



Harveen and I met a couple of years ago at an event she was hosting in London. She was working with WhereWolf who enable retailers to sell across global platforms. Harveen was representing [www.italianhomewares.com](http://www.italianhomewares.com) who were participating at a pop-up store in Covent Garden, London, managed by WhereWolf. From the very beginning, I have admired her passion, drive, commitment, professionalism and willingness to constantly embrace the ever-changing business environment.

**Harveen, how would you introduce yourself?**

I am co-founder of HGA Group, [www.hga-group.com](http://www.hga-group.com) which we established 18 years ago. We are head-hunters in the fashion, retail, and beauty sectors. Based in London, we also operate a number of international offices in Italy, South Africa, Turkey and India. Additionally, we provide a B2B service enabling

companies to grow their product and services to targeted global audiences.

**What is your main focus now? What keeps you busy?**

The retail industry has been massively impacted by Covid -19, it has only enhanced the issues we were facing prior to that. Many retailers are in survival mode in the midst of this, are also evaluating their purpose, relevance, opportunities, consumer sentiment and future operating models.

I am actively reaching out to my clients, and candidates discussing and analysing the world situation, demonstrating togetherness, solidarity and sharing information. In addition, recruitment is still ongoing in territories where the lockdown restrictions have been eased, e.g. Indonesia.

As business owner, I am learning about where we are now, and the best options for tomorrow. Our mission remains the same. We want to serve our clients, candidates and community in a relevant manner, whilst demonstrating our ethics and authenticity.

**You have made quite significant changes in your business structure last year? What were they and why did you decide to do this?**

The fashion retail space was challenged well before Covid -19, there was too much retail space, ever increasing online competition, constantly changing consumer behaviour and sustainability as an increasing focus. This led to us evaluating our focus and services as we entered 2020, in order to demonstrate our relevance.

## **We defined 4 key pillars:**

**Global Recruitment** – based in London, we operate a number of international offices and are specialists within fashion, retail and beauty. We are boutique in nature, our relationships and reputation are critical.

**Career Mentoring Service** – we assist candidates to define and implement their methodology to secure their next role and or to establish their Consultancy.

**B2B Growth Enabler** – we assist organisations to “showcase” their services and products to targeted global audiences. For instance, we hosted a number of events on 2019, in the US and Canada, on behalf of an Italian Wine Consortium, making valuable introductions into the wine, retail, distribution and marketing community.

**Sustainability Hub** – we participate in the wider sustainability debate, focusing on talent, structures and how organisations potentialise their workforce from a sustainability perspective.

In 2020, we founded **EVE, a Female Led Angel Investment Community**, looking to “move the dial” in this space. The number of Female Investors is woeful – 20% in the UK. We have just secured our first investment and are now mentoring 6 organisations to ensure that they are “investment ready.”

I describe ourselves as “marriage brokers” for talent and business. We host many events and discussions and are proud to have a voice in our industry.

**I know we both embrace continuous personal development. Do you think it is even more important now?**

Yes, absolutely! We live in a volatile world, and the pace of changes is so dynamic - personal development is critical. It does not have to be formal. For me it includes reading newspapers, being actively engaged on LinkedIn, reading personal development books and the biggest, in my opinion, is networking. If you work hard at networking, you are able to meet interesting and inspiring people who you can debate with and share ideas. You cannot do everything, but it is essential to develop a structure to allow yourself to self - develop.

**What books are you now reading, and would recommend us?**

I believe that a certain book at certain time in your life can have life changing impact. **What's your Moonshot** by John Sanei is a favourite of mine. I must admit that I carry the book with me all the time. I was fortunate to meet John in person, this book helped at a certain time in my life where I needed to be re energised.

I was recommended a couple of books recently, both by Jim Collins - **Good to Great**, and **How the mighty fall**. They are on my list to read this month.

**How do you keep the balance between work, and your private time?**

I have been very lucky. My life is celebration of both. I love my work, and my private and work life have merged. I have lifelong friendships that I have formed

in fashion and retail. I am a wife, grandmother, sibling...and work-life balance is an ongoing challenge. Sometimes I do better than at other times.

### **Who inspires you and why?**

I have many modern-day household names and business icons that I admire and draw inspiration from.

2 historical retail figures also come to mind, not only for their leadership skills and commercial success, but also for their vision of wanting to create a fairer, more sustainable society. I believe, we have much to learn from both and they resonate very much today.

**John Spedan Lewis** was the eldest son of John Lewis, who owned the John Lewis department store, London, Spedan joined the business at 19 and in 1914 assumed control of Peter Jones in Sloane Square, London. On his father's death he formed the John Lewis Partnership and began distributing profits among its employees in 1929. He transferred control of the company to the employees in 1950. **John Lewis** very much fosters a culture of democracy, where employees' views matter. I spent my almost 8 years at John Lewis, at the beginning of my career.

**George Cadbury**, along with his brother, Richard took over his Father's business in 1861. He had a dream of a factory in a garden that would be a healthy and pleasant place to work. So, once it was feasible, he and Richard decided to relocate Cadburys away from the industrialised grimy city centre. They purchased a site four miles from Birmingham, naming it Bournville, after a stream (bourn) that ran through it and ville, the French word for town. In 1879 they reopened the factory there,

and began to create a model village, providing their employees and others with good housing, schools and leisure facilities.

**What would be an advice you want to share with us?**

I am woman of colour, a grandmother and in my mid-fifties. I have been challenging all the stereotypes. You can be whoever you want to be; surround yourself with supportive role models, network, work on your personal development and give back. Be authentic, demonstrate your values, and love what you do. If you do not love what you do, get out and search for it.

I believe I have not yet achieved the biggest thing in my career yet...

**Is there any question you want me to ask you?**

That is a good question. I would say, do you have any regrets at not addressing challenges in your career / sector?

Generally, in life, you need to learn how to use your voice...sometimes the power of your voice is "silence".