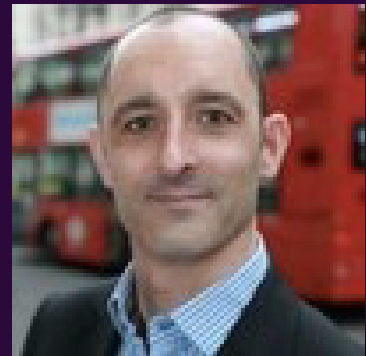


SheHer

Tech GIANTS

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I'm **Gemma Telford**, Founder of She/Her Ltd, and I specialise in human marketing for technology businesses. My work redefines and evolves traditional marketing in the IT sector through a more collaborative, flexible, human-centric approach. Cultivating partnerships that deliver mutual value by starting real conversations and delivering work which excites, inspires and connects people.

I started **Tech Giants** to celebrate some of the great people I've worked with in the channel over the last 20 years and to share their wisdom and knowledge with others. I hope you enjoy reading about them!

Gemma: Tell me about your current role and how you got into it.

Sandrijn: I think, probably a co-founder in terms of where I am, but I definitely don't have the attributes I think that most CEOs exhibit. I think that they tend to be much more operationally focused than I probably am. I think if I really distilled down what I actually do, I'm a salesperson. If I was a stick of rock, I would probably say sales on one side and channel on the other.

I remember many, many, years ago, in fact, more than a couple of decades ago, I did an interview for a sales job. The person interviewing me was quite hard. He said there are three types of salespeople. He said the worst ones sell software. The next sort of low skilled ones sell hardware, then finally, the best ones sell services. I took that as a bit of a challenge. In my last job where I had quite a large sales team I sort of jokingly said there is the right way, the wrong way, and my way. I was doing my way. Not because it was better or worse than the right way. It's different. And I have specific things that I do. A lot of that comes from being dyslexic. So, I'm well aware, as I hear from my children and my wife on a daily basis, I think differently to the average bear. So I'm looking at something and I see a different

thing. When you become aware of that, it is built into your life. So, to answer your question, in the shortest possible way, I think I've come to the conclusion; I'm in sales. And how I got here is through working in the IT industry in general for quite a few years.

Gemma: Can you give a bit of background about your career in the channel, but also how you got into the channel originally?

Sandrijn: So I basically I started off - I went to university, but it wasn't really for me. I didn't have any idea of what I was going to do. I had a really good social life and nothing on the other on the other side. It's a good lesson to learn, I think. My Dad told me when I left home to keep a work life balance. He said, if one area goes wonky, then you can probably cope with that. But make sure they both don't go wrong at the same time.

I had no idea what to do. So, I went to an agency called Office Angels. Many, many years ago. And I met with the agent called Abigail, and I did all the tests and the typing tests and all this sort of stuff and she asked me what I wanted to do. And I said, I want to have a different job, completely different in every single way, every two weeks. I wanted a two week contract and then I leave that and I want to do the next the next job. And she was like, okay, that's a bit weird, but fair enough. So, I worked at the post office for two weeks. I worked at a security company for two weeks. I worked in logistics for two weeks. I did deliveries. I drove BMWs for two weeks. I did that for about five months. And then I got a contract with Mizuno as a salesperson.

I turned up at the office and this guy said, "What I want you to do is, sell golf clubs. We give them to golfing clubs and we want those shops to sell to their customers. So, what I want you to do is ring up the managers of those shops and find out if they have managed to sell some clubs and what they're doing. We've got this cheat sheet which would explain why these are the right clubs and you know, why they're so good.

And here are some questions that a customer might ask which you can help the manager on. Hopefully at the end of the week you sell some clubs.” I remember sitting there and getting the paperwork and I spent 10 minutes reading it then I started phoning people. I have some conversations, joking and to make fun of it and, you know, engaging them. I tell them “if you have any customers you have problems with, just let me know. And I’m happy to help.” And so I did that. And then one guy about halfway through the afternoon said, “Look, you seem pretty proactive if you want to call my prospects that I’ve shown the clubs to I’m happy for you to phone them.”

Gemma: This is of course way before GDPR!

Sandrijn: Exactly! I’ve got telephone numbers, addresses, inside leg measurements, haha. I started ringing these customers by the end of the first week I’ve sold nine sets of golf clubs now and the expectation was one. By the end of the second week the manager says, ‘You are my number one performing salesperson. How do you how did you do it?’ And I was like, I have no idea. And he says, ‘Well, you’re just a natural salesperson and I want to offer you a full time job’. And I said ‘Thank you, that’s fantastic. But no thanks.’

So I go back to Abigail and I say “Hey, I’ve got great news. I don’t need any more work. Can I be introduced to the other side of the office where they do recruitment?” And I meet another lady and say ‘I want to be a salesperson.’ She says ‘Ok, we’ve got this really, really tough to get job. We’ve sent 150 people about to it.’ It was basically a financial advisor at an Estate Agents. I got the job and was sent off for three weeks training. I learned all about how to generate leads and all that stuff. Basically, I started working with other estate agents to build out my network. This went on for a year and I was working really hard. I bought my first house. I was, pretty young, still like early, early twenties.

