

Shivani Gopal on the Flying Solo podcast

The Power Of Mentoring And Networking For Business Growth

*Automated transcript

Cec Busby ([00:02](#)):

Hi everybody. I'm Cec Busby, editor of Flying Solo. Welcome to our weekly podcast where we step inside the minds and lives of soloists and small business owners. Now, if the idea of networking sets you a-quiver, our next guest is here to tell you it's time to expand your horizons and take the leap. Shivani Gopal has spent the last six years perfecting successful mentoring programs for women in business via The Remarkable Woman. And in 2022, she pivoted her database of 25,000 women to a new digital mentor marketplace, Elladex. It's a super-app which combines the latest in data matching and machine learning technology to create tailored education programs for women at all professional levels. If you've yet to make mentoring and networking part of your life, Shivani is here to explain why it's an essential part of business growth for all business owners.

Cec Busby ([00:54](#)):

Hi, Shivani, thanks so much for joining me on the show today. Welcome.

Shivani Gopal ([00:59](#)):

Thanks Cec, it's so great to be here.

Cec Busby ([01:01](#)):

Excellent. I love a guest that's excited. So I would like to chat a bit about mentoring and networking in this podcast because that's something you're an absolute expert in. And you started a mentoring network, The Remarkable Woman, like probably six, seven years ago. And then recently you've pivoted it and reshaped it a bit and rebranded it as Elladex. But I guess we'll talk about that a little bit later. But what I'd love to hear from you is kind of your why story, because you were working in finance I think at the time, and I read somewhere that you were getting dismissed as being too young and too pretty to be taken seriously. So can you tell us a little bit about that and how that then kind of provoked you into starting your own networking group?

Shivani Gopal ([01:51](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. Look, I think as anyone should be when you enter a new organisation or a new career, for me that was financial planning. And I was 21 years old and bright-eyed and bushy-tailed and ambitious as anything. And I'm very proud of the fact that I was as young and ambitious as I was because, you know, it wasn't just stars in my eyes. It was, I need to make sure that I get the help and resources and support that I need in order to really do a good job and to really nail this new remit of mine. And I realised that if I wanted to be really good at what I did, books were only gonna take me so far. Repetition was only gonna take me so far in terms of meeting after meeting.

([02:36](#)):

I needed to get solid mentoring so that I could performance learn myself upwards and really enhance my learning. I'm a big believer of that 10,000 hour rule, but the varied version of that. And that is you

could do the same thing for 10,000 hours and never improve, right? You need to be able to take a step back and critically analyse, and speak to someone and get advice, and then you incrementally improve each time, and that's how you become a world class expert. And so I was clued into that very early on in life and I approached someone for mentoring in our industry who, as you said Cec, that was the story. He looked me up and down and basically didn't think I was gonna cut the mustard or be in the industry for anything more than five seconds.

(03:22):

And he said that I was too young and too pretty in any case, to be mentored. And if I stuck around or made it over 10 years, then I should come and speak to him <laugh>. And, you know, I think you can imagine, and your listeners can imagine what my inner monologue said about him - 'oh, why you, enter the bleeps...' because there was a lot there in my head <laugh> about him. But I also thought, you know, I'll show you because I'll still back me. And I then proceeded to go down a journey of lifelong learning, because I knew that if I needed to be successful, that I needed to continually learn a little bit every single day to incrementally get better. And I also needed to have a Rolodex of mentors. And the one person I approached had very cruelly rejected me. And so I then created my own Rolodex by actually getting a spreadsheet of all of the other financial advisors, their email addresses and their numbers, and I'd call them on rotation. So no one ever knew that I had adopted them as my new mentor <laugh> <laugh>.

(04:33):

And that's how I did it. And I eventually found my career take off to great heights in financial services. I moved on as a financial advisor. In fact, people used to come to me and say, we need to get the new recruits to go through you and learn how you do your meetings cuz it's really quite world class. I ended up kicking this other guy off the leadership charts, eventually. It took two years, but the person who so rudely rejected me was definitely shown the lights 24 months later. And then I ended up with my career as a financial services executive. And what really disappointed me, Cec, was that along the way I didn't see as many women climb that rank with me.

