



IT'S NOT ALL FLOWERS: THE CHALLENGES OF AN ENTREPRENEUR IN THE GARDENING AND LANDSCAPING BUSINESS

NEM TUDO SÃO FLORES: OS DESAFIOS DE UMA EMPREENDEDORA NO RAMO DE JARDINAGEM E PAISAGISMO

NO TODO SON FLORES: LOS DESAFÍOS DE UN EMPRENDEDOR EN EL NEGOCIO DE LA JARDINERÍA Y EL PAISAJISMO

ABSTRACT

Dilemma: After facing several challenges in her career, an entrepreneur lives a dilemma regarding the future of her business: should encourage your daughter to take the lead or would it be better to end the activities?


Educational objective: Provide a reflection on the challenges that women face when entrepreneurship and the role of entrepreneurial skills in overcoming them.

Contextualization: The case narrates the entrepreneurial trajectory of Ana, a mother who, faced with limited opportunities in her field of study, decides to undertake alongside her husband. Initially working in the administrative area, Ana soon discovers her true passion and talent in the field of gardening and landscaping, where she builds a loyal clientele. However, what she did not expect is that, amid a tumultuous separation, she would need to confront various challenges in taking over the leadership of the business. For her, being an entrepreneurial woman has become a challenge that her daughter is currently interested in living.


Main topic: Barriers to female entrepreneurship.

Audience: Undergraduate students or postgraduate courses in the area of administration, as well as courses that have female entrepreneurship as a theme.

Originality/value: The case enables the understanding of concepts of developing entrepreneurial skills within the context of female entrepreneurship.

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Keywords: Entrepreneurial competencies. Entrepreneurship. Female entrepreneurship.

RESUMO

Dilema: Após enfrentar diversos desafios em sua trajetória, uma empreendedora vive um dilema em relação ao futuro do seu negócio: deve incentivar a filha a assumir a liderança ou seria melhor encerrar as atividades?

Objetivo educacional: Propiciar uma reflexão sobre os desafios que as mulheres enfrentam ao empreender e o papel das competências empreendedoras na superação dos mesmos.

Contextualização: O caso narra a trajetória empreendedora de Ana, uma mãe que, diante de limitadas oportunidades em sua área de formação, decide empreender ao lado do marido. Inicialmente atuando na área administrativa, Ana logo descobre sua verdadeira paixão e talento no ramo de jardinagem e paisagismo, onde conquista uma clientela fiel. Entretanto, o que ela não esperava, é que junto de uma separação conturbada, precisaria enfrentar diversas dificuldades ao assumir a liderança do negócio. Para ela, ser mulher empreendedora tornou-se um desafio, que, atualmente, sua filha se interessa por viver.

Tema principal: Barreiras ao empreendedorismo feminino.

Público: Estudantes de graduação ou cursos de pós-graduação na área de administração, bem como cursos que possuam o empreendedorismo feminino enquanto tema.

Originalidade/valor: O caso possibilita a compreensão de conceitos de desenvolvimento de competências empreendedoras dentro do contexto do empreendedorismo feminino.

Palavras-chave: Competências empreendedoras. Empreendedorismo. Empreendedorismo feminino.

RESUMEN

Dilema: Después de enfrentar varios desafíos en la su trayectoria, una emprendedora vive un dilema respecto al futuro de su negocio: ¿debe alentar a su hija a tomar el liderazgo o sería mejor cerrar actividades?

Objetivo educativo: Proporcionar una reflexión sobre los desafíos que enfrentan las mujeres cuando emprenden y el papel de las habilidades emprendedoras para superarlos.

Contextualización: El caso narra la trayectoria empresarial de Ana, una madre que, frente a oportunidades limitadas en su área de entrenamiento, decide emprender con su esposo. Inicialmente trabajando en el área administrativa, Ana pronto descubre su verdadera pasión y talento en el campo de la jardinería y el paisajismo, donde gana una clientela fiel. Sin embargo, lo que no esperaba es que, junto con una separación problemática, necesitaría enfrentar varias dificultades para tomar el liderazgo del negocio. Para ella, ser una mujer emprendedora se ha convertido en un desafío que su hija está actualmente interesada en vivir.

Tema principal: Barreras al emprendimiento femenino.

Público: Estudiantes de pregrado o posgrados en el área de administración, así como cursos que tengan como temática el emprendimiento femenino.

Originalidad/valor: El caso permite comprender conceptos de desarrollo de habilidades emprendedoras en el contexto del emprendimiento femenino.

Palabras clave: Competencias empresariales. Emprendimiento. Emprendimiento femenino.

