent and open communication can create a customer experience that builds loyalty and advocacy, which in turn are critical for growth.

Indeed, large majorities of women entrepreneurs identified customer loyalty/satisfaction and customer service as their two most important sales drivers (**71%** and **67%**, respectively).

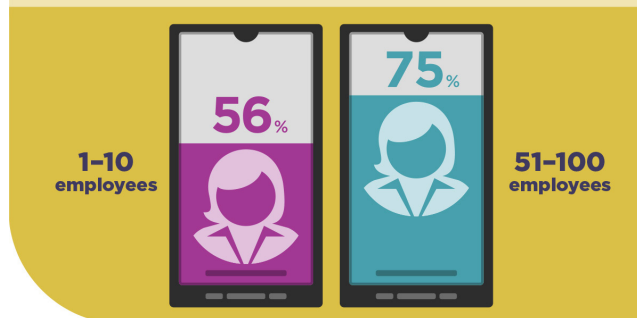
HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR CUSTOMERS TO KNOW/UNDERSTAND THE BRAND STORY?



As the business grows, the value that women entrepreneurs place on brand storytelling surges, with the portion who said it is very important rising from **63%** for women with 1 to 10 employees to **77%** for women with 51 to 100 employees.

At the same time, many women entrepreneurs expand their role as “Chief Brand Storyteller.” The portion of entrepreneurs who said that they serve as influencers for their brand swelled from **56%** for companies with 1 to 10 employees to **75%** for companies with 51 to 100 employees.

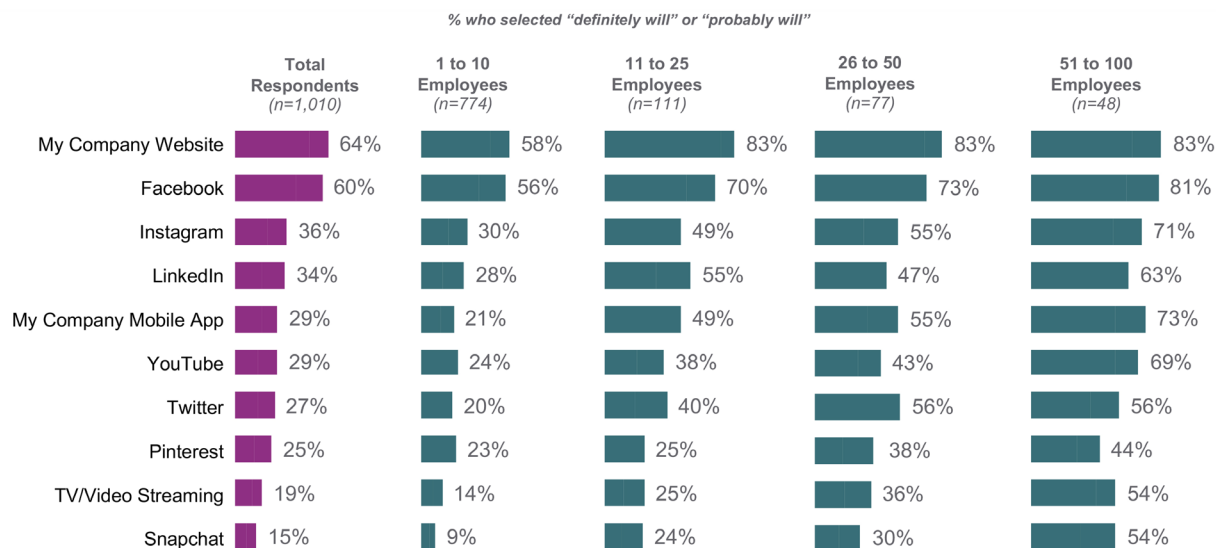
Portion of women entrepreneurs who are influencers for their brand



Portion of women entrepreneurs who plan to use in the next 12 months

At larger small businesses, women entrepreneurs also begin using a more varied array of digital media platforms to engage customers. Overall, entrepreneurs said that they are most likely to use their company website (**64%**) and Facebook (**60%**) over the next 12 months.

IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS, HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO USE EACH OF THE FOLLOWING TO TELL YOUR BRAND STORY?



But women entrepreneurs with larger businesses showed sharply higher intent to use other digital media platforms as well, such as mobile apps, Instagram, YouTube, TV/video streaming, and others.

Women leading larger businesses are also more active in enlisting others as brand advocates—echoing the teamwork focus of mindset change #1 (above):

- The portion who engage outside influencers or plan to do so rose from **26%** at 1 to 10 employees to **58%** at 51 to 100 employees.

- The portion who saw these engagements as very effective rose from **46%** at 1 to 10 employees to **77%** at 51 to 100 employees.
- The portion who chose employees as their most effective brand advocates rose from **7%** at 1 to 10 employees to **15%** at 51 to 100 employees.



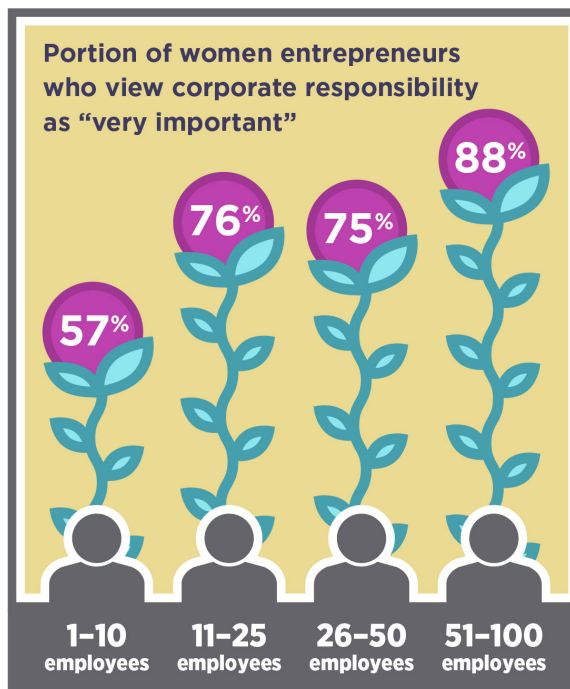
Leaning into Corporate Responsibility

Nearly two-thirds of women entrepreneurs (**62%**) view corporate responsibility as a core element of their brand. They are passionate about being a company that acts in the best interests of all stakeholders and the environment, and they want their customers to know about it. Indeed, **78%** said it is very important for customers to believe that their company operates responsibly.

But as their companies grow, more women entrepreneurs seem to embrace corporate responsibility as a key business driver, transforming this view from “very common” to “almost universal.” The portion of entrepreneurs who agreed that corporate responsibility is “very important” spiked at larger business sizes—rising from **57%** for companies with 1 to 10 employees to **88%** for companies with 51 to 100 employees.

