

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: OK, right. Question number one Ovi. Tell me what your current role is, and how did you get into it, please?

Ovi: Ohh OK, so the title is: Cloud and Cyber Security Director for UK and Ireland at Ingram Micro. What does it mean? It means I have the privilege of running an amazing team of over 100 associates that support and enable our partners to offer the right solution to their end customer needs. They make things happen day in, day out.

Gemma: Very good!

Ovi: Yeah, and how did I get into it? Well, I don't know when you're going to publish this, but seven years and two days ago, I started with Ingram following a one-hour final interview with our friend Apay (*Apay Obang-Oyway, now Partner Sales Director at Microsoft, and a former Tech Giant!*). I think it was 30 questions fired at me in 30 minutes. That's probably the toughest interview I ever had! And I joined Ingram as a Sales Manager at that time. The internal sales team - I think it was six or seven associates in my team. Yeah, I must have delivered something good in the meantime, because the business kept asking me to take on board more and more responsibilities, I moved into the role of Head of Sales for Cloud and Advanced Solutions. Then I was asked to

take over as the General Manager for our Microsoft Modern Work and Biz Apps Practise. And since July 2021, I'm running the Cloud and Cyber practise.

Gemma: That's quite a trajectory, isn't it?

Ovi: I would say the right one because I'm not planning to stop here!

Gemma: Very good, excellent. Love it. OK, so give me a bit of background about your career in the channel to date Ovi, and how you got into the channel originally.

Ovi: So I got into the channel through Ingram, really. Before joining Ingram, I spent around 4 ½ years working for an ISV, tailored to the hospitality industry. It was a startup. It was basically a large hotel chain that developed a really interesting app. And I'm speaking about 2015 now - they developed a really smart app, you know, to open the door to do the online check in and they decided to roll that out and sell it to their competitors. I was employee number one for this company. And I developed a sales structure with a channel approach, trying to find resellers that were already selling into the hospitality industry and develop the business across the globe in 18 months.

Gemma: Wow. So, I used to do some work for a company called Avvio in that space. Do you know them?

Ovi: Yes, I do. And they're not quite a competitor, but we did have quite a few integrations with them.

Gemma: Oh, well, it's a small world, isn't it? OK. What do you think is the best thing about working in the channel?

Ovi: Besides the amazing channel community AKA the people, I think it's seeing the real impact that we have on the day-to-day economy - being involved in projects both in you know, the public and private sectors. I see how the outcome is delivering real things to the communities, and I personally see how we generally change the way people live,

the way people interact, the way people engage, the way people work. And I think that's what I love most about being in the channel. It's about the spread and getting visibility across everything that it's happening. It's simply amazing.

Gemma: That's a great answer and a very selfless answer as well. What's your biggest frustration about working in the channel?

Ovi: It's a tough one, right? It's a tough one. I don't get frustrated very easily at all, right? Personally, I think more about challenges than frustrations – and that's in being able to capture and maximise all the market opportunities. It's finding that right balance between delivering today and making the right decisions, investments etcetera, to sustain a constant delivery in the future because in Cloud and Cyber, especially in this space, there is so much opportunity. It's about placing the right bets today to be in a better position tomorrow. I'm not sure if it's a frustration, but this is really top of my mind all the time.

Gemma: A challenge – that's a good way of putting it. What are you working on right now that excites you? That you're able to talk about!

Ovi: DE&I is specifically something excites me a lot and I think I'm fortunate to work for an organisation that has the right DE&I. It's part of our values and we really live and breathe those going into the work. If you want projects, the biggest one I'm involved with at the moment probably is Xvantage. That is the new platform that Ingram has launched, and it is a platform that is – and I can see it every day – is truly revolutionising the way the distribution market is operating. The way our partners are engaging with us as a distributor. The way they engage with our vendors, the way they start discussing and engaging with their end customers. You know the amount of AI and machine learning that sits behind Xvantage, is absolutely phenomenal. And another project is Consult, which is an online diagnostic tool that basically enables any reseller to be able to sell

Cloud even if they don't know how to spell Cloud! There has been massive uptake and really, really good success stories from our partner ecosystem around that.

Gemma: Very good. And very good promotion of both of those. Well done!

Ovi: Well, unless that bit gets cut by you! (*It didn't!*)

Gemma: What are you most proud of?

