



# BIRTHING the ELEPHANT

The woman's **go-for-it!** guide  
to overcoming the big challenges  
of launching a business

Karin Abarbanel & Bruce Freeman



## Frequently Asked Questions

Karin and Bruce are small-business experts with years of professional experience and interesting stories. Karin has a high energy, can-do style and a passion for women's issues while Bruce is the folksy entrepreneur who uses "humor with lessons."

### What's that title all about?

Launching a new venture is a lot like birthing an elephant: It's a huge undertaking, it takes about 22 months, and if you stay with it, you end up with a healthy, lovable, bouncing business!

### What makes your book different?

Other small-business guides focus on the 3Ms: Money, Marketing, and Management. But there's a 4th M: Motivation—that's been largely ignored until now. *Birthing the Elephant* is the *What to Expect When You're Expecting* of business books. It offers women a unique emotional road map to the make-or-break first 18-22 months of their venture—when every decision counts and every mistake is magnified.

### What's the #1 challenge women face in launching a new business?

You might think it's money, but it's not! It's moxie. It's taking the leap in spite of your fears. It's giving up a "paycheck" mentality. It's winning what we call the "small-business mind game" and learning how to act like an entrepreneur.

### Are the obstacles that women face different from men's?

Women tend to be under-funded compared to men—that's key. But the biggest difference is how women respond to the emotional challenges they face. Women understand the impact of emotional barriers to success—like fear, image anxiety, and financial stress—and are willing to get help to beat them.

### What are the 5 top qualities you need to succeed?

- Passion, passion, passion!
- Focus: "With one tuchus, you can't dance at two weddings!"
- Persistence: the drive of a Sherman tank!
- Optimism: the ultimate naysayer deflector shield.  
"No pessimist ever discovered the secrets of the stars, or sailed to an uncharted land, or opened a new heaven to the human spirit." —Helen Keller
- Ingenuity: the ability to go over, under, around, or through obstacles.

**They say that some people are born entrepreneurs. Can you learn to be one?**

Yes! There are many paths to the start-up gate! For every classic “light bulb” entrepreneur, we found 2 or 3 women who are “accidental” or emerging entrepreneurs. Emerging entrepreneurs aren’t born, they’re made—or rather, they create themselves.

**What are the top 3 mistakes women make?**

- romanticizing being your own boss
- overspending due to image anxiety
- underpricing products or services

**What surprised you most in writing *Birthing the Elephant*?**

1. How launch hungry women are! Every day, 7,000 women launch new ventures. That’s 200,000 a month and 2.5 million a year! Women are jumping off the corporate ship three times faster than men.
2. Women’s endless ingenuity! They excel at a critical start-up skill: substituting brains for bucks. Many women turn a major weakness—being under-funded—into an asset by using their smarts.

**Why is a guy co-authoring a book for women entrepreneurs?**

Through his weekly syndicated Scripps Howard News Service column, Bruce has interviewed scores of women entrepreneurs and found their numbers were exploding. Some of these same women reveal their success strategies in *Birthing the Elephant*.

**What’s your favorite story?**

There are so many! Ronnie Fliss taking Murray, her basset hound, on sales calls. Bobbi Brown’s husband delivering lipsticks in a shopping bag to the back door of Bergdorf Goodman. Cathy Kerns turning her biggest liability, multiple sclerosis (MS), into an asset by creating Style Sticks, a successful manufacturer of fashionable canes.