Tech & Community Building with Kelly Baynes

00:00:01
Speaker 1: Tech Reimagined, redefining the relationship between people and technology. Brought to you by Endava, this is Tech Reimagined.

00:00:12
Bradley Howard: Hello, and welcome back to Tech Reimagined. I'm Bradley Howard, and I'm glad to welcome you to the latest episode of our show. We're now full steam into season three, in which we explore how technology is influencing the fabric of our society, how we live, the way we work, and how we do business. Please follow us on your favorite podcast platform to learn more from our talented guests. Today's guest is Kelly Baynes. She's the founder of Lemon Quarters and the Nurture Network Community. A very dedicated and hardworking entrepreneur, with a knack for refreshingly creative projects that help small leaders grow their audience and businesses. Hello Kelly, and welcome to the show. How are you today?

00:00:49
Kelly Baynes: Hi Bradley. Thank you, delighted to be here.

00:00:51
Bradley Howard: Can you give us a little bit of background into Lemon Quarters and also Nurture Network?

00:00:56
Kelly Baynes: Yeah, of course. So, Lemon Quarters is a content marketing agency. We work mainly with B2B businesses, helping them build really audience led content campaigns. And Nurture Network is a sister brand to Lemon Quarters, and Nurture Network is an online community, and we help women of all backgrounds, so across all regions and job levels, really come together to learn from each other, meet each other, network, share each other, really helping create a sense of community, and also building a sense of how we help each other really get a seat at that decision-making table.

00:01:49
Bradley Howard: Welcome to the show again. So the subject of today's episode is how to build a community with the help of people, of course, and also technology. So, can we go a tiny step back, what was the trigger for setting up the Nurture Network?

00:02:03
Kelly Baynes: So, as I touched on at the beginning, the day job is Lemon Quarters, and as we battled through COVID, through the autumn of 2021, we were having lots of conversations with, in particular, female founders and female business leaders about their working lives and how they were struggling to find opportunities to interact with peers, and sharing new experiences, meeting new people... So, from that and other changes in the world, we were inspired, if you like, to set up Nurture Network back in August '21. It's an online community, and really what we wanted to do is bring women together to share their experiences and learn from each other. Our participants or our members will meet through online and offline roundtables... We keep them quite closed, they're about eight women or so. It's all off-the-record, in real free flowing conversation.

We also do supporting content and resources with the aim of really inspiring and entertaining. We have a podcast that we're running, we interview members on their career

journey. So we've got about now 700 women in the network. We've been really amazed at how quickly it's grown and how much it's really resonated and touched with our members. We're so actually happy and inspired by these first steps, so we're moving into that second stage of, how do we build Nurture Networks? So we're working with some fab companies to partner around supporting employer brands and highlighting their support for more diversity and representation. I think, particularly for small businesses and entrepreneurs, it's a lonely place, so having that network and tribe where you can meet other people, meet like- minded people, is really important.

00:04:20
Bradley Howard: Is there a criteria for joining the network?

00:04:22
Kelly Baynes: No. No criteria and that was really important to us, because there are a lot of communities, a lot of membership organizations, where there are I suppose barriers to entry, and for us, it was really important that we were able to bring together people at different career levels, in different regions... So there would be no cost barrier to entry, so that you are meeting people that maybe you might not meet around in a traditional networking group... So that you're getting a more organic sharing of ideas and sharing of experiences.

00:05:00
Bradley Howard: So I know you've got a full- time job looking after Lemon Quarters as well, but is there any kind of monetization to Nurture Network?

00:05:06
Kelly Baynes: There will be, and that's the next phase. We are working with a lot of like- minded businesses who are wanting to see and promote the success of women across their organizations and also their industries. So that's working with organizations to highlight some of the great women that they have working for them, building up a talent pipeline, building up a, I suppose a voice around helping women succeed in both in industry and entrepreneurship.

00:05:41
Bradley Howard: Before we go into more detail, if somebody is itching at the feet already, that they really want to join the network, where can they go to find out more information?

00:05:47
Kelly Baynes: You can head over to our page on LinkedIn, which is at Nurture Network or find us on our website, lemonquarters. com/ nurture network.