(05:22):

And along the way, even at the very coalface at clients, I saw women earning less than their male counterparts as my clients. And I couldn't say anything because of client confidentiality. And I saw so many women, so incredibly intelligent, capable, successful women plagued with imposter syndrome and issues of confidence. And I realised it wasn't because of them. There was a big structural challenge and vice standing against them that was causing them to feel that way. But all the same, I felt that if I could share my success formula with them, then we could all get ahead. And I found myself just juggling too many mentees and trying to help out too many women. And I realised there had to be a better way through technology. That I could build a digital community, a platform. One that didn't just span Australian wide, but also globally so that we could create a Rolodex for connection, networking and mentoring, which we do via our mentor marketplace. And we could create a success Rolodex for the personal, professional and financial success of women via daily, incremental bite-size learning.

Cec Busby (06:32):

So how did you initially get the word out about what was called The Remarkable Woman at the time?

Shivani Gopal (06:39):

Yeah, so we were called The Remarkable Woman when I first launched, and then we rebranded to Elladex just late last year. In terms of getting the word out, it sort of happened accidentally, actually. I was sharing my story with a girlfriend of mine who said, you know, gee, that's a really compelling story

and I'd like to share it with a journalist friend of mine to see if she'd like to write about it. And I didn't think anything of it. Yeah. You know? Sure, that sounds fine. And I wasn't ready, Cec, from a business perspective at that point in time. But that journalist happened to work for the SMH, Fairfax, and that story really caught on like wildfire. In fact, it was on the front page of the Sydney Morning Herald all day, the digital version.

Cec Busby (07:27):

Oh, wow.

Shivani Gopal (07:28):

And it sort of meant to me, wow, you know, we've got a landing page, we didn't even have an email autoresponder at that point. I was still building the business in the backend. And I went, okay, so the word's out now, and I really can't fail. I've really gotta make sure that I build this into something really formidable for the sake of the community that I've now gone out and promised that I would do. So that really helped. And through that I had so many people reach out to me on LinkedIn and say 'I really believe in what you're doing, and I wanna be a change agent. I wanna be a mentor', or, 'really love what you're doing, and I wanna be a benefactor of that. I want to be mentored, or I wanna get access to some of these courses, and how do I do that?' So through the years, we ended up being talked about in many areas of the national media. And as a result, we've amassed a community of over 25,000 women and hundreds of mentors, and we've been able to build a digital app, bringing that all together just from that first starting point.

Cec Busby (08:40):

It's a pretty incredible success, going from that initial conversation where you wanted to go, actually, I am good enough and more than good enough, I'm gonna surpass you and I'm gonna help other women do the same. It's a pretty incredible journey.

Shivani Gopal (08:59):

Oh, thank you. I think, you know, resilience is a phenomenal thing. And sometimes stubbornness is a great thing as well, and I was very stubborn. You know, if this guy wasn't gonna help me, I was gonna find another way around. There was no way that I was going to let that be the dictator of, or the catalyst for, the successful demise of my career. And you've just gotta find a way. And when I found my way ... and what I mean by that as well, Cec, is there's so many things I think you've gotta do in order to be holistically successful. You know, you've gotta invest in your own personal wellness and sense of balance and mindfulness and confidence and self-awareness, so that when people like this guy tell you that you are less than, you are able to see it for what it is.

(09:54):

And that is that they're seeing the world through their own limitations, or they are supporting you to the extent that they were only ever supported or loved or backed. They don't have the capacity to do that for you. It says more about them than it does about you. And so having self-awareness is really important. Having great communication skills and leadership skills and all of that stuff is really important. And I invested in my own learning of that really holistically, which was a dictator of my career success. And then the many career successes of so many women. We've helped women earn almost \$1.5 million now in collective additional salary because they've come to us for salary negotiation coaching, or downloaded one of our videos and learned how to do that. And we've had hundreds of

women get promoted, through just being a daily learner because the nexus is there. If you learn something every day, you are far more successful. It's just wonderful to see that it works and that if you have a fire in your belly, then there's a formula out there that can work for you.

Cec Busby ([11:01](#)):

So, a lot of our listeners are micro-businesses and solopreneurs, and they all have that fire in their belly in terms of their passion for their business. But I think sometimes networking and mentoring, it's something that can seem out of reach to them. Like, they often feel quite isolated, I feel. So, you know firsthand the power of this networking and mentoring, what it's done for you. Why should our soloists and our micro business owners be making the time to do this, and how can we help them facilitate it?