INTRODUCTION

Ana knows she's not young anymore. No matter how many cosmetic procedures the market offers, her body already shows the aches and pains of 23 years of working in the gardening industry. When she got up as usual at 5.30 am, she felt a discomfort in her shoulder, possibly related to the diagnosis of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis she had received. Responsible for her mother's death, this disease, which causes progressive motor paralysis, had been taking Ana's sleep away, literally.

As she sipped her coffee that morning, she remembered the photo on the wall perfectly. It was July 1990, and the day was rainy, but even that did not dampen the spirits of young Ana,



who would receive her diploma that evening. Seeing those bright eyes, full of dreams, she thought, "This girl had no idea what she was going to experience."

A notification on her cell phone takes her out of her memories and into the present: she is a 53-year-old entrepreneur late for work. The message she had received was from her daughter, Bianca, who told her about people's surprised expressions when they saw her maintaining a garden. Thinking back to when she first started working as the only woman in the business, she thought about a question plaguing her lately: Should she hand over the company's leadership to Bianca or close it down?

A MOTHER IS BORN

Thirty-two years ago, Ana began the career of her dreams. Looking at the playground full of children running around, she felt complete, exactly where she had always wanted to be. After graduating in Physical Education from one of the best universities in Latin America, she was selected to teach at the school where she had always wanted to work. With great pay, she had decided to take the next big step: leaving her parent's house and moving in with her boyfriend, Thiago, an agronomy student.

Thiago, the son of small farmers who encouraged him to follow the same profession, started his business while still an undergraduate. His first idea, to invest in pesticide-free agriculture, came to fruition when, together with Ana, they found an ideal place to live and plant. Despite the beautiful location, their dream of living together was short-lived, as a year later, Ana discovered she was pregnant with her first child and returned to her parents' home. Family support was essential since a month after giving birth; in order not to lose her job, Ana returned to the classroom, leaving the little one in the care of his grandparents.

Recently graduated, Thiago was starting a new business, this time focused on gardening and landscaping. At the same time, when the couple's son was three years old, Ana discovered she was pregnant again with a girl called Bianca. She soon realized that the situation would be untenable. If she returned to work, her increasingly elderly parents would have to look after not just one but two young children while she and Thiago spent the day working. She had already missed special moments with her first child and did not want to waste the second chance she saw in Bianca.

After discussing it with Thiago, they agreed that a change was needed. The first change came from Ana, who drove to the school where she had worked for six years to resign. She was determined to spend some time looking after her children and the house; the latter was the second change she made. Moving to a neighborhood far away from her parents, Ana began to set up the house where, without knowing it, she would live for the next 15 years of her life.

AN ENTREPRENEUR IS BORN

When Bianca turned three years old, Ana decided that she would go back to work. While her children were at school every afternoon, she spent hours looking for school vacancies. There were few vacancies, and the requirements had increased since she graduated. One day, as she was driving Thiago to his next client, she commented to him about her desire to return to work, to which he replied distractedly:

— Why don't you come and help me? You can work with me.

— How can I help you? I do not know anything about gardening or business!

— Start by budgeting, buying, and ordering materials. I don't have time for that.

Curiosity has always been a characteristic of Ana. Interested in learning more about her husband's work, she accepted the proposal and began to divide her afternoons between calls, notes, calculations, and purchases. At first, she went to the stores where Thiago used to buy materials, introduced herself, and negotiated discounts for legal entities. While leaving one of



the flower shops, she spotted a truck from São Paulo unloading flowers at the establishment. She approached the man carrying out the service and asked if it would be possible to contact him. He was very friendly and gave her the company's business card, saying that she would need to call for information. A distributor brought gardening items from São Paulo every week at half the price they were paying. Talking to the sales assistant, Ana included Thiago's orders in the company's trips. The savings were visible.

While she continued to place orders, her husband's company had won three new clients, hotels that required daily maintenance of their gardens, which he and Carlos, his only employee, could no longer do. So, a year after starting the estimates, Ana received a new invitation from Thiago:

— Can you help me with maintenance?

Although she still needed to feel more confident about carrying out these services, she decided that she would like to go one step further. The next day, she accompanied him on his projects and was delighted with what she saw. The transformation of what was on paper into reality fascinated her. Watching a garden, she forgot everything around her, ignoring the scorching sun, the puzzled looks, and the disparaging comments from the men working there. She knew her presence was strange; her husband had never hired a woman.

On her first visits, she was content to help Thiago with simple things, like cutting up the bags of soil, taking the plants out of the containers, and reaching for the tools. Then, keen to learn, she started asking him the name of every plant she spotted and walking along the street to observe which ones were in the sun and which were in the shade. She soon began to feel more confident about carrying out her first maintenance tasks, which involved watering, changing, and cleaning the plants.

