

## **Transcript – Highland Business Women**

**Host:** Katie Masheter

**Guest Speakers:** Hannah Lloyd and Karen Simpson

**Katie Masheter: 0:16**

Hello this podcast has been brought to you by the University of Highlands Islands Careers and Employability Centre. My name is Katie Masheter, and in this episode we'll be talking to a couple of members of Highland Business Women, Hannah Lloyd and Karen Simpson. Both have their own career story, but they've come together to network, share and inspire. Founded in 1995, Highland Business Women is a networking and support organisation for business women throughout the Highlands. So let's delve in. First up, we've got Hannah Lloyd, Associate Director of GLM, Chair of Women in Property for the Highlands and Islands and Director of Highland Business Women. Welcome to the podcast Hannah. Do you want to start by telling us a little bit about yourself and your current role?

**Hannah Lloyd: 0:56**

So, I'm Hannah, I grew up in Edinburgh, as one of three girls, went to school, gap year, uni - kind of traditional path. I now live in Inverness, which I came to through work opportunities, and I work as Marketing Manager, Inverness Lead for a company called GLM who are architects and building surveyors and lead our marketing and business development efforts across Scotland.

**Katie Masheter: 1:21**

Hannah, I'll never forget the fact that I met you in a little cafe in Inverness and the first impression I got was - wow, this girl is so ambitious and she's had so many opportunities in kind of the early stage of her career. But you've made those opportunities, network being at the heart of that, and the fact that you've thrown yourself into a new community, making friends and professional contacts as you go. So could you tell us a little bit more about how you got to where you are today?

**Hannah Lloyd: 1:47**

I think it's an interesting story that can go on for a long time, so I'll try to be relatively concise. At school everyone went to uni. I didn't necessarily know exactly what I wanted to do in the long run, but applied to uni to do primary education. You'll all realise that's a long way from where I am today. I'm not in a classroom. So I decided to take a gap year before embarking on the world of uni and went with Project Trust, a brilliant organisation, to South Africa for 11 months, and I lived, taught and ran a school in a children's home, which was a great experience and a great test of teaching as a career, and made me realise that teaching wasn't really for me in the long run. I came home, moved to Aberdeen, and took up my place at uni, but knowing that it wasn't what I wanted to do and knowing that I needed to really change that. So I left, had a second gap year and then headed back to Aberdeen the following year to do a management degree. But four years later, having been inspired by some of the lecturers, graduated with a degree in management and real estate, as a joint honours. Management and real estate is an RSS accredited degree, which opened some doors for me that I didn't even know existed, and I applied to more formal graduate programmes down that

surveying route than I would care to remember. But my heart wasn't in it. And so, I didn't get them. And, in hindsight, that was the best thing, although it was really hard, rejection from jobs is always tough, and it's something that helps us grow to be the people that we are. Over summers when I was at uni I had worked in various roles in lettings in Edinburgh and I was delighted when I was offered a role with a company who do student lettings and festival accommodation in Edinburgh where they offered me a full-time position for 16 months, which was the perfect stepping stone, to build my confidence, to give me a chance to learn, to be in a small office, to have responsibilities and to work out, ultimately, where I wanted to go, and the things that led me to GLM are quite funny. I am a huge fan of social media, I think it's got so much power. If it wasn't for Facebook I wouldn't be at GLM and I wouldn't be here. GLM is a firm that I had never heard of, I didn't know they existed and a family friend shared a project that GLM we're working on on Facebook. And I made a mental note to look them back up when my contract was coming to an end at a letting agent. A few weeks later, another post on Facebook, another post from GLM, advertising a position, a vacancy as marketing associate, and I applied and much of the rest, as they say, is history. I got the job. In April 2019, after months of planning and prep, and a few sleepless nights we opened an Inverness office, and I moved from the safe knowns of the central belt to the unknown of the Highlands. I knew a handful of people and had a big audacious goal of becoming one of the most connected people in the Highlands, and the immersive experience began. My focus was people. I went to all the events. I met people for coffee or lunch. I explored the Highlands so I could have educated conversations. And I spent a lot of time outside my comfort zone. But despite COVID, here we are, still in the Highlands, loving it, and seeking all the opportunities.

**Katie Masheter: 4:52**

Hannah thank you for sharing, wow it's amazing to hear the different steps people take to get to where they are today. So you're joined by Karen Simpson who's a fellow Highland Business Women Member, also set out with the view of becoming a primary school teacher when leaving school. However, she's now a fully-fledged entrepreneur who's currently focused on growing her own business, 'My Primary Tutor'. Great to have you on the podcast Karen. Do you want to just tell us a little bit about yourself?

**Karen Simpson: 5:20**

Well I'm a primary school teacher, I qualified back in 2004. And I was teaching really right up until I had my first child back in 2012. And during that time, I wasn't obviously too sure about what I was going to do returning to work. And I began kind of doing a little bit of tutoring just for friends and family. And then when I had my second child in 2015, I pretty much decided that I couldn't see myself returning to work full time. And by that point, the tutoring had kind of grown quite a bit. And I thought "I wonder if I could make more of this". I've now got a team of 10 and I wouldn't have it any other way really. It's hard work, but I'm really enjoying this new chapter in my life.

