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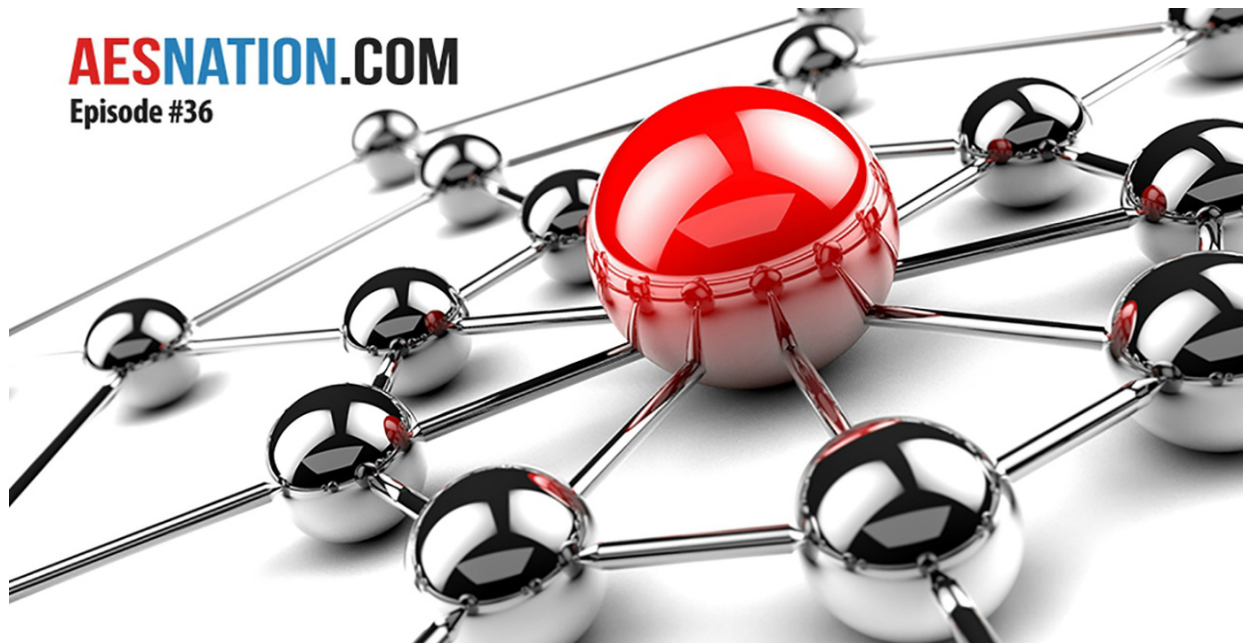
ACCELERATING ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS PODCAST

EPIISODE
36

Michelle Patterson

Show Notes at: <http://www.aesnation.com/36>

AESNATION.COM
Episode #36



Dear Fellow Entrepreneur,

We are thrilled that you have joined us here at AES Nation, where we're dedicated to accelerating entrepreneurial success—your success.

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Best of success,



John Bowen
Co-founder, AES Nation

John Bowen: As entrepreneurs, we've got many, many challenges but one of the biggest challenges is building a community around what we do, a tribe, together that really embraces what we do. And to do that, there's an awful lot of work. We need capital. We need energetic people. And we're going to have events as well. Well, my next guest, she is going to share with us some ways of making things happen and really some of the most challenging times.

In 2012, she was asked to join a group. Now let her describe the group. But she had 17 days to fulfill a commitment, an event where 7,000 people were coming and it was a million aide in the wrong direction on the budget.

This is a real challenge that most of us building community haven't been hit with that, but we've been hit by many things. I'm John Bowen and we are here at AESNation.com and it's all about building a community of like-mind entrepreneurs who are successful who want to accelerate their success. My next guest, Michelle Patterson is going to share with us how we can be successful in our own business in building great communities. Stay tuned.

Michelle, I am so excited to have you joining us here today with the magic of Skype. Thank you.

Michelle Patterson: Thanks for having me, John. And I know it's been a few weeks since we've seen each other, I had the opportunity to sit next to you. Pretty amazing meeting with Arianna Huffington and a few others and you were great. I kept reaching over to grab water and you were right on queue. We got a lot done that day.

