

Saira Khan: Standing out from the crowd

My name is Saira Khan. I'm a TV presenter, I've written a book and I run my own business.

My dad said to me once "that gob of yours is going to get you into great trouble". That gob of mine actually helped me to make a lot of money.

People don't come and knock on your door or tap you on your shoulder and say "you've done a great job, here's the next opportunity". You have to knock on the doors and you have to find the people to help you to get along.

I presumed that because I was a graduate everybody was going to open their doors and say "yes come in, we'll give you a job" actually reality wasn't like that.

My very first job in sales was to actually to count Jaffa Cakes in a warehouse. But that job was absolutely fundamental to where I am now because that taught me the tricks of the trade. I got to talk to people, I got to understand competition, I got to understand why the warehouse is important, who you've got to be nice to, what you've got to look out for and it was fantastic. And then the opportunity to apply for 'The Apprentice' came up and the rest is history really.

The most important thing that you should prepare for an interview is yourself. Practice in front of a mirror how you're going to come across, practice what you're going to say, practice in your mind the kind of questions that you think are going to come up so that when they ask you a question you're not completely taken aback, and read up about the industry that you're going to be applying for. Read up about the company.

One of the most important things that I look for when I'm employing people is confidence. It's the way they walk into the room, the way they present themselves, the way they sit down and are ready to kind of engage with you.

You're going to get a lot of setbacks. Not everybody is going to like you, not everybody is going to say yes to you. What you've got to do is walk out of that situation and say two things: "I'm never going to take no for an answer" and secondly "I'm going to prove to them that they've just lost out on me".

If you come out and start blaming yourself 'oh I didn't look right, I didn't do this, I didn't do that, it's because I'm a woman, it's because I'm a Muslim, it's because I'm a Asian' you're just never going to get anywhere.

Even when Sir Alan said "you're not the apprentice" you know it made me think 'alright, fair play, but I'm going to prove you wrong'. And then got up the next morning, put my suit on and then off to business.