

w-power\_podcast\_episode3\_v1

Saavutettavuusteksti

\*Intro jingle\*

Matthew:

Hello, and welcome to the W-power podcast series. I'm Matthew Comber, and I'll be your host. The W-power project works with women entrepreneurs in sparsely populated areas across Northern Europe and Arctic communities, encouraging them to set up and develop and grow their own business. The project is funded through the Northern periphery and Arctic program of the European development fund. One of the aims of the W-power project has been to create gender sensitive business coaching models to focus on the needs of self-employed women in rural areas. The W-power project is run by a number of partner organizations and all piloted a version of the gender sensitive business coaching model, which has been developed by the W-power project. These pilots took place in various locations around Northern Europe. In this episode, we will focus on the pilot, carried out in the Shetland islands, called the realized coaching program. Joining me today, we have Helena Deane project leader working at Westbic in Ireland who has been instrumental in developing a model for gender sensitive business coaching. We also have Elisabeth Johnson, project leader working at Pure Energy Center, Shetland in Scotland. Elisabeth has been working hard for a number of years to help female entrepreneurs in her region. We are also joined by Emma Miller, an entrepreneur from Shetland who runs a company called Realta events management and Celia Blyde, also from Shetland who runs a tourism training business called Blyde Welcome. Both of these female entrepreneurs took part in the realized coaching program.

\*Jingle\*

Matthew:

All right, then Elizabeth, welcome to the podcast. Would you like to introduce yourself please and tell us a bit of how you've been involved in the realise coaching program.

Elisabeth:

My name is Elisabeth Johnson and I work for the Pure Energy Center. We became involved in the W-power project through a contest we had with the lead partners in Karelia. And the reason for Pure getting involved in this project is that, uh, there's been a severe lack of training or coaching or support specifically for females.

Matthew:

Celia, if I could move on to you now, would you mind introducing yourself please? And telling us a bit about you.

Celia:

Um, thank you, Matthew. So I'm Celia Smith and, um, I'm the founder of Blyde Welcome, Blyde is a Shetland dialect word for glad. And basically, what we do is we offer vocational qualifications to people working in the hospitality and retail industries. So, it's like the old, um, on the job training alongside that. I also do bespoke training and customer service and then the mandatory, uh, food hygiene training and alcohol licensing.

Matthew:

I see you sound busy. Thank you very much.

Celia:

Keeps me busy.

Matthew:

Yeah. Excellent. Emma, would you like to introduce yourself now?

Emma:

Yeah. Hi, I'm Emma Miller. I'm the owner of a business called Realta events management. I set that up in November, 2017 when I was made redundant from my previous job, which had been project management, um, for the, uh, heritage organization. Um, I'd had quite a lot of experience in that kind of work and it was just something I genuinely enjoyed doing.

Matthew:

Would Helena you like to introduce yourself please and tell us a little bit about the, uh, the organization that you work for and your involvement in the W-power project.

Helena:

I'm Helena Deane, I'm with Westbic, which is a business innovation center based in the west of Ireland, and we work with startups and SMEs and are, um, obviously particularly interested in, um, supporting entrepreneurship in all its forms, including female entrepreneurship. And we are, um, a partner in the W-power project. I have worked with a lot of, um, entrepreneurs, but also other types of stakeholders in promoting female entrepreneurship.

Matthew:

Well, it sounds like all of you have a very good handle on the situation for entrepreneurs in your area and what it's like setting up a business. Would you mind, um, telling me how you feel about how difficult it is for a woman to start a business in your area and what difficulties they face in particular? Um, Celia, do you want to start?

Celia:

It was always a bit like Emma in that I just took a gamble. Um, I left a 20-year teaching post to set up Blyde Welcome. Just had this gut feeling that, um, there was a demand I did have the background. So, I think that that certainly helped and people did know me in the industry and I would see, I haven't, I haven't felt outnumbered, but I'm aware of other people who definitely, um, have struggled and have come up against male dominated industries. I think hospitality and retail, you will probably find more females working in the industry apart from probably in kitchens.

Matthew:

Emma, do you have anything to add on that subject?

Emma:

I think, I mean, I guess like Celia as well I was quite lucky in that I didn't find any particular barriers being a woman, but it would really depend on the type of industry that I was maybe working with. When I went to a conference, which was, um, oil and gas based. Um, and I very, very much felt like in the minority, it was only just starting the business. Um, I didn't quite feel confident enough just to walk up to, to all these men and just go, hi, I'm Emma, how are you? Can I offer you my services? Um, it felt a little bit intimidating, but, uh, I'm, I'm, I guess I'm one of the kind of person that prefers small conversations and, and kind of building up and developing relationships. Yeah. I think things are changing.

Matthew:

Right. Well, that's good to hear. I would imagine that a lot of female entrepreneurs have difficulties starting their own businesses, because there's a lack of support from, from business advisory people, the funding isn't quite as, uh, as easy to achieve another question for you, please Helena if I could, um, your organization Westbic, uh, has been developing agenda, sensitive coaching program to help women entrepreneurs, I believe. Could you describe what this program was like and what tools or methods were developed as part of this scheme?