CHALLENGES ARE BORN

Although they arrived at work together, Ana and Thiago barely saw each other. They each carried out their gardening style in a rush to finish the job and get on to the next customer. Accustomed to heavy work and with no patience

for trim details, Thiago was the opposite of his wife, who liked to see flowers up close and personal. So, the first conflicts began to arise between the two of them. One day, while driving home and listening to Ana ask the classic questions about plants, he abruptly cut the subject and commented:

— Did it take so long to water a few plants?

— Not only did I water them, I identified a disease in them.

— We do not get paid to identify diseases.

— But if I didn't see it, the customer would lose other plants. I had to warn them!

— Better for us, no? Then he would call us again.

— No! He'll hate our work! We need to look at the plants carefully, Thiago.

— That is a sissy's thing. I can't just watch when I still have to plant others. Time does not stand still, Ana.

— Then we will have to split up. You cannot keep rushing me.

— I agree. You cannot keep delaying me.

After that conversation, they both agreed not to go to work together anymore. In charge of maintenance, Ana watered the flowers, chose the pots, replaced the dead ones, identified, and treated diseases, and performed many other duties that required attention to detail. Meanwhile, Thiago carried out the work, which involved leveling the ground, planting, and transplanting large trees, installing irrigation systems, and pruning and cutting back vegetation.

Shortly after Ana started doing maintenance work, Thiago got a job at a flower wholesaler in another city. He knew that Ana would not be happy about him leaving the business, so he told her the news close to his departure, trying to reassure her:

— Everything will be fine; I can help you.

— But I don't know anything about gardens, Thiago! - Ana exclaimed - I don't have a degree in agronomy or any other field.

— But you'll ask me everything, and I'll answer you. Don't worry.



The problem was that the answers came at a different speed than the questions. At the time, they didn't have cell phones that could send photos quickly. As a result, there was no one to help Ana when a client asked for information, such as how many plants would be needed. Wanting to improve her skills, she asked Thiago to go with her to where she worked on weekends when she was in town to answer all her questions.

As a little girl, Bianca would wake up early and ask to accompany her mother to her jobs. While her brother was caring for a nanny, she would arrive at the maintenance work hand in hand with her mother, carrying a backpack full of school activities. Their first destination every day was a large shopping mall. During her mother's work, Bianca would sit on the benches, where she would often fall asleep under the watchful eye of the security guards. Known to Ana, the mall employees made sure that the little girl could play and rest without leaving the premises. Around midday, when she had done her other work, Ana would go home to have lunch with her children, taking them to school before heading off to the next customers.

In the year that Thiago was out of town, demand for the company grew. During this period, Ana looked after the gardens of three large hotels, a shopping center, a club, and a condominium and carried out work when asked to. The demand for maintenance came from referrals from other clients, who emphasized how careful the service was. However, she was not alone. As well as working with Carlos, Ana coordinated, when there was work, entire teams made up of men, recommended by Thiago. It was a challenging job. Although they had worked well with her husband, many of those hired temporarily didn't follow Ana's orders, and she felt frustrated by the situation.

THE SEPARATION

When Thiago returned, the couple went back to their routine. While Ana and Carlos carried out the maintenance work, her husband took over the construction work, forming the temporary teams. A short time later, however, Thiago received a new job opportunity. The position with a large company offered an excellent salary, but

there was one detail: it was on the other side of the country. Despite the distance, supported by Ana, he decided he wouldn't miss the opportunity. He would work, earn a good amount of money, and return to invest in his business. However, there was never any return.

The thousands of kilometers separating Ana and Thiago soon became too great and unbearable to manage. With new demands, having taken over the company, she couldn't get time off to visit her husband, who gradually stopped visiting his family. So, a year after Thiago moved out, they agreed to start the separation process.

Ana was exhausted physically and emotionally and needed another employee in the company to help her. At this time, she began a real journey searching for a new employee. The first hire seemed excellent until two weeks after he started at the company. It took 14 days to separate someone proactive and did the job well from someone who didn't want to help and ignored Ana's orders. Tired of taking over the man's duties, which she paid for, she questioned him about the job. With a threatening tone, the newbie replied:

— I want to be fired. If you don't fire me, I'm going to start messing around.

Dismayed by the rude statement, she asked Carlos why someone would want to be fired. Ana discovered that when hired with a formal contract, some people seek to resign from receiving Severance Pay (SP) and unemployment insurance. It wasn't comforting to think that someone would do this on purpose. Ana had never imagined leading a business, let alone living through such a situation. She knew she would be living through a declared war if she chose not to fire the employee. The man didn't mind being absent, late, or neglecting his orders, refusing a settlement offer.

