



Women in Business Q&A

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Louisa Gillen, Co-Founder and Principal Broker, The SIMPLE Real Estate Co.



Louisa Gillen is the Co-Founder and Principal Broker at [The SIMPLE Real Estate Co.](#) (“SIMPLE”), the first residential real estate brokerage firm designed specifically for sellers. Co-founded by Gillen and business partner Chris Palminteri, SIMPLE thrusts the stale, outdated brokerage model into the future by introducing a modern and honest approach to the sales process. SIMPLE’s forward-thinking model is financially smart, fully transparent and service driven. Sellers benefit from SIMPLE’s hybrid fee structure, three-month exclusive agreements and a brokerage firm designed to keep more money in their pockets.

Before launching SIMPLE, Gillen spent 16 years at The Corcoran Group with Palminteri. Together, they closed more than 250 transactions totaling over \$350 million. Extremely knowledgeable and hardworking, Gillen is committed to providing deep expertise, market insight, individual attention and high-touch service to clients. Her attention to detail, ability to listen and analytical prowess make her a powerhouse broker; and her commitment to professionalism, honesty, and transparency make her a trusted partner by clients.

Born and raised in New York City, Gillen attended The Chapin School and Deerfield Academy, and received her bachelor's degree in math from Vanderbilt University. She currently lives in downtown Manhattan with her husband, Chris, and daughter, Hattan.

How has your life experience made you the leader you are today?

As the youngest of six children, I organically sharpened my leadership skills very early on. With three brothers and two sisters, I always had to think on my feet, negotiate every little thing, adapt to hectic situations and have a little grit to thrive. Also, my constant desire to be an individual and forge my own path made me a natural leader.

How has your previous employment experience aided your current role?

I started in the real estate industry as an assistant to a top producing agent, and at the time, I looked at it as more of a job than a career choice. I was two years out of college with a math degree and still trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. As it turned out, that assistant job showed me just how suitable the real estate industry was for me. I fell in love with everything about it and sixteen years later, I'm as passionate about it as ever. This year has been especially exciting as I co-founded The SIMPLE Real Estate Co., a residential real estate brokerage firm designed for sellers with my partner, Chris Palminteri. I'm proud to be a female entrepreneur and am more excited than ever to build a successful company.

What have the highlights and challenges been during your current role?

The biggest highlight is starting my own company. It has been incredibly energizing taking an idea that my partner and I have been brainstorming for almost three years and making it happen. It has been a lot of work, but it has all been worth it.

The biggest challenge is also starting my own company. It is a lot of work, and as much as I think I have the work/life balance down, that feeling surely gets usurped quickly.

What advice can you offer to women who want a career in your industry?

You can't just dip in your toes. If you want to be successful in the real estate industry, you must be all in. And with most career advice, you have to love it.

What is the most important lesson you've learned in your career to date?

The most important life lesson that I have to share is one that my parents fully modeled. It was to be a genuine person. Sometimes to get ahead and be more successful in life, people lose sight of that. I am grateful that my first boss/mentor in real estate demonstrated to me that you can succeed in this industry without compromising your values. Thank you, Dan!

How do you maintain a work/life balance?

It is a work in progress. In this industry, you have to be ready to pivot, so your daily routine can only go so far some days. After having my daughter, I really needed to prioritize my time and schedule everything in my calendar from apartment showings and client meetings to workouts and dinner with my husband. I don't feel guilty taking time for myself and my family, but I need to schedule it, or it doesn't happen enough.

What do you think is the biggest issue for women in the workplace?

As a newish Mom (my daughter is 2), I think work/life balance in a traditional "9-5" workplace setting would be incredibly challenging. Firstly, three months for maternity leave would not have been adequate for me. I feel incredibly fortunate that I have a supportive business partner and was able to take what I needed for maternity leave. Secondly, I believe workplaces should give women (and/or primary caregivers) with young children more control over their time. I work a lot of evenings, so I can spend time with my daughter. I know I will log in those work hours at night to get everything done, but I get to choose how to prioritize my time.

How can we encourage more women to start their own business?

Spreading the word that it is liberating, and although it is a lot of work, it is so energizing that you forget about that. And being in control of your time is priceless.

How has mentorship made a difference in your professional and personal life?

Professionally, my first boss in this industry was an incredible influencer and teacher in my life. He taught me everything about this business and made me realize I could be successful in it while still being true to myself. Personally, my parents were both positive role models and mentors in very different ways – my father was an accomplished surgeon and my mom raised six kids (I have one child and still can't even fathom how my mom did it!) – but they both instilled in me solid core values.

Which other female leaders do you admire and why?

Diane Von Furstenberg is the definition of a career woman and leader. She was a princess, yet still pursued her passion and created her iconic brand at a young age, and decades later it is still a huge success.

I, also, have a huge fondness for Ali Webb, founder of Drybar. Our business models and philosophies are similar. Like Webb, my partner and I are longtime professionals in our industry, and just like Webb believed clients overpaid for blowouts at traditional salons, we believed sellers overpaid for services at traditional brokerages. Both Drybar and The SIMPLE Real Estate Co. were created as solutions. We want SIMPLE to be as successful as a solution as Drybar.

What do you want to professionally and personally accomplish in the next year?

Professionally, I want our residential brokerage firm model to resonate with sellers and to be a recognizable brand in the Manhattan market. Personally, I would like to get more involved in volunteer work. It always feels good to give back and it keeps you grounded.

What are the top three tips you can offer to an entrepreneur starting out?

Be true to yourself and listen to your gut.

There is always something to learn, so listen.

Work hard, but don't take things too seriously.

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