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## **Apprentice star Jo Cameron to push women in the workplace**

*[Dec 22 2008](#) by Alison Jones*

Former Apprentice contestant Jo Cameron believes that women don't do enough to promote themselves in the workplace, so she is going to do it for them.

The former MG Rover training manager turned motivational entrepreneur is organising the first WOW Awards, and it is something she hopes to make an annual event.



WOW stands for Women On Their Way, a 12- step programme developed by Jo to support the progression of women in business, particularly in areas where they are under-represented.

Jo, who is 38 and lives in Leamington, has drawn on her experience as a woman who made it to a senior managerial position in a male-dominated [environment](#) – the car industry.

She joined MG Rover as a business apprentice but was persuaded to train as an engineer after showing an aptitude for it in while on secondment in the tool room.

When she was made redundant while still in her early 30s, Jo, who holds a Masters degree in equality and diversity, worked as a freelance consultant, until a friend persuaded her that she would be a perfect candidate for The Apprentice.

Part of the group of job hopefuls that included Ruth Badger and series winner Michelle Dewberry, Jo is chiefly remembered for her fiery and emotional approach that did not impress Sir Alan at the time. However, she defends her tears.

"Crying is a good release of toxins, women do it with their eyes and men do it with their armpits, so the scientists around crying tell me," says Jo, when we meet at Coventry Technology Centre, where her High Performance Academy is based.

She feels it was her efforts to stay true to herself that set her apart from her fellow contestants and made her a target when she did not deserve to be.

"There was a lot of pressure to conform. I let people take credit for the ideas that I had in The Apprentice and I didn't defend myself particularly well in the boardroom."

Jo was determined to learn from the experience. She is, after all, the woman who trademarked Bouncebackability, a system that, through seminars, training and talks, guides people in how to overcome adversity.

Since failing to make it on to the Sugar payroll, she has set up HPA intending it to help people, particularly women, realise their professional potential.

One of the most valuable lesson she says she took from her time on the programme was that women should not be ashamed of drawing attention to their own achievements.

"I think women have fabulous tendencies in terms of their modesty and in terms of their analysis of decision making. But sometimes that can hold us up.

"I was just doing some work in the public sector and quite often women would pass off their achievements to someone else.

She sees the WOW awards as being part of that process, of creating role models and shining a light on the unsung heroines of the workplace.

There are 10 categories in total, including sole trader, women in a nontraditional role, on-line business and contribution to women's learning and development.

Applicants can self-nominate or wait for their colleagues and friends to do it.

The closing date for nominations is mid-January and the awards ceremony, with prizes donated by sponsors Flybe, will take place at the Botanical Gardens on February 27, 2009.

As part of the event there will be an Angel's Den where aspiring entrepreneurs can pitch to business angels in the hope of securing backing.