00:05:56
Bradley Howard: Excellent. Right. So, into some more questions around the network, what advice would you share for people that want to create their own community for like- minded people?

00:06:06

Kelly Baynes: Just do it. It's been so uplifting and inspiring for us to see the conversations, the laughter, the support... When our members meet at roundtables, as we talked on, we run it as sort of a side community to Lemon Quarters, so we started off small... Essentially, it was a pilot first. We had eight women around the table, we then realized there was an appetite and an interest, so now we've expanded, and we're rolling

out more improvements to the members' journey, making it easy for our members and others to see each other. So, I think really just do it. It starts small, if that's the barrier, and see how it grows.

00:06:53
Bradley Howard: What technology do you use to try and keep everyone in touch? I was talking to someone else about this very recently, and I mentioned, "Do you have a WhatsApp group?" And they went, " Well, not really," because WhatsApp isn't as popular in certain countries as it is in the UK, for example. So how do you find a balance between all the different geos that you're in?

00:07:12
Kelly Baynes: So that is the question to unlock for this year. At the moment, it is a relatively manual process that we do. So we use LinkedIn, from a community build, and then we also have emails... We run sort of face- to- face events, so that our members can meet each other and then connect to each other offline. But my ideal is building a tech stack or a platform that helps that a little bit more seamlessly. And WhatsApp, I think is a fantastic tool, but it does have its limitations in terms of geographical acceptance, it's a very European centric tool. I know it's not used as much in the States, I think they have the other tools that they use there. So, yeah, it's certainly a challenge. So if there's anybody who's listening to the podcast who would like to share their words of wisdom, please do get in touch.

00:08:10
Bradley Howard: And how'd you overcome some of the obstacles in tying the network together?

00:08:16
Kelly Baynes: Well, I think, like we said, it is very much a work in progress, so sometimes it feels a little bit like that game of Whack- a- mole, where you hit one mole down, and then another one pops up, and then another one pops up... I think really the biggest obstacle was very much the beginning, and that was mindset, that was really something of, I think it's very common when it comes to starting something new, it's the sense of, well, who are we to be doing this? What can we add value to? Why are we the ones to put our heads up above the parapet?
 And there is and there was some pretty grim stats around looking at women in senior roles and women founders... I think what drove us was that certainty of, even if we're contributing even just a little grain of sand to bringing women together, to look for that seat at the top table, we're on the right road to helping... I think I described Nurture Network as a bit of a labor of love, or almost a passion project, so that desire and motivation to build something that our members are deserving of, is a really great driving force. I'll probably reveal myself to be a bit of a masochist here, but almost the obstacles and the things that make it interesting, I think it'd be pretty boring if it was easy. But actually, in all honesty, it probably wouldn't be very good if it was easy. So, the obstacles are the bits that make, I think, make you make better decisions.

00:09:47

Bradley Howard: On the subjects of lack of women in some of the most senior roles within companies, we've had several podcasts in the past with female leaders... It was super interesting. I've got three daughters, so it's something that I'm super passionate about as well. I looked online and saw there's only eight female chief execs in the Footsie 100, only 15 female CFOs or finance directors... So that's obviously 8% and 15%. And that percentage is relevant, because in the US it's pretty much exactly the same. There's only 43 female chief execs in the S&P 500 and 78 CFOs. In fact, the percentages were so similar, I just want to say if anyone who's listening, I've got those figures from The Guardian, which is the UK newspaper and also Forbes. So a question for you, Kelly, is what do you think as society, what should we be doing to try and help with that gender imbalance?