Ovi: The people that I managed to develop alongside my career. There's always the focus on numbers, but I think the biggest achievement in my career is in developing associates to the next level. Seeing someone grow and achieve in their career, is the biggest achievement in my own. I think that is personally my biggest achievement when we speak about career.

Gemma: That's nice. Yeah, that's good. But you have to make sure you're not too expensive to keep, Ovi!

Ovi: Someone else needs to make sure of that!

Gemma: Haha! OK. What has been your biggest mistake? I don't believe you've ever made any.

Ovi: But when? Today? This week? This month? My entire life? Look, I make mistakes all the time, right? Some smaller, some bigger. One thing is, I always look at what am I learning from those mistakes. And the way I look at mistakes is – it's like a coin, right? Which has two equal sides. The bigger the mistake is, the more learnings I need to get from it. And personally, I don't have any regrets. You know, I make mistakes, fail fast, move on.

Gemma: OK, that's good. That's a good attitude, I think. Is there a piece of advice that you have found useful or that you give to other people?

Ovi: Quite a few. Don't wait for perfection. Yeah. Make things happen out of what you have. And always focus on quality

first. I think it's the key, right? Delivering quantity is easy. But setting up a very high standard to ensure quality, is so critical before you start developing quantity. And I will say it again, what I said earlier, you know, learn from your mistakes, have no regrets, fail fast. Bring innovation, all those kinds of things. But critically, quality first.

Gemma: That's good. And also, I think sometimes that can be difficult, can't it? Because people are sometimes a bit short-sighted and quality is an investment for the future. So that's kind of what you were saying earlier, isn't it? It's looking beyond what's now and into what's coming.

Ovi: Of course, it's not easy, you know. That's why I'm trying to give this piece of advice. No, it's not easy. But personally, I think it's the right thing. Sometimes it doesn't pay off straight away. Quality. Probably though as well – you need a bit of a balance between quality and quantity, because you can't just work forever on quality and not deliver the quantity as well.

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

Ovi: Loads of them. Let me think about what I'm allowed to say. So, I don't think many people know that a few hundred years ago when I was in high school, I was a professional dancer. You know, Tango, Waltz, Samba, Cha Cha, Rumba, all of those things. I was in Romania. I went to competitions. I even won some and it's you know – it's just like riding a bike – once you know it you never forget it.

Gemma: Ohh wow. So, when I was a kid, I also did dancing lessons so I did all of that stuff as well! I never went into competitions, but I got all my medals.

Ovi: We weren't so advanced in Romania to get medals – we were just working hard! And then during a competition I remember at some point it was a pairs competition and we won 3rd place nationally.

Gemma: And what dance were you doing?

Ovi: I was in the classic ballroom dances – Tango, Waltz. That's where I was more focused because I was a bit rigid.

Gemma: Excellent! Ohh, well I think we're going to have to find some of those photos, I think, don't you think to post online with the interview. I think that should be the headshot. What we'd have to do Ovi, is secret practise of the Tango and then knock them all out on the floor at the CRN Awards. What is what's next for you, career wise? What's the next thing you're going to be focusing on?

Ovi: I mean, I've always focused on what's next. I've got a very clear career path and I think the organisation I am with today is, pretty much, offering this career path. I've managed to get where I am today, but I'm not planning to stop here at all. It's loads of avenues and I'm working on what's missing for my what's next. But I already know my what's next.

Gemma: Oh exciting! OK. And I think we'll be watching with interest!

Ovi: And this is what I'm also advising the others and my team. You know it. People are not leaving organisations for money. They are leaving because they don't have the what's next? You know, you don't learn to apply today. You learn to be better tomorrow.

Gemma: Well, I can imagine that working with you is pretty good fun.

Ovi: Don't ask anyone in my team for their feedback!

Gemma: So do you have a favourite book or film or piece of music or anything like that?

Ovi: I'm not really picky when it comes to those sorts of things. For example, I listen to any music. In fact, I think that there is quality in any piece of music. It's probably down to our mood, the specific moment in time. I watch films as well, although not a big fan, you know. I would

rather, you know, read a good book or even watch a football match rather than a movie.

Gemma: Yeah, OK. No, that's good. And that's it! Anything else, we haven't

covered that you want to share with, you know, everybody?

Ovi: Absolutely. Loads of things. In our next episode!



Ovi dancing with his daughter

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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