John: That was the first time I met you and I was just blown away with what you've been able to accomplish. You're really building communities, holding some amazing events and I wanted to share you with my fellow entrepreneurs because this is something we all struggle with and so tell me a lift a little cliff-hanger there in the beginning on the introduction. What the heck were you doing in 2012 that you took a position that you got just a few days before a major event with thousands of people attending and you're way upside down on the budget.

Michelle: I was thinking the same thing. What the heck was I thinking? Now I can laugh about it but at that time, it was very, very scary feeling from a business standpoint, personal standpoint going through it. And my PR company says to me, "Do not share the story. It makes you look weak." And I said I'm going to tell everybody. This is so important for other entrepreneurs to be able to hear this, especially women.

A lot of times, what happens is we're risk-adverse. We think that we can't ask for the help. We think that we have to have everything together and if we show weakness, that's not a good thing. And so for me, that 17, I call them the 17 Glorious Days. It was amazing, truly

amazing and probably one of the highlights of my life. Although it's so painful, it was so exciting that it really made me feel like I'm getting prepared for what's next. And I do feel that there's so much in your life where you look at all the different jobs that you have, it really prepares you.

But I have been putting on events for fun, I have my own company so it was in recruiting so I was placed in accounting, financial, HR, and I'd come home at night from my own company and then I would work till four o'clock in the morning for fun on these charity events. And my husband who's a CPA, he says to me and he goes, "What are you doing?" He looked at me and he said, "You know you should be doing what you love and your passion." Which I thought was great, great advice.

So if you could imagine, I get this phone call and it's from a friend of mine, whom I've helped her run for office and she's now senator. And she says to me there's this conference that was cancelled after 28 years. And it's an amazing event that was put on the last person who has been on this was Maria Shriver and it got up to 17,000 people. Would you be interested in doing this?

And ironically enough, I interviewed the governor that started this conference for the eighth grade school paper thirty years prior. So there's Governor George Deukmejian. So I always tell women, yes a man started the California Women's Conference. And I interviewed him and it was really a life changing moment. It was the first time that somebody outside of my immediate family told me that "You matter. You have value to contribute." And I'm asking the really important questions like what's your favorite hobby? How many kids do you have? And so Governor Deukmejian looked at me and he said, "Michelle that was the best interview I ever heard." And so I thought, wow! I could do this.

So I left there, I was president on my high school, president on my college, so here I get this phone call to continue that legacy. And what happened was the Governor's Office has always been producing this event. It's always been put on by the first lady and after Maria Shriver, they decided that it was going to get cancelled. The new governor decided that they were no longer going to continue this event. So it gets cancelled and I get the phone call and it's when you take this on. You're one of a few women in California that are putting on events of 30,000 people. Are you interested?

So of course, I was really excited. I thought it was amazing that time-wise it was so close to hear it's the same person that I interviewed for this eighth grade school paper that had such an influence and an impact on. So I jumped in, full force and we had hired a sponsorship company that had pipelined seven million in funding for the event. And the event's a multimillion dollar event. They had all of their numbers and their stats and they were rocking and rolling and everything sounded great.

When the event continued to get closer and closer, and the more that I asked them what the sass was, the more they told me everything's fine. And finally I knew it wasn't fine. Out of the seven million that they pipelined, the total amount that they brought in was a hundred thousand dollars total. I know, it still makes me sick.

John: Just stop, Michelle. Every entrepreneur that's watching this or listening to this has had this feeling where somebody, particularly sponsorship, I'm involved in sponsorship too where they promised something. Promise might be too strong a word but it's usually promise and you're doing all this planning. And even if you, as entrepreneurs, we mitigate risk. Nobody embraces risk. We want to mitigate it as much as possible. But one of the things you need is throw a party for 7,000 people and I've seen some of the video of this, this is not just a minor, little event. This is a big deal. It's expensive to pull off.

Michelle: Absolutely. Well and it's the largest, longest running event for women in the United States.

John: How did it turn out? I know you're here and I know you did 2014, so what happened?

Michelle: So I have to tell you two quick stories. One, I decided that I was going to swallow my pride, suck up my ego, and I was going to ask for the help. And keep in mind, here I am an expert. I'm supposed to be this expert on putting on these 30,000-people events and now, I'm 1.8 million in a deficit 17 days before this event. And I just started making phone calls. I said, "I am going to have to ask." And so often what happens is we do not ask for the help. We simply don't.

