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## **Do Women Make Better Movies Than Men? Useful Strategies for Indie Filmmakers**

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Discussion of women's participation in leading positions and entrepreneurship has received a significant impetus thanks to the deep involvement at the international level of the United Nations and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). New challenges and problems faced by the women in today's society require their active participation in management positions. This is essential to building a more democratic and inclusive society.

In the past twenty years, the world has faced an explosion in the field of art. With advances in computer technology and satellite and cable television, global access to information, when democratically used, continues to increase and expand, creating new opportunities for the participation of women in art and the entertainment business and for the dissemination of information about women.

However, all these developments bring about new challenges and obstacles. The present global situation in the media shows the perpetuation and re-enforcement of negative images of women that do not provide an accurate or realistic picture of women's multiple roles and contributions to a changing world. Even more subtle are the use by media of women's bodies as sex objects and violence against women as 'entertainment'. Greater involvement by women in both the technical and decision-making areas of art and the entertainment business would increase awareness of women's lives from their own perspective.

The accomplishment of women in arts was at the centre of debate at the Directors' Roundtable at the Female Eye Film Festival (FeFF). The festival took place in Toronto, Canada from 16-20 March. The Female Eye Film Festival celebrated its ninth annual showcasing of independent films of talented women directors from around the world.

The festival served as a forum for the current debate regarding women in films, in addition to introducing the work of emerging and famous directors. The talented Albanian director Vilma Zenelaj was present, screening her latest project, the thriller 'In The Woods', starring Greta Zenelaj (Eva), David Landry (Steve) and Rocco DiNobile (Carl).

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Directors' Roundtable Discussion focused on the gaps between women and male producers. Unlike the previous year's discussion, which focused on women producers getting less attention than their male counterparts, this year, the topic was 'content of work' versus 'results', regardless of gender. The assumption is that women tend to make movies that are more appealing to women. If a woman director is looking for a breakthrough in the entertainment industry, she has to consider what the expectations are and what the market is like. An interesting idea that came out from the FeFF festival discussion was that of the director viewing herself 'as a product' or 'making products' which leads to the second challenge: the lack of support.

The primary challenge that women directors face, in addition to depletion of their personal funds to make their projects or the lack of support from distributors, is 'the challenging audience'. Getting people to support the films is a crucial strategy of funding and marketing.

In addition to identifying who the audience is and what they want, technology is becoming a benefit in advancing the film industry as much as it is a drawback. When it comes to innovation and new technology, 40% of the current movies being released are in 3D. Today, Netflix and Blockbuster Online have embraced 3D Blu-ray discs in their rental services, when only 20 years ago the CD player was a new invention. The new 3D screen format has shifted the gender debate away from gender issues, instead to thinking outside the box for innovative ways to distribute films, gaining the right technical skills to keep up with technology and identifying the needs of the audience.

Self-distribution is an alternative solution for those self-starter indie filmmakers. However, utilising the community is a very crucial component of marketing. Keeping in mind the location where the movie was shot, perhaps screening at a local theatre in that area could boost the support from that community. In addition, researching blogs interested in similar topics and advertising the trailer or the details of the screening are other ways to build the market.

Pitching to investors is another key component of being successful. The investors are interested in knowing the reasons why they should read the proposed movie script. Whether it is starring a talented actor/actress, writing a creative storyline or being passionate about a particular genre, pitching the script the right way means getting funded from a potential investor. Additionally, the director's experience, the background of the actors, clear budget requests and the value that the movie will add are all great reasons that make the perfect package in pitching to investors.

The gender conversation needs to evolve to how to diversity the roles of women in the film industry. There is a need for skilful women that can develop, produce and make movies. There needs to be a focus on the concept and the content of the filmmaking rather than asking do women make better movies than men. The question should be: What makes a good movie? How can both women and men advance the industry in meeting the expectations of diverse audiences? How can independent movie makers become part of the mainstream? These questions are crucial to the future of filmmaking.

Achieving success means creating the ideal project by using other people's money instead of your own. And if that is not happening, it means the director has to review the employed marketing strategies to better pitch the script, improve producing skills or clearly state why the investor should fund the project. Filmmaking is not for everyone and there is a need for skilful directors and producers in the industry.