After firing the employee who had threatened her, Ana sought out and hired a man who had previously worked with Thiago. Based on his recommendations, she thought he might be the employee she needed, but the man soon showed little interest in cooperating. However, it wasn't Ana who noticed his indisposition. One day, when she arrived early at the mall, one of the



security guards called her over:

— What did you think of my work, boss? It was much information to take in. Had she been careless in trusting the man's work without checking up on him? The guilt of not having stayed close consumed him. At the same time, she remembered that her afternoons were marked by work in other establishments. She couldn't split her time and also be at the mall. Wasn't that why he had hired the employee in the first place? She had to face the disrespect and fire the man if it was true. To prove her negligence, she showed up at the mall by surprise. That is how she found the employee sleeping on the job and leaving early. Once again, she felt disappointed that she had trusted someone.

A week later, a new man appeared interested in the position. Unlike the last one, this one worked well and was the right choice. One day, when it was time to go home, Ana returned to assess the work. That morning, she had given her instructions to install irrigation systems specific to the client's needs. Approaching the construction site, she bent down to look at the installations nearing completion. Watching in silence, she sensed the presence of someone else in the room, whom she imagined to be one of her employees. At that moment, the newcomer crouched next to Ana, asking her a question while running his hand over her leg: — What did you think of my work, boss?

Getting up abruptly, Ana left in the direction of her car, driving aimlessly, embarrassed by the situation. The next day, she didn't show up for work. She asked Carlos to replace her and tell the new guy he was fired. That day, she felt weak because she could not face the situation herself. She felt envious of Thiago, who had been building teams with such ease for years. She had never heard of any problems with his hiring. The problem could only be her. Should she give up leadership and leave the company to Carlos? Giving up entrepreneurship was the best option. Several possibilities crossed her mind that day, but she knew she had to return; the family's income depended on that business.

After the separation process, Ana decided it was time to put the brakes on. She went back to where it all began: her parents' house. Her

mother was very active but suffered from a silent disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Her father's disease, Alzheimer's, which was in its early stages, was also developing in silence. Ana knew it would take more than just sharing a roof over her head if she wanted to help those who had helped her at the start of her career. The work consumed her mornings, afternoons, and even some early mornings when she did jobs before the clients arrived.

Although she missed Christmas and New Year's Eve celebrations with her family because of work, another situation caused her to make a significant change. In December 2015, Ana decided to ask for a raise when she renewed her contract with a luxury hotel. It was R\$200.00 that would cover the costs of travel and products, which had risen considerably, but the proposal was not accepted. Having worked for the hotel for 15 years, Ana felt betrayed. She knew that the owner was a friend of her ex-husband's and that she had accepted increases negotiated by him for several years.

Fearful of making impulsive decisions that could jeopardize her children's future, Ana spent days doing the math to calculate the risks she was taking. If she terminated her contract with the hotel and did three more maintenance jobs that required much travel, she would lose R\$1,000.00 a month. With fewer jobs, she would no longer need to hire a new employee, but R\$1,000.00 was a significant amount in her life. So she knew that besides the mall, she would need to find new clients. She wasn't sure if she would succeed, but she decided to take a chance. Shortly afterward, her work caught the attention of a coffee shop owner, who hired her to carry out regular maintenance work. This way, with undersized services, she could make up for the money she had given up.

THE FUTURE OF THE COMPANY

It was a cold July day when Ana was called to a meeting with the mall's management. There, gossip spread fast among the staff, and the speculation was terrible for her business. Rumor had it that the manager wanted to make significant changes to the façade by next summer, and Ana wanted them most unrelated to the garden. It could be the color of the building, the



logo, or even the doors. She felt that perhaps she was worrying for nothing until the day of the fateful meeting arrived.

As soon as she entered the meeting room, Ana saw an image of a wall full of plants, but it was not just any wall; it was the façade of the shopping center. The project was presented by an entrepreneur in the landscaping business, who, for 1.5 hours, showed images, talked about his work, and answered questions from those present. One of these questions came from Ana, who, suspicious of the service, asked:

— As I work with the mall's plants, I would like to know about the maintenance of this wall. How can I contribute to the project?

— You don't have to worry," said the entrepreneur, smiling, "the wall has an automated irrigation system. We'll plant the seedlings, and in January, everything will be green, ready to welcome tourists.

Annoyed by the response and the smiles of satisfaction expressed by the management, Ana raised her finger again and said:

— I don't want it to sound like I'm doubting it, but I think it's unlikely that maintenance won't be needed.

— In fact, it will be necessary, but only once a month, a simple thing, — said the entrepreneur - that you can have your employee do.