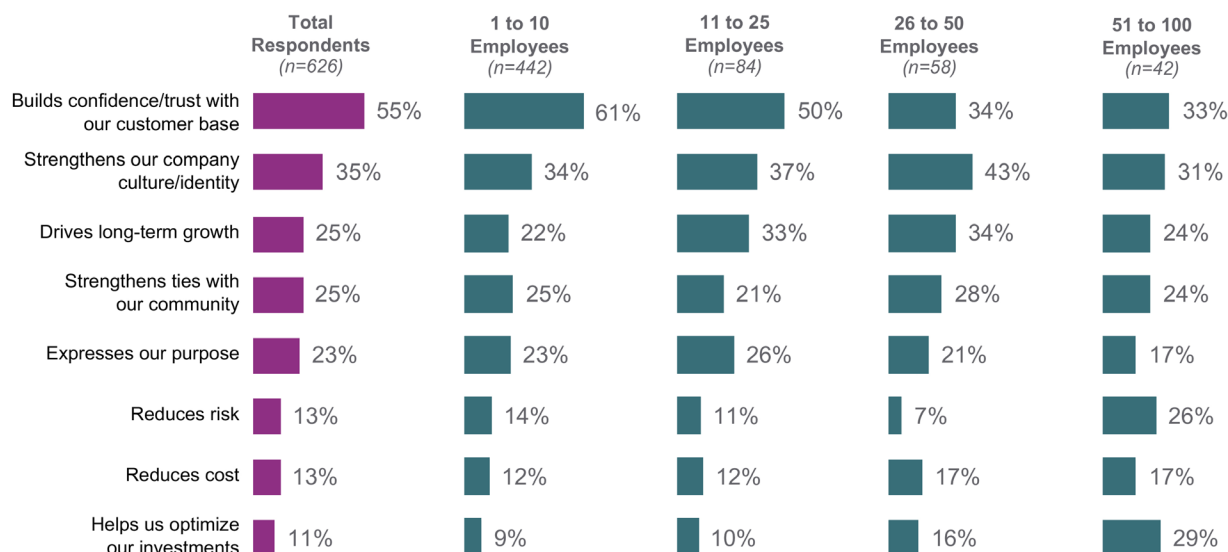
Women entrepreneurs most commonly chose two reasons for their focus on responsible business practices: to build confidence and trust with their customers, and to strengthen their company culture. Women with larger businesses

have also discovered the powerful role corporate responsibility can play in reducing risk and optimizing investments.

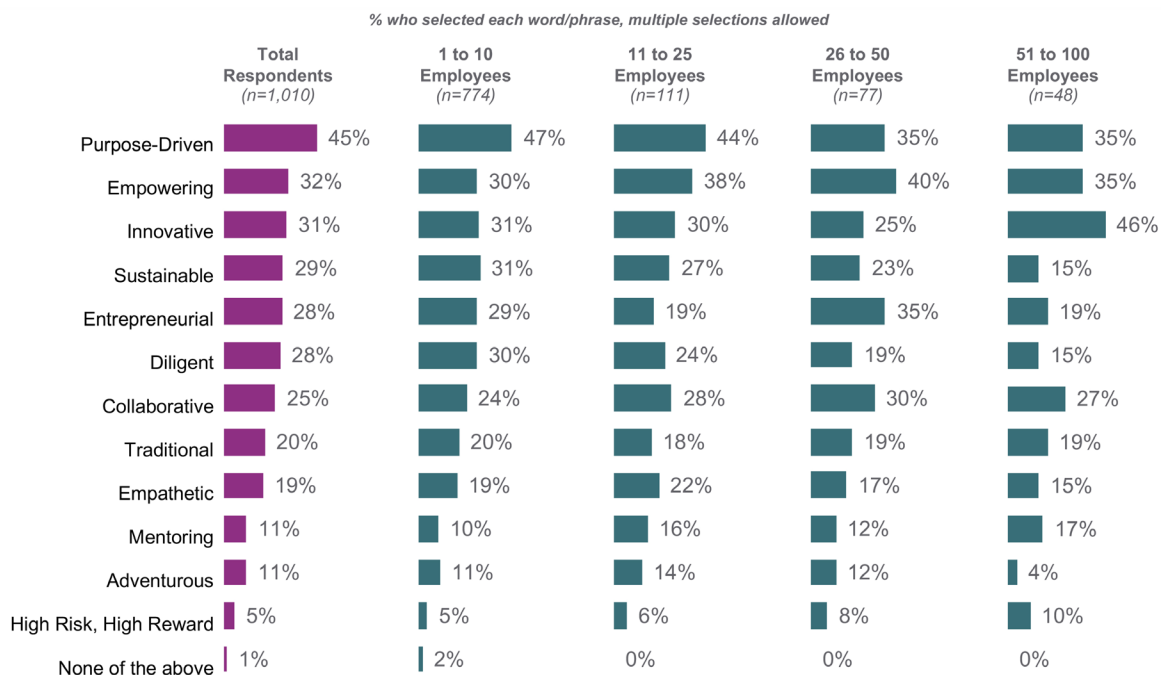


WHY IS CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY SO IMPORTANT TO YOUR BRAND?