Shivani Gopal ([11:35](#)):

Because you know what, being in business by yourself - first off, hats off to your listeners - being in business by yourself, it is a lonely game, and you are the only one driving you. And sometimes that can be incredibly motivating and sometimes that can be really hard because you don't have a support network, you don't have an accountability buddy. You don't have someone to just spar ideas with. And that's when you level up, and it's so important that you level up. It's so important that you check any blind spots and have someone to talk strategies over or get really strategic advice. When you are in business, there is a million things that you need to be the master of. And as humans, we're not designed that way, right? You've gone into business because you care about one problem, one product, one service, and you wanna deliver that really well and really passionately, that's where your expertise lies.

([12:27](#)):

It doesn't necessarily lie in people leadership, or HR, or what business structure should you set up and what tax environment should you take on, and how do you manage your time effectively, and all of these things, because admin creeps up on you. And so these are all the things that they can learn via the platform. There's great business templates around there, so that if they're testing a new iteration of something that they wanna launch, again, it may feel and sound like a good idea in your head, but how do you really test the viability of that and make sure that there is enough of market, it's commercial, you're solving a problem, you're able to scale it, what the cost margin is, all of that sort of stuff.

([13:14](#)):

And so they're able to learn that in the app, but then also they're able to connect with other entrepreneurs, other business owners and other mentors who can help them. And I would imagine that any business owner has a marketing question or two, has a distribution question or two, has a finance question or two. So they're able to then connect with mentors who are absolute specialists in that area, and have that Rolodex at their fingertips rather than feeling alone and lonely and not feeling supported by an ecosystem. Because it's wonderful to be the master of your own destiny, but it's great to have an ecosystem around you that can catch you when you need it. So the mentor marketplace would help them out there. It's a good place to be, Cec, I would say to your listeners.

Cec Busby ([14:01](#)):

So, you've spoken about some common hurdles that face your members in terms of that lack of support and renegotiating salaries and things like that. What are some other impacts that you've seen in terms of them being able to achieve their success? And how have you been able to help them?

Shivani Gopal ([14:25](#)):

Yeah, there's been this great sense of taking and reclaiming back who they are. I find that people are coming in to the platform just sort of scooped up from the whirlwind of life and the busyness of life, and they don't realise how lost they are amongst that. And there's been a great sense of clarity being achieved on, here's where I am right now, here is where I wanna go, here are my goals, and here's a really tangible way for me to achieve it. So there's been a lot of that, a lot of preparedness and massive boosting in terms of confidence as well. And that happens because when you do something that is beneficial for you, just a little bit every day, you do start to feel good about yourself and you do start to feel really proud.

(15:20):

And if you simply learn something every day, then you are tapping into the innovation centres of your brain, which greater enable you to do other things and tackle other problems. And so we've found that through the app, people are a lot calmer, a lot more in control of their lives, a lot more confident. But there's also made some lifelong friends as well. Some mentors and mentees have gotten together and started businesses together. Some members have gotten together and become lifelong friends, and they catch up for years on end as well. So there's been some beautiful professional, but business outcomes as well as their career outcomes and business growth.

(16:04):

On the other end, we've also had some business owners who had some genuine problems that they took to mentors, and some of these mentors are actually able to connect them with distributors and do some really incredible things that we never thought would be possible. We originally thought the mentoring was there for advice, but our mentors love to roll up their sleeves and get their hands dirty and really help. And that's been a massive game changer. For some businesses, it's meant that they mightn't have survived the next six months, but they've gotten through with a whole new distribution. There's so many stories like that.

Cec Busby (16:42):

That connection element is so important as well as the advice, isn't it?

Shivani Gopal (16:48):

Yeah, it really is because the world has become a little bit of a lonely place. I think technology has been a great enabler in our lives, but technology has also made us lonely because it's just so easy to stay at home and watch Netflix, right? And it's just so easy to stay on your phone and continually scroll on your social media, which actually makes you feel really badly about yourself from a procrastination perspective. So being able to connect with someone actually is also a great mood booster. And we just did a webinar on this and talking about mental health and the importance of your own mental wellness. And we talked about - the webinar's available in the app for if anyone who's downloading the app a little bit late, that's okay, you can still watch, it's called Mental Workout.