Ana let her answer pass by taking a deep breath and swallowing the urge to reply. She would gain nothing from it, perhaps even lose. It was clear that the management was delighted with the project, and no wonder. The entrepreneur was a great salesman, the price was reasonable, and the facilities sounded perfect to them. At the end of the meeting, Ana approached the manager, with whom she had a perfect relationship, and said:

— I'm sorry I didn't seem enthusiastic about the project. I found it strange.

— Don't worry Ana, I've known you for years. I know you care about our garden, but this new feature will make our mall even more beautiful! I don't see what could go wrong.

— That's the point. I, unfortunately, see it.

— What do you mean?

— There's no point in me working on the wall once a month. Do you know that little flowerbed in front? We must take care of it every week because it's overgrown and clean it up.

— I know, Ana, that's why we've approved this project: it won't burden you even more. - You heard what the young man said, they're modern systems that even use rainwater! Is anything else bothering you?

— Actually, yes. I don't know anything about green walls, but I've been working with plants for 20 years, and I believe they behave the same in the ground as in the air. As shown in the project, one will die if you plant sun and shade plants in the same place.

— You're being very negative, Ana! Our architect has validated the project; if anything was wrong, he would have said so," said the manager, speaking to someone else.

Ana decided that she wouldn't broach the subject any further. She was tired of talking and not being listened to. A month later, the contracted company began installing the wall, which was finished in December, when the mall opened for the season. Forty days after the seedlings were planted, the first mistakes could already be seen. Some of the plants grew, but half of them failed to develop, forming gaps. Seeing that days passed, and nothing was done, Ana started corrective maintenance. Without the help of the contracted company, she and Carlos replaced the dead plants, pruned them, and applied products to prevent the diseases from appearing.

As Ana had predicted, the green wall entered her daily routine. What she did not expect, however, was that it would be much more than just a wall. That is because a year after the installation, the landscaper in charge returned to the mall to take photos of the work. When he saw the result, he soon noticed that there had been some changes to the project and approached Ana to find out how the maintenance had been carried out. When she explained what she and Carlos had been doing, Ana noticed that the landscaper was amazed by the work and offered his services if needed. Grateful for the correction,



the entrepreneur added Ana's number to his contacts, promising to send her new services. Thus, what used to be just maintenance became one of the company's primary services. Whenever a client needed adjustments to their vertical gardens, a common occurrence, the entrepreneur in charge of the installations recommended Ana's company, which didn't refuse any service.

At the same time, Bianca followed in her father's footsteps and became an agronomist. Despite her happiness, she soon became frustrated because even with her diploma, she could not find a job she liked. Having frequented many gardens as a child, she already knew her mother's work and many clients. It was then that she decided to help out in the family business. Like Ana, she began by carrying out simple services requiring little technical knowledge, improving her mother's tips. There were dozens of messages with photos and questions such as "which plant is this?", "can I put this plant in the sun?" "What are these spots?" among others. So, the 23-year-old learned and enjoyed the family business more and more and then decided to enroll in a postgraduate course in landscaping.

What Bianca didn't know was that her professionalization was worrying Ana. Ana loved working with Bianca as a professional, but as a mother, she hated seeing her daughter doing such hard work. That was not the future she wanted for her youngest. She had already experienced entrepreneurship for over 20 years and was well aware of the difficulties in this field. He felt that his daughter, who was so dedicated to her studies, deserved more than the company could offer. However, this is not Bianca's view.

Interested in carrying on the family business, the daughter is not worried about the duties she has to perform or the salary she receives but rather about her mother's health. Diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and responsible for her father's care, Ana has been taking more and more time away from maintenance and concentrating on the company's administrative functions. For some years now, she has been considering the possibility of retirement, which is becoming more and more accurate. However, Ana is aware that this decision implies facing not just one but two enormous challenges: the

company's future and her daughter's future. Ana's dilemma transcends mere concerns about the continuity of the business, incorporating the deep fear that Bianca may experience the same challenges that her mother has faced throughout her entrepreneurial career. So, the question remains. Should he close down or support Bianca in the succession of the business?

TEACHING NOTES

Educational objectives

The story of the teaching case encourages reflection and discussion on certain content related to entrepreneurship:

- 1) Barriers to female entrepreneurship.
- 2) Entrepreneurial skills.

It is recommended to be a teaching aid for undergraduate and postgraduate business students, especially in entrepreneurship-related subjects. It can also be used in courses on female entrepreneurship.

Data sources

The case is based on a true story inspired by the experiences of an entrepreneur in the gardening and landscaping industry. However, some of the presented incidents were also elaborated or adapted to facilitate the narrative and the debate around the proposed educational objectives.