**Katie Masheter: 6:04**

Just thinking about what you've said, going from primary school teaching to running your own business. That's a big step change, where do you go about finding the skills that you need?

**Karen Simpson: 6:13**

I did a degree in primary education. And although at the time, there was a little bit of concern from my parents point of view, was that going to limit me in the terms of the jobs I could do in the future? Was it only going to mean that I could do teaching? I didn't see it like that, as a teacher, you've got so many skills, you know, in terms of managing your time, in terms of organisation, you know, things that transfer across many different areas, so it didn't worry me or concern me that my degree might be quite restrictive. And I think you should think about that quite carefully when you're choosing a degree, to try and think you know, what kind of skills am I going to get from this degree, what could be transferable, but ultimately as well, do something you really enjoy, don't get too bogged down by that is what I would say and I really wanted to teach, and I love my job, and I basically went from finishing my degree straight into teaching, and I taught at quite a few different schools, and I made a point of teaching all different age groups. I didn't want to get stuck with one group and become too comfortable, I always made a point of I wanted to move on and I wanted to expand my skills and I wanted to keep learning. You know I did a post-grad in primary physical education, so I could teach children PE at my school and I did some work with Learning and Teaching Scotland on Scots language and I was always trying to be involved in as much as I possibly could, you know, I believe, in lifelong learning, I believe that the minute you think you know it all, or that you don't need to keep trying, then that's not a good way to be, you have to keep thinking. You know things move all the time, never did we think maybe 20 years ago, we'd be doing learning in this way and using online tools in the way that we do, and look at how things have developed there. But in terms of running my own business, my Dad was self-employed for a large part of his life, and so he's been a huge influence on me and a huge support in going forward with it. And when I started out, I didn't really see myself as running my own business. It sounds crazy but it just almost felt like a wee hobby, a little side-line, I quite enjoy doing this and I think it starts out for a lot of people like that. I think having a network like the Highland Business Women has been brilliant and I've only really been part of that for the last year. And I don't think up until that point, I had realised just how important it was to have that support network outside just my family and my friends. People that also run their own business and totally understand what it's like. You know, I think I was a little bit naive maybe in the beginning as to just how much is involved. And having other people that completely can relate to what you're going through. Even if their business is not in the same area that you are in.

**Katie Masheter: 8:40**

That network being so key, I know Hannah that for you as Director of Highland Business Women that's something you're really passionate about?

**Hannah Lloyd: 8:48**

Building myself and my knowledge is all about people for me. The reality is, every person I've met on my journey has helped me in some way. Highland Business Women transformed my experience and my opinion of the Highlands. I went along to an event and I walked into a room and I knew nobody and Victoria MacDonald, who is now also a Director of Highland Business Women alongside me, walked up to me and said, "Hi I've never met you before". And that just, you instantly felt welcome and calm, and she introduced me to some other people. I sat with them at dinner, it was a laughter

yoga session at Bogbain. So I think Highland Business Women has transformed my experience of the Highlands but also just given me a support network of women that are incredible and there is every business in that. In terms of other people who've helped me, I'm truly privileged that at GLM, we have a brilliant business coach, and I have worked with him for three years one to one.

**Katie Masheter: 9:45**

It's really interesting, one clear thematic that seems to be bubbling through is the fact that, you know putting yourself out of your comfort zone and really challenging yourself for personal development is a positive thing, and those that we've spoken to have been really successful tend to be those that are doing that most often. Hannah is there any other kind of key lessons that you've learnt that you feel you'd like to share.

**Hannah Lloyd: 10:08**

Yeah, you've summed it up in what you just said. My one key lesson that I've written in my prep notes is 'growth happens in the uncomfortable'. I think it's really easy to stick in our comfort zone. And this applies to everyone, at all levels of business, in life. It's easy to look at a CEO and think 'oh well they, they're not scared of anything'. And actually, they will go through periods of uncomfortable, that lead them to growth and have led them to the growth that's enabled them to be there. I have been more uncomfortable in the last 18 months than I have been in my whole life before because I've put myself out there. But in doing that, I have also opened up opportunities for both me at a personal level but also for GLM as a company.

**Katie Masheter: 10:51**

And Karen for you, is there a lesson or challenge that maybe sticks out in your mind?

**Karen Simpson: 10:56**

I think my biggest challenge right now and I'm not saying I've fully learnt the lesson yet but I'm getting there, is working out what my role is in my business. And do I want to be in the business, or do I want to be on the business, and sometimes those lines blur quite a lot, and I find it really difficult to keep them very distinct. I think possibly it comes from being a teacher, you know I want to be teaching, it's my passion, I love it. And ultimately, running a business, I can't be teaching the whole time. I have to pull back a bit on that and I have to look at the other areas of the business and how we grow it and how we develop it and how are the team getting on and working all these elements.