(17:40):

We were talking about creating a joy list and, and all of that sort of stuff. Cuz joy lists are so much more fun than to-do lists <laugh>. But also, a quick sort hack was if you're feeling a little bit glum, one of the greatest things that you can do is get social interaction, but also just speaking to someone new. That connection actually makes you feel really good about yourself, really positive, and we crave it. And I think in being as busy as we are, being as hyper focused as we are, and when you're in business, the consequences of you getting something wrong or not working hard enough is so high that we don't tend

to prioritise human connection enough. But if you just did that every now and then, the impact on your happiness levels are profound and as a result, that has a wash-on effect on your business too.

Cec Busby ([18:37](#)):

I like that idea. Joy lists rather than to-do lists. <laugh> Sounds like a much better way to approach your day. <laugh>.

Shivani Gopal ([18:47](#)):

We talked about to-do lists. We released some 'new year, same me', which I'm really proud of. It's not 'new year new me', it's new year, and you are the same you, and you've gotta adapt and evolve this same you to elevate this new year. And so we did some goal-setting lesson plans in the app. And one of the things that we're talking about was to-do lists. They have no meaning attached to it Cec, you know, it's just a never ending list. And then eventually you get overwhelmed with something and that list means nothing to you. It's just this endless dread list or endless list that tells you how much you've been procrastinating or how you haven't used your time properly. You gotta add a bit of purpose behind it and remind yourself why, because when you get really busy, you think that you know why when you're writing the to-do list, but two weeks later it's just another line item on your to-do list. And creating a joy list is really taking into account the fact that we are human and what drives us as human beings. And so you'll be happier, but you'll end up being more successful too.

Cec Busby ([19:58](#)):

What about accountability groups? Are you a fan?

Shivani Gopal ([20:03](#)):

I'm a fan of all things accountability. Absolutely. Accountability is so important, because sometimes we aren't strong enough alone to be able to push through. Other times it's just that we need a little reminder - Hey Shivani, this thing was really important to you, it's coming up, you've gotta reprioritise. Having that extra support really does go a long way.

Cec Busby ([20:32](#)):

All right. We'll be back with more from Shivani after this short break.

([20:38](#)):

Welcome back, Shivani. It's been great chatting with you about our networking and mentoring and all the pros and cons of the process, predominantly pros, I would say. But are there any cons? Can you, like, could you accidentally get matched with the wrong kind of mentor and it ends up being worse for you than what you began?

Shivani Gopal ([21:04](#)):

Oh, sure. I think with any kind of human element, there's always gonna be a situation where you've been matched with someone that you think, oh wow, this person really just didn't get me. And that'll happen in any service. Whether you are looking for a doctor or a psychologist, a personal trainer, you're gonna find some incredible ones. And then you're gonna find some where you think, this person's just not for me. And that'll happen. We spend a lot of time on the vetting to make sure that the mentors that we bring on have the right level of expertise and specialisation and people leadership experience, depending on what that mentor is offering. But you may, you know, we've got mentor matching

technology and you'll get matched, or you can ignore that and just go and scroll through and find your mentor for the time and place that you are in right now, and what you need to problem solve.

(21:59):

And you may come across someone and you go, Hmm, really didn't like that advice, and if that's the case, fine, move on, find another mentor. There are plenty of others in the ecosystem that you can connect with. But I've certainly had that experience myself Cec, where I have spoken to someone and I had to take a step back and go, you know what? I don't think that that advice was bad advice, but I just don't think that advice serves me. And that's the importance of self-awareness. That's why we've built our platform in a way where it's not just a mentor matching platform, which could have been a business in itself, to be honest. But it's mentor matching with daily bite-sized learning that is personalised to what it is that you need around personal, professional or financial learning.

(22:46):

UIn fact, we're the only global platform that does both together. And the reason we did that is because I'm a big believer in you gotta self-educate before you delegate. It's so important that you are in the driver's seat of your own life. And the only way that you can do that is to consume the knowledge so that you have the power that you need. And so when you invest in things like self-awareness, and there's lots of self-awareness tools that we have in the app, there are personal surveys that you can answer questions to learn more about yourself. There are great, insightful videos around how to find out what your sense of meaning is in life, what your sense of purpose is in life, by distilling some of your childhood experiences into now.

