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## WORK IT OUT: DARA HUANG

*In our weekly series, we meet working women to discuss the secrets to their success*

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Each week, we interview a successful woman to find out how she made it to the top, and get tips on maintaining a successful work-life balance. This week, we meet Dara Huang, the founder of Design Haus Liberty.

### **Describe your company**

Design Haus Liberty is an award-winning, energetic and forward-thinking architecture and interior-design studio. I started the firm in 2013, and I now run a team of 25 architects and designers. Our projects are international, ranging from bespoke light sculptures to installations, architecture and interiors across residential, hotels and offices.

### **Describe your career path**

I went to Harvard in Boston, then worked for my dream firm, Herzog de Meuron, in Switzerland, before moving to London to start my own design practice.

### **What is the most rewarding aspect of what you do?**

Inspiring others: my clients, my colleagues, even myself. I am constantly looking for new places to find inspiration.

### **What is one piece of business advice you would pass on?**

Pursue something with passion, or else it isn't worth pursuing.

### **Name one piece of advice you ignored.**

Write a business plan.

### **Do you have a mentor who inspired you?**

I have many, including my mother, who moved to a foreign country, started her own business, worked really hard to support her family and was just a nice person to everyone.

### **What is your work look?**

I always wear black. I prefer skinny trousers with a loose, long tank top, and I love a good blazer. I accessorise with long necklaces or a nice scarf. I usually bring heels if I am going to an event; otherwise, flats are okay. In winter, I wear heeled boots or a pair of chunky leather heels by Rag & Bone. At the moment, I like my Alexander McQueen black and white scarf, a long necklace from a young designer I found at Wolf and Badger, and my Amanda Wakeley blazer. My aim is always to look professional, even though I am dying to wear jeans to work every day.

### **What are your go-to brands?**

I love mixing brands: I will pair Zara with Gucci, or Prada with a young designer nobody has ever heard of. The best brand for black trousers is definitely Gucci. Victoria Beckham is my go-to label for a formal, work-event dress, while for informal occasions I have found a lovely brand called Saloni.

### **What is your favourite...**

**...form of exercise?** At the moment, it's with my personal trainer at Lomax.

**...way to relax?** Sitting in the park with my family.

**...beauty treatment? Where?** Because I am so busy these days, I have treatments at home. I would recommend an app called Priv that basically sends a beautician at any time of day directly

to your house within an hour, and it isn't any more expensive than the high street. For businesswomen, this is great because you don't need to spend precious business hours at the salon.

**...beauty product?** I would say a good SPF is always nice. I love Zelens Daily Defence Sunscreen because it's very light and smells good, unlike most suncreams, which tend to be really greasy.

**...tech product?** There is an app called Boomerang that schedules email sending and reminders whenever you set its alarm. So you can email yourself (as well as use it to email your clients, say, every six months) all in one sitting.

**...restaurant?** Park Chinois by Alan Yau on Berkeley Street, London: not so much for the decor, but I love the Asian food, especially the duck, and the live music. For something more fun and casual, Palomar on Rupert Street in Soho is just delicious; it's always packed and the food is very unique.

**...service you can't live without?** I hate to say this, but I am addicted to Uber: it's made business and travel a lot easier and more accessible because it's so affordable. However, I do love black-cab drivers, as they are so much fun to chat with, so I still try to take both.

**...guilty pleasure or vice?** Going to museums and galleries. It's a time-consuming process to enjoy art, but it's worthwhile, especially when you're surrounded by incredibly inspiring architecture. I helped design the Tate Modern extension, which has just opened, and I am so proud to see it completed, and up and running the way it was designed to be.

**Plug something else you're involved in.**

We are launching our first lighting collection this October. We've had a huge demand for our bespoke light products, so we wanted to create beautiful designs that can be bought off the shelf and seen in people's homes.

*To find out more about Design Haus Liberty, visit [dhl Liberty.com](http://dhl Liberty.com).*