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CATCHING UP WITH...

## NETTY THINES

**The managing director of communications agency Mediation is campaigning for more women entrepreneurs.**

When Netty Thines launched Mediation in 1991, there was “only one other communications agency which was run by a woman,” she says. “It was very hard to hire a man. It took me quite a while to be ‘diverse.’” Today her firm has a staff of eight (“now I’m in the happy position that we have three men”) and works with clients like ING and IBM. She also is one of 11 “female entrepreneurship ambassadors” in Luxembourg, a programme backed by the European Commission and women’s business group FFCEL.

While female bosses are no longer such a rarity, “the question we have to ask ourselves is why we have more men than women in leadership positions” and “it’s not only the glass ceiling,” argues Thines. “This has to do with the way we work.” At Big Four firms “it’s normal that people work 14 hours per day and it’s expected that they’re available for the company on Saturday.” But the pace is not sustainable for everyone. “We are seeing more and more people suffering from burnout, we see that a lot of absenteeism is due to the fact that men and women can’t cope” with that workload.

When asked which sectors are doing better at delivering work-life balance, entrepreneur Thines answers with a laugh, “everything linked to the public sector.” She recently spoke with a doctor who moved from private to public practice after the physician found it “very difficult to handle private life and work because the hours are really incredible.” In a public practice, doctors are grouped up so there is always a physician available for patients but work schedules are more balanced.

Along with eight other “ambassadors” Thines will participate in a speed networking session for future female entrepreneurs at the Chambre des Métiers on 1 December from 4-7 p.m. ([cdm.lu](http://cdm.lu)). Then she will help mount a traveling exhibition on Luxembourg’s pioneering female entrepreneurs that will travel to schools and commune halls starting in March ([fea.lu](http://fea.lu)).

Thines wants to tell young women that “there are opportunities other than just working in the public sector or staying at home.” Starting a company “can give you a lot of satisfaction... [you can] become an actor instead of staying passive; you can take your life into your own two hands and go for it.”

Interview by **AARON GRUNWALD**  
Photography by **MIKE ZENARI**



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