(23:27):

But those things are so important because they serve you really well. So when you do come across advice where you think, yeah, that didn't work for me, you have the mental clarity to be able to spot that and then to be able to dust that off and to be able to move on. Because when I certainly got that advice, I thought, not for me. And then I also thought, you know what, it could have applied to me, but maybe the Shivani of five years ago, but this Shivani is a different woman and she wants for different things. So then I got advice from someone else. And it's also why it's so important that you have a Rolodex, a suite of mentors that you speak to, and don't just pair yourself up with one and then just keep going back to the one. To be honest Cec, I actually do see that in the app data where someone will find a mentor and they end up going back to them five or six times. And certainly you can do that. There's nothing stopping you from doing that in the app, but I don't advise that. I would say, have a couple of sessions with one mentor and then move on to someone else, get a diversity of opinions, because then you are actually broadening your worldview and your scope of strategic thinking.

Cec Busby (24:35):

And I guess as well, it's about not just matching yourself to someone who can help you build your strengths, but someone that can also help you explore your weaknesses so that they become your strengths as well.

Shivani Gopal (24:48):

Yeah, indeed. You've gotta address your blind side just as much as you address your strengths. And that's not to say that you need to work on your weaknesses, but you need to know what they are so that you can work around them. So as a solopreneur, that's where you might delegate. If you've got the budget for it, that's where you might go, well, I'm going to automate certain things, I'm gonna delegate certain things, or I might offshore certain things or hire someone. But I'm not gonna spend time there

cause it doesn't give me joy, it's not a strength, and I'm not in flow. But I'm gonna spend my other times in these areas because it has the right impact. Again, I would say to business owners, make sure you are spending your time where you do have that level of strength, but also make sure it's serving where the business is strategically requiring you to be.

(25:42):

Sometimes, as the founder, you need to be not just the founder or chief executive officer, if you do call yourself that, but you also need to be chief sales officer as well. And sometimes that doesn't give you joy and sometimes that doesn't work around your strength. But you've also got to be really mindful of where the business really needs you right now, and just take check of yourself, make sure you're not hiding behind a desk as well, which is another reason why speaking to someone and calling your own bluff is really important.

Cec Busby (26:15):

So obviously, Elladex is a fantastic resource for women in business, but a lot of our listeners are men as well. So what's any kind of advice for them in terms of how they can find out about more support resources, some networking tips for them?

Shivani Gopal (26:35):

Yeah, absolutely. So, yes, the beneficiaries of Elladex are women, so they can come on board as members. Women and men can both come on board as mentors provided you meet our vetting requirements. But for any male owner listeners there that are out there thinking, well, I'd like to be a member, and can't quite get that mentoring as part of Elladex, what do I do? Look, it is a little bit harder, which is why I've developed this ecosystem in the way that I have. But you can still go out and access networks, and you would do that by the good old LinkedIn and you would reach out to people.

(27:18):

The thing that I want to prepare you for though, and this is why again, I set up an ecosystem where everyone's brought into mentoring and it's really easy to connect, is that sometimes you're not gonna get a response at all. And sometimes you're not gonna get the response that you want. And it's not because people don't wanna mentor you or don't wanna give you the time, it's just because they're so busy in their own lives that it's really hard. So what you need to do is go out there and join different business groups, for example, join different communities and make sure that you are getting outside of yourself to check again, your own blind spot spots and make sure that you are executing the right kind of strategy or meeting the right kind of clients and moving at the right pace for your business. So to do that.

(28:06):

The other hot tip that I would give you when you are networking, and we have a training on this in the app, often people won't go to networking events because it is a little bit daunting and you don't really know if you're really gonna meet someone or if you're sort of awkwardly trying to interrupt someone. So, my advice when you go to these in-person networking events is always look for groups where there are odd numbers. So if you've got a group of three, chances are one person isn't actively involved in the conversation; it's easier to jump into that group. If you are going and trying to break into a group of two, for example, it is almost impossible. And you are doing that awkward dance where you're just standing there waiting to be let in <laugh>.

