

# Nurture Network, amplifying the voice of women and underrepresented people

Ahead of the Nurture Network's 'Lean In, Lift Up' conference on the 14th of November, we spoke to Marie-Claire Frederick, Founder of Nurture Network, about amplifying the voices of underrepresented people, networking and the importance of having a mentor.

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## Tell us about your business and what you do?

I am the founder of *Nurture Network*, a UK- and EU-wide community of about 1,000 women and men, established to amplify the voices of women and underrepresented people in the business world. The Nurture Network strives to connect underrepresented people with other people of influence who can inspire, share their stories, strengthen their leadership and pave the way to bring others along with them. The community is free to join and members need not come from any particular sector or role.

The Nurture Network runs small networking and team building events aimed at creating safe places for women to share experiences, challenges and

information. We believe that everyone has a powerful and compelling story to tell that helps connect them to others.

We write, share and promote our members' stories which in turn helps them to build a stronger connection with their own audience, other businesses and people that matter to them. Since its inception in 2021, we've had our members start businesses, receive on-the-spot job offers, agree to mentor others, etc. Shortly after meeting each other at our events. Many of our female members expressed the benefits of cross fertilisation of ideas and forming relationships/networks for life.

Most of my time is spent seeking out and connecting with people who we believe we can impact or help. Furthermore, with a continued focus on the next generation of leaders. I also work with schools and universities to facilitate build a pipeline into the Nurture Network.

## What are you hoping to see and share at the Nurture Network event?

I set up the Nurture Network Live as I believe that women in business are unstoppable. We're innovators, creators, entrepreneurs, leaders, mentors and problem solvers and overcome a unique set of challenges and barriers to build brilliant businesses and powerhouse brands as we grow to become our best selves. It is my passion to bring our members together, because together, we can overcome many of these challenges and elevate and inspire the people in the room.

The inaugural *Lean In, Lift Up conference* from The Nurture Network will prove just that. I'm very excited about the blend of women and men coming together to make things happen.

I want the attendees to grow their networks, meet people who they would otherwise not meet, find valuable allies and hear some inspirational stories from a range of people from different industries and brands, including *Google*, *EY*, *Grant Thornton*, *NatWest*, *Avon* as well as start-ups and small UK SME businesses.

Attendees also include GCSE students from a local secondary school as well as members of several charities aimed at helping young girls in the field of STEAM and sport. We want to inspire these young girls and let them see amazing role models in the world of science, technology, retail, finance and more. We will also be promoting sponsorship, mentoring and work experience opportunities for these students.

# How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

The Nurture Network was launched during the 2021 lockdown, kicking off with our first virtual roundtable event, attended by 10 women as senior leaders in the Financial Services sector. Our original focus was on seniority women in the Financial Services sector. However, the Nurture Network's mission evolved as we learned that our original members longed for genuine cross fertilisation and the sharing of diverse ideas across a broad range of sectors and roles, allowing for greater opportunities for growth.

Accordingly, the Nurture Network has expanded to become sector agnostic. As we continue to grow and evolve, in addition to online events, we have now launched Nurture Network Live, our inaugural event bringing these unique voices together in an in-person event at the inspirational *Knowledge Centre at The British Library*. We have women and men, from the *NHS*, EY, Google, NatWest etc including small businesses, start-ups/scale ups and a range of female founders.

As mentioned above, we've expanded our offering to a secondary school of final year GCSEs students who will be attending with their career's tutor. Free tickets have also been offered to young people from *Badu* – a sport charity set up to empower young people and their families through sports and mentoring. We have also invited young girls from *Stemettes* – an award-winning social enterprise, co-founded by *Dr Anne Marie Imafidon*, working across the UK, Ireland and beyond to inspire and support girls, young women and non-binary young people into Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths careers. In collaboration with Anne-Marie, we are encouraging our members to mentor some of these girls. We have also collaborated with *LSE*, *UCL* and a few other local universities and further education colleges for their female students to attend.

## Tell us about the working culture at the Nurture Network

At Nurture Network, everyone has something to contribute and we are slowly building a team of women and men who are curious and passionate about helping people live their best lives in their careers and businesses. Our working style is flexible and collaborative. We do not have an office, but we ensure we regularly check in so that our team knows we are always available to speak with or bounce ideas off each other. We have a massive coffee culture and take time to meet in-person where possible in local coffee shops or our work hub

that we use frequently.

## What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome it?

The biggest challenge and opportunity it to get people on side to believe in the Nurture Network's business purpose. I found that resilience plays a crucial part in this. You must bring everything you have, including the self-belief that what you are doing is truly helping people and making a difference. It's a challenge and you just have to dig deep and make sure you have embedded a strong network of support around you. My support network is not just my family, but a wider group of people who can share objective rationale and frank and constructive feedback on what's working and what's not working.

Get a Mentor. They will be the key to helping you in your journey as that old African proverb.

*'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together'.*

It is one of my go to mantras, to help me continue to bring people along with me, on this journey.

## What's in store for the future?

We want to start a movement – we want to move mountains. We believe that together we can do incredible things. We want to build a community of super empowered and engaged people, create a tech. platform where people can ask for help, share and network with each other without judgement.

## What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

Take up a hobby outside your founder life. We often ask the women and men within our community in The Short Cut, especially those that run their own

companies or have a senior managerial role at work. The one thing that comes through, is that single minded determination – which sometimes isn't great for your mental wellbeing. We encourage others to 'take time out of your business and work'. Balance is key, so continue to do those things to create balance.

## And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

I start with a hot shot of lemon juice – a quarter of squeezed lemon and hot water. If it's not raining, I grab my trainers and either do a quick run or park walk.

Now I'm super busy organising Nurture Network Live and doing the 11+ with my son as well as taxi driving/cycling him around in between his swimming lessons and competitions.

Between these things and working through my to do list, I try and spend time with my 93 year-old grandma who's had dementia for over 20 years and she is still going strong. I am conscious that sometimes no matter how busy we get we need to pay attention to those around us that may need our help, time and energy. I appreciate that things change rapidly so I try and live life in the moment.

*Marie-Claire Frederick* is the founder of *Nurture Network*.

*Click here* to get your tickets for the Nurture Network 'Lean In, Lift Up' conference!