Then I was talking to a friend and he said

I should get into IT because that’s the big win. So I went back to the agent and he put me into a mass hiring at Computer 2000, now TD Synnex and I met Cathy Low.

We did all these sort of psychometrics and all that kind of stuff and sat down and she said to me “Okay, so you’ve got a lot of experience here. You’re a proper salesperson. I had gone through the grind and it was it was hard telemarketing and engaged and face to face and the whole thing. So why do you want to take a backward step and go into IT?” I was like, because this is the place to be. She asked me what I knew about IT and I said ‘Ask me anything’ and she asked me the difference between a hub, a switch and a router. I said ‘A Hub is at the centre, a switch switches things and a router directs stuff’. She said ‘You don’t know anything do you?’ and I said ‘Not a thing.’ So, she took me on and put me in a section called Master Resellers, where I had to grow the business. I was there for almost four years.

There are two things that I would highly recommend to everybody when you’re in that world. Firstly, distribution is the best place to learn about IT and build your understanding of the market of vendors and resellers and the channel. Nothing beats it. My manager Andy Webb, who I still see occasionally now, told me everything I need to know. And the second thing is, that you make your life easier by learning systems. Almost every day in distribution, a vendor will be doing a breakfast training session or lunch session or after work session. I went to every single one of those. After those four years, I understood that naturally I got the channel. When I was selling golf clubs, I was working with a channel. When I was working in an estate agent. That was my channel. So, working with resellers was like second nature for me. I understood channel. I was certified in every technology, but focused on security. And from that point onwards, it was a rollercoaster.

I had a great mentor at my following company, Netscreen, called Colin Gray.

He filled in all my gaps and made me a really well-rounded salesperson. And then from that point, I accelerated through different jobs. I worked in international channels, then I joined Cybertrust in enterprise sales. Then I joined Proofpoint, that was my first VP role. I would have been 28, 29 and then I went over to the US to work for Reflex and I became EVP Worldwide Sales and Marketing, so I was around 31. Then they sold out and I worked for Virtual Computer and I ran sales for them globally and they were sold to Citrix. Eventually I started a company myself. So that's how I got here. But I think, you know, I am an actual salesperson and that's what I like. I like a mutualised win. I like that consultative engagement. I still talk to customers from 25 years ago and it's fun. I get the channel. I get all the facets of the channel.

Gemma: Wow, that's quite a story, thank you. What do you think is the best thing about being in the channel?

Sandriijn: Long term relationships. I'd say about 15 years ago, I basically only had one rule that I started working with. I can't suffer fools and that would make me stop working with someone. It's much easier when you run your own business. But I don't work with anyone who's disrespectful towards me or people I care about - my team, my partners - I just won't do it. If someone does that, I literally just won't work with them. If you're rude, if you're a douche, if you want to do bad business - I'm gone. I'm out of there.

Gemma: And what's your biggest frustration about working in the channel?

Sandriijn: I don't think I have any really. As long as everyone understands their part to play, it's like a well-oiled machine. I probably work with about 40 something distributors around the world. One thing that's really interesting is how operationally excellent they are. And when you see any company doing something operationally, just absolutely streamlined, it's incredible to see how it works. You might expect that all ships rise

with the tide, so sales, marketing, everything. But actually then you can see what area is struggling. That's really interesting. I love that Kaizan-type approach. There are some incredible resellers. Size is irrelevant. You know, it's operational excellence. Also, there are lots of things that a leader can do that really make a big difference. And that's amazing to see. When it doesn't work, it's awful - when you walk into a meeting with a Mexican standoff and everyone's got their guns out and they're all going. Then, we need to pause, reset and start again. But in general, I love it. I think it's amazing.

Gemma: Okay. What are you working on right now that excites you?

Sandriijn: I really am excited by AI in general and what it's delivering. I think it would make a huge difference in those places where people can't afford to do certain things. You know, the pandemic a couple of years ago. Most people have forgotten about it. But you look at the impact that AI could have had. Lonely people could have had conversations. It would be hugely impactful for education. If you think about maths for example - there are certain exams in mathematics where you are allowed a calculator and then there are certain ones where you can't use a calculator. But you can use AI to create crib sheets and revision notes and timetables. You can get it to mark your exam papers for you. I think this is a pivotal moment in history where we can all be better educated. We can do things in a more environmentally friendly way, that is really important and hugely impactful for everyone on the planet.

Gemma: What are you most proud of?

Sandriijn: My kids. Both of them. I think, you know, as a human being, it's really, really important I don't screw this up. But luckily, you know, I've got a great wife. I see them becoming really well-rounded. I think it's really the most important thing to me, you know, not only for now, but also for the planet and moving forwards. I really do genuinely care. You know, we try

and grow our food where possible. We support local where we can. We try to do our bit for the future.