The data to prepare the case was collected from a semi-structured interview with the entrepreneur in April 2023. In order to reconstruct her career and record the events that took place in chronological order, the interview was recorded with her consent, and the names of the company and the characters mentioned in the text have been changed to preserve the identity of the case analyzed.

Lesson plan

Understanding the case needs to be based on concepts previously presented in the classroom during the course, such as the types of



entrepreneurial skills and the barriers to female entrepreneurship.

In order to familiarize students with the story, it is recommended that the case be made available a week before the activity is carried out in class, asking them to answer the questions individually and send them to the teacher for analysis. In this way, the teacher will have access to both the individual and the collective understandings.

We suggest using this case in a session of approximately 90 minutes. Based on the reading and study prior to the collective debate, this can be carried out according to the steps below:

- 1) Start the lesson and divide the class into small groups of up to 4 students (5 minutes).
- 2) Analysis and discussion of the case, the proposed questions and everyone's answers in small groups (40 minutes).
- 3) Discussion of the case in the large group, sharing the discussions and reflections generated (40 minutes).
- 4) Closure by the teacher, who may optionally record on the board the points of agreement between the groups and the most original ideas (5 minutes).

In addition to the individual assessment, it is recommended that the teacher circulates among the groups formed to observe the students' interactions and ability to argue. In this sense, the students must base their comments on the concepts previously discussed in the course, relating them to the evidence found in the case.

Discussion questions

1) What barriers to female entrepreneurship can be identified in the case? Show evidence of the barriers along Ana's path.

When analyzing the barriers to entrepreneurship for men and women, Gorji and Rahimian (2011) identified that businesses developed by women have some particular characteristics, i.e., additional challenges that can impede or interrupt the progress and success of women entrepreneurs.

Divided into three groups, individual,

organizational, and environmental, the main barriers to female entrepreneurship include issues such as reconciling work and family, gender stereotypes, limited access to financial resources, lack of support networks, and unwillingness to take the risks of a business (Buaride et al., 2022). As the study by Davis and Abdiyeva (2012) points out, being a woman is already a barrier to entrepreneurship.

Related to personal factors, individual barriers can be subdivided into three categories: psychological, family, and educational. In the psychological aspect, barriers to female entrepreneurship are related to internal factors such as insecurity, lack of self-confidence, fear of failure, and risk aversion (Davis & Abdiyeva, 2012). Lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem can lead to hesitation when making decisions. At the same time, fear of failure and risk aversion often inhibit people from seeking growth opportunities, characterized by a lack of initiative.

In the family context, barriers arise when entrepreneurs need to balance their family responsibilities with the demands of the business. Although they are also found in businesses run by men, Gorji and Rahimian (2011) state that these barriers are even more significant for women, as they face traditional social expectations regarding their role in the family, which can conflict with entrepreneurial ambitions. In this sense, a significant barrier is the lack of family support, characterized by the absence of understanding, encouragement, and emotional support. This lack of support, especially from partners and close family members, can overwhelm and demotivate women, hindering their progress in entrepreneurship (Buaride et al., 2022).

Finally, environmental barriers to entrepreneurship relate to the social, cultural, and economic context in which the business operates (Gorji & Rahimian, 2011). In this sense, Davis and Abdiyeva (2012) highlight gender stereotypes, social norms, and cultural expectations that can impose restrictions on female entrepreneurs, such as the belief in the suitability of women for specific jobs. Another aspect Buaride et al. (2022) investigated is the lack of public policies and specific programs to support female entrepreneurship. This can create an unfavorable



environment for women wanting to start or develop their businesses.

It is recommended that students demonstrate the barriers they have identified by using some of the passages mentioned in the case as a basis for their answers. Table 1 shows some suggestions.

<p><i>"That's the stuff of sissies."</i> <i>"With a threatening tone, the newcomer replied: "I want to be fired. If you don't fire me, I'll start messing around."</i> <i>"The newcomer crouched down next to Ana, asking her while running his hand over her leg: What did you think of my work, boss?"</i></p>	<p>Gender stereotypes (prejudice, sexism and harassment)</p>
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Source: elaborated by the authors