00:10:50

Kelly Baynes: Yeah, I think aligned to those frankly pretty terrible numbers, there are some really positive and interesting studies that speak to the success of companies that have women in senior decision- making roles. So, Credit Swiss did some analysis, a little while ago, so 2016, that looked at companies that have women in senior decision- making roles, and they continue to generate higher returns on equity, and they also run more conservative balance sheets... So, that's also been backed up by a study that a Finnish bank, Nordea, did. They looked at 11,000 companies, and found out that companies that have a female CEO or head of board of directors have 25% annualized return over eight years, compared to just 11% for the broader index of firms. And they also looked at some of the suggestions as to why that might be... And I think their findings were having a diverse management team really brings a fresher perspective, and maybe women executives have access to a different pipeline of qualified employees...
 And also, I think to note, because of those pretty grim numbers at the start, the women that rise to senior, they've had a harder path to get there... So they're going to be among the most talented to get there. I think for us, when we set up Nurture Network, we've touched on it already, but it was really important for us to build a space that was open to all women, so that we were able to reach, not just those women who may have had access to training, mentoring, ally sponsors, but also those who were at the beginning of the career or in the middle of the career, who, for whatever reason, were not able to access that level of support. Men and women network differently... There's been a lot of studies that look at men benefit the most from having broader networks, but the most successful women will have a broad network and then a small inner network, to build those close connections, and meeting like- minded people who might have struggled with similar growths.
 I think, broadly across society, we've got a skills gap, so roles are getting harder and harder to fill. There is a lack of diversity and inclusivity, not just within corporates, but also within entrepreneurship as well. I think the most recent stat is something like 70% of business owners are women. But female founders only receive around 3% of VC funding. I think actually in 2022 it was 2. 7%, so even worse. But there are things that, us as a society, we can help with addressing. So things like helping with childcare, helping with elderly parents, unconscious bias... That representation I think will collectively help (inaudible) . It won't be solved in one day, won't be solved probably in two days... But going back to the studies at the top, which I opened with, on Credit Swiss and Nordea, there's certainly advantages to having a more diverse decision- making tree, I guess, at the top table.

00:14:26

Bradley Howard: I mentioned at the start of that question that I've got three daughters, two of them are going to be leaving to university in the next couple of years. And for those listeners that know that I've got twins, yes, one took a gap year, in case you're going to write in. So, Kelly, do you have any advice for my daughters or any other women that are going to be entering the workforce soon?

00:14:49
Kelly Baynes: We ask a really similar question to the attendees, or I ask a really similar question to the attendees of our roundtables, what advice would you give someone at the start of their careers? And the answers always rotate around running your own race, and also figuring out what your personal definition of success is? Broadly, I think those sentiments are really around pacing yourself. Women entering the workforce at the moment won't retire until 2070. So let's just imagine what's going to be different... What the world of work is going to look like, in the best part of, what? 50 years time?
If we look at the people who are retiring now, they came of age in the seventies and the eighties, pre- internet, so who knows what will the world of work look like in 50 years time? I think whole careers don't exist now. Switchboard operators, word processes, typists, they're gone. What will be the jobs of today that don't exist in 50 years time? Inevitably, the world of work is going to change in ways that we can't imagine. So I think we need to be prepared, and also to prepare our young people, and also schools and career advisors for really non- linear careers... It's going to be an ever more complex and changing world. I think that the era of the career, or the one career, is long over. So it's about preparing for a marathon.

00:16:18
Bradley Howard: Do you do a lot of running because you use a lot of running metaphors?

00:16:19
Kelly Baynes: I don't. I realized that as I was saying it, I like a marathon, but I really should take it up, it's not something I actually do.

00:16:30
Bradley Howard: Back to networking... Are there any communities that you see that are out there or maybe you are part of, that you aspire Nurture Network becoming a bit like that?

00:16:41
Kelly Baynes: I think I mentioned, I'm actually in Madrid, so there's a women's network group here that I'm involved in, it's called International Women Building Businesses, and it's a really lovely community of overseas or I guess expat women doing some fantastic things, in a whole host of industry... So definitely a shout- out to all the work that they've been doing here.

00:17:08
Bradley Howard: Excellent. Well, that was a really great episode, Kelly. If anyone would like to get in contact with you, what's the best way, including Nurture Network or Lemon Quarters?

00:17:19
Kelly Baynes: So, head on over to our website, which is lemonquarters. com and all our details are there.

00:17:26

Bradley Howard: Wonderful. Thank you very much, and thanks for joining us today.

00:17:29
Kelly Baynes: Thank you.

00:17:30
Bradley Howard: This has been Bradley Howard, until next week, please don't forget to share this podcast and subscribe.