



North Carolina Law Life

Are Women Business Owners at a Disadvantage to Men?

By: Donna Ray Chmura. *This was posted Monday, August 23rd, 2010*

Do women business-owners really have less access to capital than men?

I was reading [this](#) article exploring the reasons why women business owners have less access to [venture capital](#) than male business owners do. The data shouldn't have surprised me, but they did.

I have been a woman in male-dominated areas since 1985 when I was a female sports reporter (and later the sports editor) for [The Daily Northwestern](#) student-run newspaper.

I remember feeling like the only woman at a [Big Ten Conference](#) basketball press conference who wasn't a wife or secretary. When I asked a question, everyone turned around in surprise at the sound of my voice. I remember a local news crew filming me in the football locker room post-game press conference, as if *I* were the news for just being in there.

I am now a business attorney — one of only two women attorneys in the 24 [business attorneys](#) at [Sands Anderson](#). Most of the attorneys I negotiate transactions against are men. Many, although not all, of my clients are men. I work with male accountants, financial advisors and bankers. I don't think about gender at all.

I forgot how hard women struggled to [vote](#), to [own property](#) in their own names, have [professional opportunities](#) and to be taken seriously in the [business](#) world. Then an article like this comes along to remind me that there are still struggles in day-to-day business life.

As a [woman business owner](#) in [North Carolina](#), what experiences have you had being taken seriously, having access to credit and competing in business?

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