Table 1 - Evidence of barriers to female entrepreneurship

Excerpts from the case	Barrier identified
<p><i>"Although they arrived at work together, Ana and Thiago hardly saw each other"</i> <i>"Thiago was annoyed by the time it took Ana to do the work."</i> <i>"With new demands, having taken over the company, she couldn't get time off to visit her husband."</i> <i>"If she wanted to help those who helped her at the start of her career, Ana knew it would take more than just sharing a roof. Work consumed her mornings, afternoons and even some early mornings."</i> <i>"Having missed Christmas and New Year's Eve celebrations with the family."</i> <i>"Responsible for her father's care, Ana has been moving further and further away from maintenance"</i></p>	<p>Work-family conflicts</p>
<p><i>"Fearful of making impulsive decisions that could jeopardize her children's future, Ana spent days doing the math to calculate the risks she was taking."</i> <i>"She has been considering retirement for some years now"</i></p>	<p>Fear of failure and risk aversion</p>
<p><i>"How can I help you? I don't know anything about gardening or business!"</i> <i>"That's how Ana discovered that some people, after being hired with a formal contract, seek to resign as a way of receiving their Severance Pay Fund (SPF) and unemployment benefits."</i> <i>"Had she been careless in trusting the man's work without supervising it?"</i> <i>"Ana had never imagined leading a business"</i></p>	<p>Lack of business skills and knowledge</p>
<p><i>"Although she still doesn't feel safe to perform these services."</i> <i>"But I don't know anything about Thiago gardens! — Ana exclaimed — I don't have a degree in agronomy or any other course in the area, I don't have a degree in agronomy or any other course in the area."</i> <i>"She could only be the problem. Should she give up leadership and leave the company to Carlos? Perhaps giving up entrepreneurship was the best option"</i></p>	<p>Lack of self-confidence and self-esteem</p>

2) How would you rate the way Ana overcame the barriers? Putting yourself in the entrepreneur's shoes, would you have done anything differently? If so, what other answers could Ana have given? Choose a situation experienced by the entrepreneur to support your answer.

It is suggested that the teacher encourages the students to think of other responses in addition to those presented in the case and that they be specific about the situation chosen. In groups, they can debate among themselves and compare the actions proposed by each one, complementing, questioning, and dialoguing critically. It is important to emphasize that there is no ideal model to be followed and that this question, therefore, enters into the particular context of the students' perceptions.

One possible answer is the individual barrier generated by a lack of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge. It is known that, according to specialized literature, many women launch into entrepreneurship due to a lack of opportunity in the market or financial need, needing more preparation to deal with all the issues involved in leading a business.

In the case presented, Ana decided to become an entrepreneur with her husband after facing difficulties finding job opportunities in her training field. As identified in the first question, she must know some business practices and seek support from Thiago and Carlos. Another way of dealing with this situation would be through training, which could be obtained through courses, workshops, or training on business management. In this way, Ana could familiarize herself with business practices and learn about strategic planning, people management, marketing, and other areas relevant to the success of her enterprise.



3) What entrepreneurial skills has Ana developed during her career? In addition, what skills can still be developed?

Regardless of the gender issue, Ana needed to develop specific competencies to become an entrepreneur. *Competence* encompasses different knowledge, skills, and personality traits influenced by experience, training, education, family history, and demographic aspects peculiar to the person (Kets De Vries, 1996).

Regarding entrepreneurial skills, some authors have been concerned with creating typologies that make it possible to identify the skills needed for business development. Among these, we highlight the empirical studies carried out by Man and Lau (2000), which resulted in categorizing entrepreneurial competencies into six distinct areas: opportunity, relationship, conceptual, administrative, strategic, and commitment.

Opportunity competencies are related to recognizing business opportunities and can be divided into three parts: identifying, evaluating, and pursuing market opportunities. Thus, the entrepreneur must be able to identify favorable scenarios for achieving organizational objectives and act on potential business opportunities to evaluate and transform them into favorable situations (Hills & Laforge, 1996).

Relationship skills, conversely, are characterized by the entrepreneur's ability to create and strengthen an image of trust, good reputation, and conduct to build and maintain relationship networks with actual and potential partners (Man & Lau, 2000). These refer to the entrepreneur's relationships, i.e., their connections with customers, suppliers, business partners, and other relevant stakeholders. They include communication skills, negotiation, conflict resolution, influencing and persuading others.

Conceptual competencies relate to entrepreneurs' ability to understand and use concepts, theories, and models to analyze and solve complex problems (Man & Lau, 2000). These skills are developed through theoretical knowledge and practical experience related to systemic, strategic, creative, and innovative thinking, capable of anticipating future trends, identifying opportunities, and developing action

plans.

Administrative competencies focus mainly on the role of leadership associated with the efficient allocation of human talents and physical, financial, and technological resources; thus, to organize different internal and external resources, the entrepreneur must be able to plan, command, motivate, delegate, and control (Man & Lau, 2000).

As far as strategic competencies are concerned, these are linked to choosing and implementing effective strategies in an organization. Entrepreneurs need to be able to visualize long-term situations and plan achievable and realistic objectives and positions in the short and medium term.