Helena:

Um, yes. So, um, research has shown as well as empirical evidence that in how business support is provided, um, in terms of access in terms of content, um, in terms of all these variables that feed into training and mentoring and, um, and so on. Um, so that's what we undertook in the project to, um, in more detail into these biases. And we did a lot of research to determine how could we improve business support.

Matthew:

Thank you very much. Okay. So, I think back to Elisabeth now, please, um, from your work supporting women entrepreneurs across Scotland can you explain why it's

so important to have a gender specific model for business coaching and your, and your opinion?

Elisabeth:

I think it's important to have gender specific coaching because female entrepreneurs have a whole set of different issues and problems to, to what's generally perceived as, as, as the problems for entrepreneurs and the, what tend to work around families and other commitments as well, which a lot of men, a lot of men do the same, but a lot of men just, um, pack their bag and go to work for the day and that's them at that office. And whereas women have so many things in around it, then also the support that was there that is great for entrepreneurs. The realise program was very different from that. The fact that they narrow down the females' needs and, and after each session, the next session's content was agreed dependent on the requirements of the females. So, it was very specific to the group and, and I think they all got on or got on so well that they formed their own group now on WhatsApp, social media, and they support one another on a daily basis. And that's exactly what we wanted to, to come to be. They feel safe in the environment, the coaching environment, they feel safe with the grouping. They can just feel they can discuss anything at all.

Matthew:

I'm glad to hear that it's changing and that there's more of a collective field now, female entrepreneurs, and this scheme sounds like it's been an excellent step in that direction as well. I'd like to move on to Emma and Celia now, just talk about your experiences in the realise program.

Emma:

The sessions that we had there were fantastic. Um, as Elisabeth said, we had one two-hour session, um, every month or six weeks. Um, I mean it just, it felt like it came around quite quickly and they would always be very, very welcome. We didn't start off with set themes. Uh, but what we did do was we had a chance for everybody at the start of the meeting, just to kind of see where they were, how they were feeling, if there was anything that progressed since the last meeting. And then we would always sort of give everybody the chance to either pose a question or ask for feedback on a particular topic. One of the things I brought to the group was there was a particular contract that I thought I might have wanted to try and investigate getting a job through, but I was a bit, I suppose, reluctant because it was a sensitive local subject. Um, and I didn't know if I wanted to put myself in the position of being, um, associated with it. So yeah, things like that. They're just really kind of every time I think we all came away from the sessions where they're really kind of positive, um, happy feeling. Um, and I feel very much supported.

Matthew:

That sounds excellent. Um, Celia, do you have anything to add to that? Do you have similar memories and experiences?

Celia:

Absolutely. I mean, as Emma said, nothing was predetermined, so we turned up and from my own experience, one of the things that amazingly had never dawned on me was that I could take annual leave, um, you know, coming from a teaching background where your holidays aren't dictated and because I'd been in teaching for so long, it was just assumed they would have holidays in the summer and that Christmas, and then suddenly becoming self-employed and the business taking off, I just kind of worked solidly and then lockdown hit here tonight. So come Christmas. I was just exhausted. And suddenly, you know, people were talking about annual leave and it really was like a light bulb moment going well, yeah, I can, I can take annual leave. Nobody's going to stop me if I don't turn, turn up. And something else that Emma brought up was just taking a half an hour once a week just to prioritize what your tasks were for the week ahead. I mean, I had lists for lists all over the place, but I'd never actually sort of sat down and thought, right. Okay. What do I need to do this week? What's our agenda? Let's get to the fact that I moved it into the diary. I see every day. And as Emma said, you know, there comes a point when you get fed up of rewriting the same task over and over again because you haven't done it. So, it kind of makes you do it. So, thank you, Emma. That was, that was a big learning for me. So, some things were really simple, but other things were really, um, really helpful. Like the colleague who had difficulty with her colleague at work. I mean, that was quite an enlightening session for everybody, I think.

Matthew:

Right. And do you think that colleague who, well, this lady who had this, this, this problem with a colleague at work, and it was an enormous help for her to be able to speak to female entrepreneurs like her, and to be able to talk it through and get advice and just have that.

Celia:

I think she'd been bidding the weight of this, this issue for, by herself for quite some time, and just having the space to talk freely and openly and knowing that nothing would be said outside of the digital walls as it were.

Emma:

I mean, I think, yeah, on a personal level, it did kind of just encourage me to take a bit of time, which Celia was saying, I just don't do that. Um, you know, uh, recently I started taking weekends off and that has, uh, that's been the first time, um, since pretty much since I set up the business actually, but I think the realise sessions just kind of taught me that, well, actually the world isn't going to end if I don't work at the weekend, these things will still be there on Monday, unless there are specific deadlines to meet. Um, then I don't have to work every single day. And that's really helped me to address my kind of work-life balance, which I think makes me more productive when I am at work. But the group kind of reminded me that actually my

business is about me as much as it is about what I do because people are coming to me because they want me to do these projects for them. So, I can post things that are a little bit more personal, um, to give that sense that I'm, I'm actually a passion, not just a corporate body, who's there to do a job. So, you know, my cat is sitting on the laptop and I'm trying to work. It's perfectly okay for me to post on Instagram and say, you know, okay, we're having a cat day today. I wouldn't do it every day. Of course. Um, but just little things like that were just really helpful. And yeah, again, just give me little bits of confidence and happiness.