(28:50):

And I know, I've been there, it's awfully awkward. I've played with my rings and then my phone and then my drink, and then sort of looked the other way and walked off. But to the people that are in the twosomes and the foursomes of the group, the advice I have for you is, don't close off your body language. Don't stand in a circle. Always stand in a horseshoe environment so that you as well, because remember you are also there for networking. You're speaking to one person, that's great, but you need to be speaking to more. Keeping your body language open allows other people to come and join your circle as well. So do that. Or if you are the wanderer and you don't wanna be like me, playing with your rings, playing with your hair, playing with your phone, and trying to figure out, oh my God, are they ever gonna make eye contact and let me in - <laugh> go for an odd group, and the person out will generally let you in or make eye contact and have a chat.

(29:42):

When you are chatting, if you are stumped about what you could chat about, follow the FORD technique. It's a good one because it'll allow for deep conversation and not just shallow conversations that don't get you anywhere. What you wanna do is you wanna build connection. From that connection, you get a business card or a LinkedIn scan, and they will remember you and therefore they will respond to your message and whatever it is that you want. You networking for the sake of just talking about, Hey, how was that session? Or, God, it was so hard to get here, wasn't the traffic insane? Look, you spoke to someone, but did you get the outcome that you wanted? Was it a memorable conversation? Are they gonna remember you? No.

(30:19):

So the FORD technique allows you to have deep conversations. So Ford's obviously spelled F O R D, and it's an acronym. So you can speak to them about their family. So, tell me about yourself, who all is at home for you? You can talk about occupation, what is it that you do? Oh, that's really interesting, why did you get into that? Have you always wanted to get into that, is there a team around you? You know, that sort of thing. R stands for recreation. So what do you do when you're not working? And D stands for dreams. If it could be anything, what would you be doing? And that gives you a really lovely template to use, a little mind map to use where you can have deep connections, beautiful conversations, drill down and be remembered, and as a result, actually get the networking result that you were after.

Cec Busby (31:07):

That's good advice. Should you bring a wing man with you to help you <laugh> ease your way in

Shivani Gopal (31:15):

<laugh>. I think we've all been guilty of bringing a wing man or a wing woman along to networking. And you certainly can. My advice is that you both then split up when it comes to networking, otherwise, the two of you will be -

Cec Busby (31:29):

You become a two.

Shivani Gopal (31:31):

You become that twosome and sometimes you're doing it to save yourself from the awkwardness of having to roam around. So remember that if you wanna get anywhere in life, and of course all of your listeners know this cuz they had to do this in order to move into business, you gotta make yourself uncomfortable, right? Success comes from being uncomfortable. Growth comes from being

uncomfortable. So take your wing man or your wing woman ... networking comes up, split up and know that that way if you both run into a dire situation where no one is opening up for you, then you can come back together. But give it a shot first and make sure you split up. Otherwise, you'll both be hanging onto each other for dear life all night and not really getting anywhere from a networking perspective.

Cec Busby ([32:12](#)):

So, you just spoke about being uncomfortable, but is it also equally as important to kind of find your tribe so that you've got these people around you that also share your same dreams and hopes?

Shivani Gopal ([32:31](#)):

Oh, absolutely. It is so important. You've got to have people who understand you. You've gotta be feeling that you are in a place of equals. You know, you are the average of the people that you spend the most time with. So go to a community where you are equally surrounded by ambitious people, by business people, by people who have the same kind of problems that you do. Because I know, as a business owner, that when I speak to my friends sometimes about some of my problems, they can't relate in any way, shape, or form. So sometimes it's nice to just get it off my chest, but sometimes it's nice to have someone genuinely understand it because they've been there too. And then it allows you to have the kind of laugh that just absolves some of that stress of the situation, then you sort of problem solve together.

([33:17](#)):

So it's incredibly important, you must do that. But also find people that you aspire to. So don't just find your immediate tribe. Find your tribe that push you to be just a little bit better. So again, that will make you a little bit uncomfortable, but it will make you strive for bigger and better things. Similarly, how do you find your tribe? You've actually gotta make yourself uncomfortable. You've gotta get out of your house, out of your home office or your workplace office, wherever you do your business or the plant that you operate out of. And you've gotta go find that tribe or you've gotta go join one or you've gotta come and join a community like Elladex. And that takes an effort, a decision, and a change of course of what you're doing. And that action itself sometimes will make you uncomfortable, but it is so necessary for the growth. And boom, you know, you are now in a community where you've got your tribe and you are able to grow as a result.