Gemma: And what was your biggest mistake?

Sandriijn: I think a misspent youth, probably. I probably didn't really focus enough. I dropped out of university, and didn't really care. I've made wrong decisions from a career perspective. Although I am actually quite focused, you don't choose to start your own business if you want lots of money to begin with, particularly if you're investing your own money in that, that's not a great structure. I think probably at least one of the jobs I took was opportunistic and I got the right job. I was lucky. I've definitely hired some people that I probably shouldn't have done as well. I've got a long list!

Gemma: What's next for you?

Sandriijn: I think probably the big thing is I'll probably retire. But I don't think that I'll retire full time. Then I want to do charitable work. I really enjoy things like Young Enterprise. It's lovely. It doesn't feel like it's anything other than me gaining. I've enjoyed it, and my current companies are doing brilliantly.

Charities have been a big focus for me, so I'll probably do that full time when I'm officially retired. But that's a fair way off. I don't intend to ever stop working. I think that's the end of the road. Just the socialisation that you get from it, you know, it's interesting. I work from home constantly but I've never felt isolated or separated. In Covid I was incredibly engaged and productive during those times. It was constant from early in the morning to late night. So yeah, that's probably what's next for me.

Gemma: What's one piece of advice you would pass on or found useful?

Sandriijn: Never lose alone. The reason why is that you work as part of a unit and a team and even if you're isolated, you

are working with others. You know, if you walk into that board meeting and that big deal that happened, you're not the only one that was responsible. If you're managing a team and they are not succeeding. If you're doing it on your own, you've lost. It's idiocy. It doesn't make sense. Everybody around you has got something that they can add to your benefit. And equally if you invest in them and spend time doing stuff that might not be obviously valuable to you, that's ok. That is the point. Yeah, you're in a team. You never lose alone.

Gemma: Right. I think for me, you always demonstrate that willingness to engage with other people and support them even when there's not anything in it for you, I see that generosity of spirit.

Sandriijn: Can you imagine like the individual that you email saying "Hey, you know, I've done this, can you give me a little bit of help in and they come back and go, I'm really busy. What's in it for me?"

Gemma: Yeah, I know.

Sandriijn: You know, time might be limited. It might be, look, I'm traveling but I can give you 10, 15 minutes, will that be enough. We're all pretty busy, right? When someone loses their job or they are made redundant, or they're obviously in trouble in some way – you see them on LinkedIn or whatever. You have to be some sort of asshole if you don't take 3 minutes to say, Can I help? I remember probably 20 years ago I had a guy who worked with me who resigned. And the reason why he resigned was horrific. It was so terrible for him and his family. He was just a lovely guy. So we said, we're going to have to put you on gardening leave. For 6 months. You need 6 months. You have to go and work in the garden. And it wasn't just me. I wasn't important. I wasn't a decision maker. It wasn't a personal thing to everybody. But the organization gave him 6 months because he was in need. And in the big scheme of things, how many times do we see people that require that and no one

gives a shit, they literally turn away? It's awful and it's a terrible indictment of the industry when people do that. You know, if you if you see one of these companies making people redundant and you know, three or four people - you have to make introductions to someone you know who's hiring.

Gemma: And is there a little known fact about you that people wouldn't normally know?

Sandriijn: No. I'm pretty simple.

Gemma: Do you have a favorite film? Book? Piece of music?

Sandriijn: I'm not a music person, which is hard because my entire family is, but I don't really listen to music or things that.

For films I'd say probably Star Wars. In the census, I put myself down as a Jedi. Obviously that wasn't real and I don't have the power, the force is weak. But I would aspire to live as Jedis do.

I think in terms of books, from a business perspective, if you are up and coming and you want to go through the ranks, The One Minute Manager, is really hard to beat. You can read it in 45 minutes. Even an illiterate moron like myself, I can do it.

But what got me through traveling was reading. My number two actually is Harry Potter. You know, I think it's pretty hard to beat really.

And then my primary kind of go to is a guy called Raymond E Feist. He's written probably 30 books, maybe more, maybe less. But it was like nourishment when all things went to pot. When you're traveling on planes 13 hours a week and you don't know what time zone it is, you're living out of suitcases, hotels are doing your washing for you and you don't have a home cooked meal in three months, then you do need some stability. And Raymond Feist did that for me.

Yeah, it depends what you're into -some people like crime, some people like, you know, magical mystery. Some people like whatever. You know, I'm fairly agnostic, but I just for some reason, I think he's the only guy I've ever been to a book signing for. And he was a bit of a let down. It was pretty bad. It was funny. He did a talk about his books and then you've got all these people are paying to come and see him. And he's like, any questions? So I said, 'Who's your favorite character? Because mine's Jimmy.' And he said, 'Any unique interesting questions?' Ouch.

If you'd like to suggest a Tech Giant, find out more about the work She/Her Ltd does, or have a question or feedback then please get it touch!

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