And so I started making phone calls. I will never forget this it was a three-day weekend. I met with the investor in the morning and he is screaming at me at the top of his lungs and he says, "You might as well make it two million Michelle." And he goes, "Shut the event down. Shut it down." And I said, "I'm not going to do that. I'm not shutting it down. This is the longest running..." Then I felt like that eighth grade kid, that twelve-year-old that I had a responsibility. I was not going to shut this women's conference. It had already been shut down once by the Governor's Office and it was not going to happen under my watch. So I tell him, "No, this is happening. We're moving forward." And I understand I'm not asking for him to put in any money, but I'm moving forward.

So I head off and I'm on FOX News that afternoon and I ended up getting on FOX News and it was like "This event's happening. This is where we're going." And we ended up selling more tickets during that period of time.

But what I did in my drive to FOX is I called the mayor. I called the CEO of the Convention Center. And I said I need to meet with you today. I am the most important person that you're going to meet with probably the whole year because here I'm getting ready to have this event. So they said to me, "Today doesn't work. It's a three-day weekend. We're all getting out of here earlier." I said where is your family going? I need to be there. We need to talk. This is that important.

So we sat down and I'll never forget this, we were sitting around a table, I walk in and my head is held low and I feel like I've got a big L on my forehead. And I really was just agonizing over this and embarrassed. And I told them the situation, 1.8 million. This is where I'm at.

And Steve Goodling who's the CEO of the Convention Center for Long Beach, he looks at me and he says, "Michelle, I have one question for you, just one." And I'm thinking Oh my gosh, he's going to just give me a really hard time about this situation I'm in and how did this happen." He goes, "One question, what's your favorite ice cream?" And I said, not that it is a trick question, I said strawberry. And he goes, "We need to order ice cream. We need to just sit here and let's spread out the numbers."

And what that taught me was especially in a time of crisis, that's when you don't want to be gripping the back so tight. That's when you want to really be able to look at all the different options and really minimize that fear because that's when the thinking happens and that's when you're really able to get creative. And it was almost like we're playing Monopoly.

And I left that meeting and I went from 1.8 to 1.4 million which was owed. And so here's 400,000 that we were able to go ahead and look at catering cost and so because I asked, and because I was honest and upfront and said "I'm stuck. I need the support." And what I was finding was if people know that you need the help, they want to help. But again, it's up to us. We got to take that step and ask.

John: What you did is so commendable and I want to just encourage all of us to do is when in doubt, reach out and go to the people who actually can make a difference. I mean if you're holding this big meeting, Michelle at the conference center, probably they have a vested interest in your success.

Michelle: Exactly. So I have to tell you there's this one other piece. My husband and I, we just celebrated 18 years of marriage and he's a CPA. He is a comptroller at a big, huge company so I get home that night. Again, I'm 17 days out. I just had a big win. We went from 1.8 to 1.4. But I thought, "I'm going to hold off saying anything. Let me see if I can raise more money." I'll tell them on like Day 13 or 12, when I can get the deficit down.

So I got to sleep that night and I'm tossing and turning and I end up kicking him in my sleep to the point where he wakes up, puts the light on and he was like, "What is going on with you?" And I looked at him and I said, "Eric, I've really done this time, I think I'm going to bankrupt this family. This is really bad. I was 1.8 and now 1.4 but this is the situation." And my husband and at that time it was 15 years we were married, he looks at me and he says, "I've been married to you for 15 years." And he goes, "You've always, always figured it out." He goes, "Late at night, that's when things seem a lot worse. Go back to bed. Get a fresh start in the morning. And get some rest." And I'm looking at him I'm thinking, what is going on with the men in my life? What kind of ice cream do you want? And I look at him and said, "Eric, I didn't say 1,800. I didn't say 18,000. It was 1.8 million. Are you not listening?" And he says, "Michelle, go to sleep. It's okay." And it is.

A lot of times where again, your comment, I love this what you've just said, never worry alone, is that feeling that it seems that everything's worse late at night and you can't even do anything about it. You're literally stuck. So I get up the next morning and I really went in with the mind-set of act as if. I'm going in and I'm raising this money. And I'm going to have a phenomenal conference. We at that time, we had 150 speakers. We had Helen Reddy coming from Australia to sing I'm Woman, Hear me Roar...speakers from all over the country. This event is going to be amazing.

