

Meet our female founders....

CATH BOOTH

Cath Booth co-founded Epistem 20 years ago after seeing an opportunity to create a viable business out of scientific research.

Foresight invested in Epistem in 2018 to support a management buy-out (MBO).

What did you do before starting your company?

I originally co-founded the company almost 20 years ago. Before that, I completed a PhD at Cambridge and remained in academia as a research scientist at a Cancer Research Institute.

What led you to found *Epistem*?

It became evident whilst working as a research scientist that we could create a profitable business out of the work we were doing with industry. Founding *Epistem* was about realising that potential at a time when collaborating with pharmaceutical companies wasn't highly regarded in academia.

What has been the highlight of your career?

It's hard to pick out one moment, there have been several steps that have each had an impact on the next stage of my career. One of my proudest moments was in 2007, when *Epistem* floated on the Alternative Investment Market (AIM). The MBO in 2018 gave me the greatest personal satisfaction.

What is the most challenging thing about being a female founder?

Getting used to risk and forfeiting family time. When I founded *Epistem* there was a financial risk as well as my career reputation. At the time, I was only responsible for myself, but I imagine if I also had family responsibilities, I may not have taken the same level of risk and certainly could not have committed the level of time required.

What do you wish you had known before starting out?

I wish I had known that if you convey your confidence, it inspires others to be confident in you. Generally, I've found that men are far more confident in their abilities whilst women vocalise their doubts more often, which in turn has the potential to spark doubt in others.



What is a defining moment of your career that brought you to where you are now?

20 years ago, I was asked to speak at the opening of a prestigious gastroenterology conference in Colorado, standing in for somebody last minute. It was very successful and I realised that I knew a lot more about my subject than I had previously given myself credit for. It was a personal turning point for me, giving me a massive boost in confidence.

What advice would you give to another aspiring female entrepreneur?

Have confidence in your ability! In my experience, the difference between a successful person and an unsuccessful person is often confidence, not ability alone. You know your business better than anyone, and the image you are projecting externally needs to reflect that. Don't stress about what you don't know, you will learn fast by finding the right people. If you don't have a finance background certainly get help in this area. It is essential that you really understand the numbers.

How do you think investment firms can contribute to closing the gap in VC funding for female and male entrepreneurs?

I think early stage female entrepreneurs could benefit from a mentoring or business education programme, to enable them to see the possibilities and how to get there. Teach them to think bigger and believe the goal is attainable. The naturally risk averse nature of women can be a real asset for investment firms seeking dependable and profitable investment opportunities.

To find out more about *Epistem*, visit:
www.epistem.co.uk