% who ranked as #1 or #2, among women entrepreneurs who said corporate responsibility is very important



WHICH WORDS/PHRASES BEST DESCRIBE YOUR IDEAL BUSINESS CULTURE?



Nearly half of all women entrepreneurs reported they seek to create a purpose-driven corporate culture (**45%**), aligned with a commitment to corporate responsibility. Entrepreneurs with

mid-sized companies (11 to 50 employees) also embraced an empowering culture (**38%**), while women with 51 to 100 employees favored an innovative culture (**46%**).



Conclusion

As more women entrepreneurs turn their ideas into businesses, they create new opportunities for millions of Americans. But it can be a tough climb, given the obstacles and headwinds that go along with launching and growing a business.

Rising women entrepreneurs can position themselves for success by learning from women who are further along in their journey. In the Qurate Retail Group Women's Entrepreneurship Survey 2020, we found that women entrepreneurs undergo several important mindset changes as their businesses grow:

- **First**, they pivot from “doer” to “leader”—focusing on building a team that can sustain long-term growth.
- **Second**, they intensify brand storytelling—devoting more time and creativity to engaging customers in the brand origin story and values.
- **Third**, they embed corporate responsibility even deeper into their brand—building trust with their customers and strengthening their company culture.

Qurate Retail Group is pleased to share these insights with women entrepreneurs. We have a long-standing commitment to supporting women's empowerment and entrepreneurship, from enabling them to engage directly with millions of customers through our retail platforms to sharing our team members' expertise through professional development conferences, our Qurate Retail Group Fellowship Program, and other skills-based volunteer opportunities.

METHODOLOGY

The findings included in the Qurate Retail Group Women's Entrepreneurship Survey 2020 come from an online survey of a random sample of 1,010 U.S. women business founders, owners, co-owners, CEOs, and partners, in organizations ranging from 1 to 100 total employees. Fieldwork was conducted by M/A/R/C® Research January 21-27, 2020. The survey margin of error is +/- 2.6% at a 90% confidence level.

Business Size: 1 to 10 employees	n=774
Business Size: 11 to 25 employees	n=111
Business Size: 26 to 50 employees	n=77
Business Size: 51 to 100 employees	n=48

ABOUT QURATE RETAIL GROUP

Qurate Retail GroupSM comprises eight leading retail brands—QVC®, HSN®, Zulily®, Ballard Designs®, Frontgate®, Garnet Hill®, Grandin Road®, and RyllaceTM—all dedicated to providing a Third Way to Shop®, beyond transactional ecommerce or traditional brick-and-mortar stores. Globally, Qurate Retail Group is #1 in video commerce, reaching approximately 380 million homes worldwide via 15 television networks and multiple ecommerce sites, social pages, mobile apps, print catalogs, and in-store destinations. Qurate Retail Group is among the top 10 ecommerce retailers in North America (according to Internet Retailer) and is a leader in mobile commerce and social commerce. Qurate Retail Group combines the best of retail, media, and social to curate products,

experiences, conversations, and communities for millions of highly discerning shoppers—bringing joy, inspiration, and humanity to shopping. Qurate Retail Group also curates large audiences, across multiple platforms, for thousands of brand vendors. Headquartered in West Chester, PA, Qurate Retail Group has 27,000 team members in the U.S., the U.K., Germany, Japan, Italy, Poland and China. For more information, visit www.qurateetailgroup.com, follow @QurateRetailGrp on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#), or follow Qurate Retail Group on [YouTube](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

Qurate Retail, Inc. (NASDAQ: QRTEA, QRTEB) includes the Qurate Retail Group portfolio of brands as well as other minority interests and green energy investments.