And I remember in the mirror and I'm brushing my teeth and I'm looking at myself and I'm like, "You are a fundraising machine." And half of me joking and the other half of me was scared. Because you get that monkey chatter that starts to happen, which I refer to it's, "Michelle, what are you thinking? You're not Maria Shriver. You're not a Kennedy. You're now out of the Governor's Office. Like what were you thinking that you thought you could come in and do this?" So I really had to just keep it at bay.

And I started making calls literally call after call after call. And some of them were amazing. People were jumping on board, writing checks, wiring money in. Some people that were closest to me were telling me the same. Shut it down. What were you thinking? This is not going to work. And I had to just keep going. I needed time to go and contemplate. And I had a whole entire plan and literally called every single person I feel like I've ever met, which John I would have called you. You would have gotten that call.

John: I would have written a check too.

Michelle: You would have written a check. Everybody is like John it's time. And what was so amazing is I ended up going into the conference and we actually had a video crew filming me and unaware that they were going through and they ended up staying on me and doing this documentary but I'm raising money at the conference still which was pretty amazing. And so I went from 1.8 and we raised 1.65 million. I had people quitting from my team. They just

couldn't handle and I got it. It was very, very stressful but it's level heads prevail. Ask for the help. Have a plan. And then work your plan. And those 17 days and it was amazing because we were able to have the event and thank goodness because if we had cancelled, we would have been in a lot war hurt and we pulled it off.

John: What was the big breakthrough to take it from almost not happening to just taking off now?

Michelle: Well, and that's what's so exciting and I feel like my contribution... Maria Shriver did this amazing job and taking it to a whole new level. And it was a star-studded event. And what I'm excited about is we've taken now this event and we've gone global with it. And so I just got back. We did a women's conference in the Bahamas. We had the Oregon Women's Conference which our Executive Director Carrie Murphy actually produced and did a great job. This is our second year. We did one with Memorial Hospital, women that worked in Memorial Hospital.

And we've got fourteen different states all lined up. And corporations that are coming in going "Bring this to our state." And so we've created this conference in a box if you will. And set it up so we can go ahead and really push this out and what's the recipe behind doing this.

And then on top of that, we created WomenNetwork.com which is this online digital campaign. And that came out of the comment saying, "We love this event. It's a couple days but then it goes dark. We want a community" For women, we want our golf course. We want our community.

And so what I've been doing in the last couple years, and I've had more fun in the last couple years than I've had my entire life. The days that I have I get to sit with people like yourself John that are change agents. And they're making a difference and they're making things happen all over the world and these phenomenal individuals, both men and women. And I sit down with them and I talk with them about their organization. And have them be part of Women Network.

And across the board, I'm batting a thousand and what the feedback I'm getting is absolutely it's time. How do we be a part of this? So everything from the United Nations to Novo to Black Enterprise, all these different groups that are coming together to be part of Women Network and what we're doing is we're putting a spotlight on women and these amazing things that they're doing.

And the whole reason that the conference was started 30 years ago... so this upcoming we'll celebrate our 30th year for this conference in 2015 in October for the event. And what's so exciting is that it started because women were opening up businesses and they were failing

at a rapid rate. And Governor Deukmejian said "Let's go and have an event that pulls all these resources together." Let's contact the John Bowen's of the world and let's bring in these different individuals so that we can educate women and they have resources to go to.

And so what's happening and I look back and there's not a day that goes by that I don't thank God literally that I knew enough to go ask for help, that I didn't give up because I think about all the stuff that we're doing now, would never have happened. It would have gone away. That conference would have shut down. And I think that's so important is the story. For me, it was 1.8 but for your listeners, it could be a mortgage. It could be a business. It could be a marriage. It could be 18 million, big, big numbers. It could be \$180.

We all, everyday we're facing these challenges, and so how do you show up? When you show up, are you running the other direction? Or you're looking at it and saying "yes I'm fearful but I'm not going to let the fear move me." I'm going to step into it and I'm going to push through that fear. And so it's just been a phenomenal ride. It's been a scary ride. But I think that for women in particular right now, there's so much opportunity for women especially with us representing 78% of the consumer and women have such great skills. We're true collaborators.

So to develop Women Network as this community and this membership site, for women to be able to step into this and find those resources and have conversation. And it's exciting because we're having conversations not just with women that are in the US. But we've been approached by Israel and their government. How do we go ahead and bring the conference to Israel both virtually and in person? And it's happening like that for all of these different countries. So I think that that experience with the 1.8 was just getting me ready for what this next step is.

