



Sahar Hashemi

Entrepreneur, author and speaker who brought New York style coffee culture to Britain

A former lawyer, Sahar Hashemi founded Coffee Republic, the UK's first US style coffee bar chain with her brother and built it into one of the UK's most recognised high street brands with 110 bars and a turnover of £30m.

Sahar's biography

Sahar's presentations are unique, blending her story of building two famous brands with the key habits for [innovation](#) and creativity. Through storytelling, Sahar is able to connect with audiences on an emotional level and bring to life her conviction that entrepreneurial behaviour is needed in every business.

Some of the messages weaved into her story are:

- Entrepreneurial behaviour isn't for start-ups – it's for big organisations at every level
- We all have [creativity](#) and the capacity to innovate within us (Habit: ANYONE CAN DO IT)
- Innovation isn't about genius tendencies: its just about finding a better way
- We can't spot opportunities sitting tight in our comfort zone
- Impersonating our customers (and not just relying on market research) gives us the best insights (Habit: STEP INTO CUSTOMERS SHOES)
- Make sure you're not too busy for creativity (Habit: GET OUT OF THE OFFICE)
- Beware of expert knowledge – if you become too set in your ways you miss new opportunities (Habit: THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING CLUELESS)
- New products/services are *a/ways* rejected, so we need to develop persistence (Habit: NOTCHING UP NO's)
- We need more of a trial and error culture in organizations to make things happen (Habit: BOOTSTRAPPING)

- To spot opportunities we need to bring not just our ‘workselves’ but 100% of ourselves to work (HABIT: TAKE 100% of YOURSELF TO WORK)

Sahar is also involved in “Change Please” coffee which recruits staff from local homeless shelters hiring them as baristas to run their own coffee carts around London. Sahar is also the co-chair of the Government Scale-Up Taskforce which brings together [entrepreneurs](#), investors and local bodies from across the country helping businesses become high growth organisations.

Sahar Hashemi’s Background/History

Sahar left the day-to-day management of Coffee Republic in 2001 and published a bestselling book, *Anyone Can Do It, Building Coffee Republic from our kitchen table*, which has been translated into 6 languages and is 2nd-highest selling book on [entrepreneurship](#) after Richard Branson.

In 2005 she founded Skinny Candy, a brand of sugar free sweets which was sold to confectionery conglomerate Glisten PLC in 2007. In June 2012 Sahar was awarded an OBE for services to the UK economy and to charity.

She has co-chaired the Government Scale Up Taskforce, being actively involved in the roll-out of Change Please, a social enterprise that trains and hires homeless people to run coffee carts. Her latest book published in 2019 is, “Start Up Forever, 10 ways to behave like a start up when you’re not a start up” based on her experiences of working with large organisations – and is a FT Business recommended publication.

Sahar is also involved in Corporate for Crisis which helps companies design and implement social strategies around their business in areas of the world in crisis, or regions where there has been conflict. It enables companies to work at a [humanitarian](#) level that benefit both them and the local community. In addition, Sahar is a supporter of the Princes Trust and donates part of the royalties of “Anyone Can Do It” to the trust. Sahar sits on the NSPCC Corporate Development Board and is a Patron of the Child Bereavement Charity. Sahar has also fronted a government campaign for Skills for Business to encourage employers to develop staff skills.

Speaking Style

Enthusiastic, informal, passionate, thought-provoking

Sahar is an accomplished [inspirational](#) speaker. She is a speaker ambassador for The Princes Trust. She has delivered keynote speeches at the Institute of Directors Women’s Summit, Wall Street Journal Europe Summit, IAA World Congress and the Global Leadership Forum Malaysia.

She has a talent for connecting with her audience – she talks with passion about being an unlikely entrepreneur and about the importance of authenticity and loving what you do. A former lawyer, she built the highly successful Coffee Republic brand with 110 bars and a turnover of £30 million because she had a passion to bring good coffee to the UK – before doing the same with Skinny Candy her sugar free candy brand. She warns that as companies grow they often lose their start-up buzz and allow bureaucracy to creep in.

On February 21st, 2016, Hashemi was named in the Maserati 100 List; a definitive list of Britain’s most successful philanthropists, investors, mentors and advisors, and ascending entrepreneurs, who are today supporting the next generation of up and coming business talent.

Sahar's talks

- **Achieving Your Dreams**
- **Entrepreneurial behaviour isn't just for start-ups**

- **What next - keeping the start up culture alive**
- **Anyone Can Do It**
- **Building creative environments, Innovation**

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