Finally, commitment skills are related to dedication to the business, especially in adverse or unsuccessful situations (Man & Lau, 2000). Comparing Ana's profile with the typology proposed, it is clear that she has developed most of the competencies presented by Man and Lau (2000) but still needs to improve some administrative competencies. For example, Ana needs help in allocating and managing talent. She has hired several employees over time, but all of them have shown problems in performance and commitment to the job.

The company needed help assessing the skills and motivations of candidates during the hiring process and had difficulties effectively supervising and managing employee performance. However, it is essential to note that these difficulties can be expected in the talent allocation process and require learning and experience to overcome.

It should also be noted that since the beginning of her career, Ana has developed other aspects of administrative skills, such as organization and the ability to allocate financial resources efficiently. In this sense, she demonstrates the ability to plan and draw up budgets, research prices, negotiate discounts, and choose the most economical options for purchasing materials.

In establishing business partnerships, Ana demonstrates the development of another skill: relationships. She uses communication,



negotiation, and empathy skills to build a solid network of contacts with suppliers, clients, and other professionals. This can be seen when Ana identifies and warns a client about a plant disease, even though this is not explicitly requested or paid for. This concern for customer satisfaction demonstrates empathy for their needs and expectations. In this way, she manages to cultivate lasting relationships, building a solid base of loyal customers.

Regarding opportunity skills, Ana can identify and seek out opportunities for strategic partnerships that strengthen her business. This happens when she identifies and seeks better suppliers and builds a partnership with the landscaper responsible for the mall's green wall. As she works out the kinks in the project, Ana realizes that there may be an unmet demand and identifies a business opportunity: the maintenance of vertical gardens. Based on previous experience, she realizes there is a need for adjustments to this type of garden, taking advantage of the growing demand to expand her activities.

This situation also shows the development of commitment skills. It can be seen that Ana does not hesitate to carry out corrective maintenance on the green wall, even without the help of the contracted company, showing her determination to fulfill her responsibilities. This commitment to the business was also evident when she faced separation from Thiago, dealt with problematic employees, and dealt with a customer's refusal to increase the price. Despite all the difficulties, she didn't give up and kept looking for solutions to keep the business going.

Throughout the story, Ana also demonstrates a willingness to learn from experiences and seek solutions to problems that arise, which are characteristics of the development of conceptual skills. As she enters a new field of work with no previous knowledge, she constantly seeks to learn and improve with Thiago's help.

Finally, some situations presented in the case demonstrate the development of strategic skills. When she recognizes the need to make a big decision that will affect her monthly income, Ana spends days calculating the risks. This careful assessment shows her ability to analyze scenarios and consider the possible consequences. Thus,

when she considers the financial impact of losing R\$1,000.00 a month, Ana identifies and sets herself the goal of finding new customers to compensate for this loss and guarantee the sustainability of the business.

4) What role did the entrepreneurial skills developed by Ana play in overcoming the barriers identified?

It is clear that the entrepreneurial skills Ana has acquired play a fundamental role in her ability to overcome barriers. This can be seen, for example, when she struggles to balance work demands with family responsibilities. Despite being stressed by work-family conflict, Ana's commitment and competence allow her to remain dedicated to the business. She understands that effort and commitment are necessary to achieve the purpose of guaranteeing her family's well-being. Thus, by reminding herself of the underlying reason that makes her entrepreneurial, Ana finds motivation to deal with conflicts.

On the other hand, strategic skills are essential for mitigating the fear of failure and risk aversion. This can be seen when Ana resigns from some clients and calculates whether she can afford the loss of R\$1,000.00. So, to deal with a decision that involves uncertainty, she tries to assess the risks of her choices in the long term. This understanding of the possible consequences and informed decision-making are examples of strategic skills that Ana has developed. This allows her to analyze different scenarios, weigh the benefits and challenges, and make an informed decision, minimizing fears of failure and risk.

Ana tries to learn from other professionals, such as Thiago and Carlos, to deal with her lack of specific skills and knowledge by observing and asking questions about their work. This search is related to developing conceptual competencies, characterized by a willingness to learn from experiences. As well as being essential to mitigate the lack of business skills and knowledge, this type of competence also plays a vital role in the lack of self-confidence. This way, Ana sees challenging situations as learning opportunities instead of feeling insecure or defeated.

You can see that over the years, the same



entrepreneur who felt insecure about answering client questions at the start of her career can now clearly state her thoughts on a project. This has only been possible because Ana has built and maintained networks of relationships, which provide her with support, advice, and business opportunities. In this way, the client's confidence in Ana's work also strengthens her confidence, demonstrating the importance of relationship skills.

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