Cec Busby ([34:13](#)):

And what about embedding yourself in your local community? Is that something that's also important if you're a business owner?

Shivani Gopal ([34:20](#)):

It is, but it's horses for courses, Cec. I think embedding yourself in your local community is a wonderful thing to do as a human in any case. And I often feel really good about it when I do do community events and I give back to my community and I connect with my community. My husband runs his own business as well, and he sponsored a local community. And when we were walking with our son up and down our local cafe strip, we live in the inner west, just seeing his logo on the floor, there was just this beautiful sort of homecoming sort of moment as well, and it was great and it served his business, right?

([34:59](#)):

But you've just gotta make sure that if you're spending money towards it, cash flow is king and queen. You've really gotta make sure that you are spending money supporting something that is of the exact

demographic and audience that is going to serve you, and that's gonna have an ability to convert. So it's a great thing to do. Just make sure you ask yourself, is it going to yield the customers that I need? Or are you not looking for customers? Are you just looking for brand exposure? Then it'll certainly do that too, but just make sure that your objectives are lined up and make sure that it delivers, until you're in a position in a business to simply give back and do good. And if that's the position that you're in, then absolutely go forward and do as much of that as you can.

Cec Busby ([35:46](#)):

And does the same go for when you are looking for a networking group or a mentor, you really need to be very clear about what it is that you wanna get out of this relationship?

Shivani Gopal ([35:56](#)):

Oh, absolutely. You've gotta be the driver of your own success, and you've gotta think about that in everything that you do, in every meeting that you go to as well. You know, don't just roll into a meeting for the sake of the meeting. What is the agenda of the meeting? What are the objectives? How quickly can you meet those objectives so that you can move on to other things? Unless you do wanna just stay and connect on a human level, which is a different objective, and you're fulfilling that, and that's great. And the same goes for mentoring. What is it that you wanna get out of this session? Every time I've done a mentoring session or an executive coaching session, I've always sent my own agenda in advance. And I remember my coaches going 'Shivani, you're the dream client', and I couldn't understand why, because surely everyone would be sending agendas and pre-creating and not just turning up as a passenger.

([36:48](#)):

And it's too easy to be a passenger because we are so overwhelmed with a million other things. Our brains are overloaded, technology is overloading us, right? So it's too easy to turn up to meetings and mentoring sessions being the passenger. Create frameworks to tap yourself out of that mentality and that comfort zone. Be in the driver's seat, have an agenda, know what you wanna get out of it. Tell your mentor in advance and find that kind of mentor. If you've got a marketing challenge, go and find someone who is the CMO or head of marketing or a marketing manager so that you can ask questions around it. If you've got a strategy problem, go and find one of the many consultants on our platform and go talk strategy. But then have your questions laid out, have your problems laid out, and know what you wanna get out of it. Because then it will actually be really fruitful rather than, 'oh let's just have a chat and get to know you'.

([37:44](#)):

But also know that that mentor wants that from you as well. They want you to be successful. They want you to get as much as they can out of it. You will not believe the amount of mentors who've come back on our feedback section of the app and gone, 'Hey, just did a mentoring session and really hope I helped. I really hope I added value.' It's really interesting for mentees to know that, because the mentors there really wanna support you. They want you walking outta that meeting going, 'oh my God, that was an incredible session. I got so much out of that, that was a game changer'. So they're there wanting to deliver that outcome. All you've gotta do is ask the right questions.

Cec Busby ([38:21](#)):

Does that also come back to that imposter syndrome side of things where we all kind of feel like maybe we're just not matching up to the expectations?

Shivani Gopal ([38:33](#)):

Absolutely. And the thing you've gotta know is that we all suffer from imposter syndrome and lack of confidence and a sense of self-doubt. That will happen no matter what role you are in, no matter how senior, no matter how accomplished you are. Unless you're a psychopath and unless you're a narcissist. And in that case, run.

Cec Busby ([38:55](#)):

We all know some of them <laugh>

Shivani Gopal ([38:57](#)):

Right? And if you sniff that out in someone, run for the hills, do not interact with that person, it's never gonna serve you. But otherwise, everyone, everyone suffers from it. I remember mentoring a chief executive actually, and he was doing a coaching session, sorry, no, a presentation. And when he got off stage, he did a cracker of a job as well, but when he got off stage, he sent me a text message and said, 'was that okay? Do you think they got it? Do you think the message resonated?' And I had this lovely sort of chuckle inside going, gee, it happens to all of us, doesn't it?