Matthew:

Celia, anything you'd like to add?

Celia:

One of the sessions, Fiona, the facilitator of our group kind of threw out the group. Um, what do I need to focus on in order to thrive and not survive? And that really struck home with me at the time, because I hadn't been in survival mode. I think this was sort of January, February time that she asked this question of us all. And it was just a case last year of getting through let's get through lockdown, let's help my candidates as much as possible and not really think too much about anything else.

Emma:

I would just add in there as well. That, I mean, Fiona was an absolutely excellent facilitator. Um, she, she kept the kind of conversation going, but she didn't allow things to kind of overrun. Um, she was very, very good at listening, and sort of quickly summed up what it was you'd said so that you felt understood. Um, and I thought that was really important to praise her highly enough really.

Celia:

I guess the sessions gave you the confidence to feel that you could lead them now.

Matthew:

One of the main, uh, things I'm getting from I'm listening to, um, Emma and Celia is, is the really strong support that you had from fellow female entrepreneurs. So it seems an obvious question to ask, but how useful do you think such networks are for women in rural areas? Because I suppose you wouldn't normally necessarily meet female entrepreneurs in a, in a, in a more rural area that is more spread out and not everyone's together. So, to have that program where you're all together supporting each other, learning from each other, it must have been well. And what we've, we've heard, it's obviously been very useful. Would you say that it is so?

Emma:

Yeah, no. I think for, um, particularly in, uh, because we live in such a kind of remote location, but even from each other, um, you know, some of the classes, they were the based upon UNSW twitches, you know, an island that if they were to come to

allow to work, um, to do these sessions, that would be a whole day over the, over the office or over the workplace for them to come and do it, but being able to do them remotely, it was great because it was just the two hours we could all log on, have the chat, um, and then still get on with things in the day, but the support there. And I think it was mentioned earlier on, we have a WhatsApp group, um, that continues, um, and just, you know, over the last a week or so. Um, there's been a few posts in there that some of the group members have obviously been looking for better support. Um, and everybody else in the group has totally rallied and provided that for them. And it was just a lovely thing to be part of.

Celia:

Yeah, I would just echo that. I mean, when I saw the list of, um, the eight of us at the beginning, I knew seven names, but they were just really names to me. I could visualize them, but I would never have dreamed of picking up a phone or emailing them and saying, could we have a coffee and a chat? So, having this group, um, has been absolutely invaluable.

Matthew:

Emma and Celia, you've obviously established good contacts. You're still in touch. So, your local network will continue to be active. Elisabeth, you see, um, will there be another realized coaching program starting up?

Elisabeth:

The Shetland pilot was just a pilot of the realise program since then, we've, um, agreed, another coaching session. That's going to start in second, uh, realize session in Shetland for another 16 entrepreneurs and total. And I think now that the business gateway in Shetland who were, who were, um, assisted with this realise sessions, uh, has realised only enough that this is, um, really important, um, type of coach and to be given. And I think it's going to continue for the foreseeable future and, uh, these females that are all gone to keep in contact and support one another in future, uh, long after the W-power project is finished. So, it really has an afterlife of your life and that's exactly what we hoped would happen.

Matthew:

Well, that's a very successful outcome for that group. And I'm very happy to hear that there'll be another pilot starting again soon. Uh Helena um, how do you feel that the realized program has gone and, and how would you see this type of project evolving in the future.

Helena:

This highlights that there's a real need for this type of, uh, uh, action that, that phrase a gap to be fields, um, you know, on, when we talk about gender sensitive business support, I think that, you know, the feedback in the sense obviously everybody would like to be more gender sensitive and help address that gap and help address the

needs of a female entrepreneur spectrum. But what does this mean in practice? You have adjusted and provided the concept that looks at, you know, where are we now, what can we practically do, and also establish a system where you hear things regularly. So, this is very important, you know, uh, point to be able to, uh, cultivate and fund pilots like this and actions like this and projects like this, data is hugely important.

Matthew:

This project sounded like it's been a big success. And as you say, it's work in progress, you're learning from the data and the feedback from the participants and how they've got on. The W-power project works with female entrepreneurs in all parts of Northern Europe. It sounds like a wonderful project. And I think I, I'm very impressed how all these pilots' schemes and the data that you're gathering can be used to evolve this project and to help female entrepreneurs in so many different rural locations. I really wish you the best of luck in developing this further and, and, uh, hope it continues business as successful as the realized project has been in Shetland. I think that is the end of my list of questions. So, I'd like to thank all of you very much.

Helena:

Thank you.

Elisabeth:

Thank you.

Celia:

Thank you very much.

Emma:

Thank you.

\*Outro jingle\*

Matthew:

Thank you to all our guests and thank you for tuning into the W-power podcast. If you'd like to discover more about this project and access a wide range of material, please visit the W-power website. You can find the link below.