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NEWS

The Benefits To Keeping Your Maiden Name

By Kate Merrill, WBZ-TV

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(credit: AP)

BOSTON (CBS) — When Cheryl Fenton of Medford got married five years ago she had no doubts. She chose the right man and the right name. “In my heart I was Cheryl McPherson, but on paper, Cheryl Fenton. That’s the way it’s got to be,” she said.

A freelance writer for several local and national magazines, Cheryl is known by her byline. Taking her husband’s name simply was not an option. “Changing my name because I got married would be just like changing a company that’s been in business for 15 years,” she said.

As it turns out, Cheryl’s decision may translate into higher earnings over the course of her career. A European study found that women who keep their maiden names make \$500,000 more than those who take their husband’s names.

According to Career consultant Elaine Verelas of Keystone Partners in Boston, it’s all about developing a brand and women who have already established themselves in their field can risk a lot by changing their names. “People who went from a maiden name to a married name overnight and no one knew are the people who get lost in the shuffle,” she said.

WBZ-TV’s Kate Merrill reports.

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Take Cheryl for example. When you Google 'Cheryl Fenton' dozens of her published articles pop up on the screen. If she had changed her name all those years of work and experience would disappear faster than you can say 'I do.'

For some women it's not that simple. As a marketing professional, Deanna Dwyer knows all about the importance of branding but she still wanted to take her husband's name. "On the other hand, I didn't want to let go of my own professional identity," she said. She used a hyphenated name for years. Then she switched over to her husband's name when she took a new job at Franciscan Children's Hospital. "Here at the hospital, I used my married name because nobody knew me before I was married," she said.

Varelas says there is no wrong choice, but if you do decide to change your name, you have your work cut out for you. "You need to do a great job of getting that message across that everyone you ever knew knows you've changed your name," she said.

In the end keeping your name just to make more money probably won't work. It's more about the career decisions you make rather than what's on your license that leads to higher salaries.

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Lori

In this day and age of social media I do not think it would be that difficult to let people from your past know you are married and let them know your new last name. Unless your husband has some horrible name or a name that rhymes with your first name there is no excuse for NOT taking your husbands name. I took my husbands name and I wouldn't do anything differently.

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Ben

Why didn't he take your last name? I was married 4 months ago and my wife wanted to keep her name. She asked me, "why do I have to take your name? Why don't you take my name?" Good point. It's traditional and conventional and also a bit sexist. So she kept her name. The animals also have her last name, but the kids will have mine.

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