**Katie Masheter: 11:37**

And I guess that must evolve over time, because you'll have presumably started out as a small business, a sole trader or a small team, and as your business grows, you have to rethink what your role within that looks like so yeah really interesting. And one thing I've noted is you've been so

ahead of the curve Karen, with your focus on tech and delivering online. How important do you feel those skills are for a student to harness?

**Karen Simpson:** 12:03

Oh, it's huge and actually, last year I was on the HIE Pathfinder course to build the business and the whole focus from my point of view, going into the course, was I wanted to move my business online. And it's hugely important that people of the future going into business have got those tools, that they understand how to use tech and that they see the value in that for businesses, all businesses moving forward, never mind an educational business. I think it's really opened up the eyes of a lot of businesses who maybe thought they had to physically meet in person all the time in order to get anything done. And maybe that won't be the case for businesses moving forward, they will be using many more tools, which is only got to be a good thing, environmentally I think from one standpoint, never mind from a skills based point of view.

**Katie Masheter:** 12:45

In addition to becoming digitally savvy, Hannah is there anything you'd like to add that you feel students could do to better prepare for their future careers?

**Hannah Lloyd:** 12:55

So I've kind of got three things to cover. The first one is keep learning. I think when you leave uni, you can often think I never want to read another book, or I never want to write another essay or never want to write a book on something else, or write notes on having read that book, because you've done so much of it, have a break. Absolutely. But seize opportunities to gain knowledge, I have a stack of books, higher than my bed, I have more books on Audible than I ever thought possible. But find what works for you. So if you learn best by listening, then download the books on Audible, listen to them when you're driving, when you're walking, when you're sat at home, find a podcast that really resonates with you, and attend the conferences, make the most of those learning opportunities, but keep learning and if you want to delve into something specific, there are some really great people out there. They run free webinars, they give you blogs in your inbox, find the people that really talk about your topic. Secondly, always remember people. Build relationships, seek things in common, beyond business. And my third piece of advice is use LinkedIn. When I was at uni nobody really talked about LinkedIn. Nobody talked about the value that you can gain through those connections. I have oh I don't know how many connections on LinkedIn now, but people see you, people remember you. And when you then bump into that person, be it, two years, three years after they've seen what you last did professionally or they've last seen you in a professional context, if they've seen you on LinkedIn, chances are they've also seen something you've posted. So use LinkedIn, there's some great training available if you don't know how to use it. And it's not a scary place and people are not afraid to connect with you so use that opportunity and reach out. My highest recommendation is always personalise an invitation to connect. If somebody invites you to connect and you can't remember where you met them but they can tell you in their invitation message, where they met you, then they're much more likely to accept your connection. So you maybe reach out and say 'Hi Hannah, heard your podcast with UHI today. Just want to connect to

see some of what you're sharing on LinkedIn'. I'll absolutely accept you. So there you go, that's my advice.

**Katie Masheter: 15:00**

That's an offer not to be refused. Students listening, be sure to look out for Hannah on social media, she's really active. And if you feel like there's something you might want to share or if you feel you'd like to connect then certainly take her advice. Karen, anything else you'd like to touch on?

**Karen Simpson: 15:18**

It maybe comes down to personal characteristics, but I do believe that resilience is hugely important in business, you know, you are 100% going to get knocked back. Things are not always going to go the way you expect it and you have to be prepared to roll with the punches with that, especially running your own business, you can't please everyone all of the time. I mean networking again is hugely important and I did have that down, as you need to be able to connect with people. And I think, drawing on all experiences, even if you're out having drinks, you never know who you're gonna bump into and see every opportunity and seize it. And I think part of that comes from being quite creative in your thinking, seeing the bigger picture, seeing beyond just what you're doing a little bit and looking outward, thinking ahead. And I think that's important to be resilient, to keep thinking creatively and to build that network because that is your support to get you ahead in where you want to be.

**Katie Masheter: 16:15**

Gosh, this is like gold dust, thank you both so much. Any final thoughts before we close the podcast for today?

**Karen Simpson: 16:21**

So I would say to your students out there, keep up with the tech, keep up with learning, always want to be a lifelong learner and go for it. You know, don't ever think that you can't achieve what you want. And if you come out of uni and it's maybe not what you thought you wanted to do. Don't worry about it, what skills have you learned, what can you transfer and go for what you do want.

**Hannah Lloyd: 16:39**

In terms of people I think the power of building relationships, connecting human to human with a dusting of self-belief is not to be underestimated.

**Katie Masheter: 16:48**

I'd just like to say a big thanks to both for your time today, it's been great to hear your experience. And for students listening, don't forget the University of the Highlands and Islands Careers and

Employability Centre is here for you. So just give us a shout. Our graduate for life offer means that our services are available to students and graduates, so don't hesitate to get in touch if you need a bit of support with navigating your own career journey. CV reviews, interview tips, workshops, there's lots to offer, so many thanks, and we'll speak to you soon.