([39:40](#)):

So, you know, as a mentee, if you're going on and you're thinking, 'oh, I'm not gonna connect with that person just yet cause I'm not ready, I'm not at the business stage yet where I'm ready to talk to someone of that calibre', first off, that's probably your self-doubt and your imposter syndrome talking. Get out of your own way and just book that meeting, write an agenda, and then move into it, right? You are already a business owner. You've already learned how to jump off the cliff and build your parachute on the way down anyway. So this is just another version of that. And just do it.

([40:11](#)):

The second thing is if you are asking yourself that, because we have had that feedback from time to time, is maybe you're just asking someone too senior and you don't need the CMO, you've got a real tactical marketing question. So go to a marketing manager who's on the app and talk to them instead. You know, don't go to the CMO of a massive organisation because you're gonna get too high-level strategy instead. But either way, if it's your imposter syndrome talking, get out of your own way and just move, because your mentor's also feeling that imposter syndrome. It's not just you, not that anyone would ever admit it, but it's there.

Cec Busby ([40:51](#)):

<laugh>. So, just one final question, Shivani. If I'm one of our soloists and I've not yet taken the leap into either getting out and networking with my community or finding myself a mentor to help me cuz I'm feeling hesitant, what first step should I take?

Shivani Gopal ([41:15](#)):

Find your tribe, find out who it is that you want to connect with. So, if you are a solopreneur and you want to go out and get a mentor and you are a woman or identify as a woman, the easiest thing you can do is just download the Elladex app and you'll have that mentoring marketplace and you'll have all of that learning and that network there for you and it's all done and built for you. So your life is a little bit easier. If you are a male solopreneur and you're looking for a network, then just do a little bit of research around what kind of network you're looking for, what kind of mentor you're looking for, and it's a little bit more manual. You will need to sort of trawl through LinkedIn and reach out to people and

so forth. But definitely do it. Definitely put the effort in and do that for yourself because for every couple of messages you send out, you will get a message back from someone who does say, 'yep, very happy to help and very happy to have a chat'.

(42:25):

My advice, however, to you would be, don't just reach out to someone and go, 'Hey, it's Shivani. This is what I do. Love your background and would love to catch up for a coffee sometime if you're free, or a Zoom if you're free.' Don't do that because I cannot tell you the amount of messages I get like that on my LinkedIn. And the first question that goes through my mind is, why? Why do you wanna catch up with me for a coffee? What do you wanna get out of it? If I don't know that, then I don't have the time to just have coffee with 20 people a week, right? Or a 30-minute Zoom catchup. And I love how people simplify 'just a 30-minute Zoom catchup', like, they all add up. I need to run my business as well, and I also need to have a little bit of work-life balance, and the person on the receiving end is also gonna feel that way. So don't send that message. Send a message that is really relevant and really appeals to them.

(43:25):

So when I get messages like, 'Hey, Shivani, I've been following you for a while and I really love the way that you've built your business. And to be honest, I actually want to build a business as well, and it's in this space and I've come across these two challenges and I think that you might have come across it yourself or maybe are even experiencing it now. And I'd love your advice on how you might solve it. If you've got 15 minutes, 30 minutes spare and you are up for open to a conversation (I always use the words 'open to', because very few people would say, no, I'm closed to that, or I'm not open to that) and if you're open to a conversation, then I'd really love to pick your brains on this. Here's my details.' And then I go, oh, this person's got a problem. I can help solve that problem. Yeah, sure, I can add value in 20 minutes or 30 minutes. I'll give you that time, but I'm not just gonna have aimless coffees with people.

Cec Busby (44:19):

Yeah, no, the specifics are so important. And you gave a really great outline there of how people can approach that initial connection.

Shivani Gopal (44:30):

Yeah. I hope that helps.

Cec Busby (44:34):

Thank you so much for your time this morning, Shivani. It's been absolute pleasure chatting with you. I hope we can talk again very soon. Thank you.

Shivani Gopal (44:44):

I hope we can too. Thanks so much Cec.

Cec Busby (44:47):

Bye.