John: And this is so important Michelle. I was thinking 6 million. I was on the verge of bankruptcy. I won't go into the story but usually you have to have a little alcohol where they share the story but this is where persistence if you've got something, you want to make a difference in the world... nobody gets out of life unscarred and this is just so good advice. You want to not get yourself so overhang that you can't come out of it. But it is not straight line. Michelle, let me go to this.

You've got so many things going on. Tell me what's the one thing you're most passionate about right now?

Michelle: My one thing is creating an online community for women. It's creating that platform. I breathe, sleep in it. I wake up. I could see it. I could visualize it.

John: Is it for all women Michelle?

Michelle: What we've been doing, it's for women. We've got segments that are Women Network Youth and what we've been doing is we've been going into each industry sector and so I feel like my purpose is to find the key women in each industry sector and those are our heroes. Those are our celebrities. And put a spotlight. We want to hear from them. And there are studies that show that women need to have a visual. They need to have a physical visual. And we don't get it from the television or movies. We're less than 70%. We're not in any kind of executive roles or C-level roles or running companies.

And so I want to be able to go out and highlight those women. And so we've been following a TED Talk model and a Huffington Post model. And being able to gather that information and then get it posted. I can give you an example. We had an event at Memorial Hospital. Diana Hendel who's one of the CEO's, one of the only CEO's that manages six hospitals in the Western United States, I went to her and said "Let's put in the bed on together and focus on women's health."

And what we've done is we've looked at the Five to Thrive area and it's everything from career and how you're spending your time to social, the relationships you have, physical, financial, which is why you're so critical in this mix, and then community. And so we took those five areas. We don't want to just focus on just career. Or we don't just want to focus on the financial. We look at the holistic approach of how do I have that balance?

And Gallup over fifty years did studies that showed that you need to have those five elements present to lead this thriving life. They're not always the same but there's a piece that's paying together in all five of those and you're paying attention. And so then we started looking at, let's go ahead and have specialized, smaller host conferences around those areas. We did one with Memorial Hospital, so Women Network Memorial Hospital. And I had 6 speakers.

One of them, Sybil Bogardus, amazing lady, an attorney, HUB international, and she was on stage and she's talked about healthcare reform. And so we filmed it and we took the film and we posted it up on Women Network. Well, that got picked up by Congress and Congress then saw the film and invited Sybil to come and speak at a Congressional hearing. I'd be back up with her. Her life now has completely changed and she says to me and she goes, "I'm now speaking all over the world on healthcare reform. My job is completely different."

It was just amazing and so being able to go ahead and do that where we're identifying and we're celebrating these successes and having women talk about... these are the challenges I ran into. This is how I overcame it. And this how you can. And I think painting a picture John of it not being, it's not always perfect.

John: As you meet all these people that already had these major breakthroughs and you get to know them. You've learned that life is not perfect. And what you're doing Michelle and have done, has created a great platform for all these really talented individuals. They're linchpins, they're heroes in different areas to really make themselves available to so many other people to inspire. I mean this is leadership and as entrepreneurs like never before, you don't have to rely on traditional media at all. As a matter of fact, you can't.

You just wrote a book. So I have a Book of the Day segment and I'm just going to make it into telling us about your book. Because I didn't know about it until we just connected here. What did you write about and what's in the book?

Michelle: We have 40 different authors that did segments and talking about their crusades and their accomplishments and the challenges that they faced and they went into and how they overcame them. They're all women.

John: I'm going to pull up on the screen the Amazon link, *Women Change the World*. I have already ordered it now and I will be reading it on my Kindle. So what are the readers going to get when they get this?

Michelle: I had an email from one woman who runs a major broadcast center and she said, "I stayed home for the day. I had a really bad day and I decided I'm going to take a free day. Your book was on my nightstand. I picked it up and I couldn't put it down. I kept reading it. When I got done, I felt better. I felt so much better."

Because again, it's that mind-set of... we think that it's supposed to be that the road that you're going to travel is this very easy paved road and it's not that way. And that's where when we can have candid conversations, then we can go ahead and express to women.

You're going to get to a point where you want to give up. And what happens oftentimes is it's at that point where you just go a little bit more, that's where you reach that success because so many give up. And so it was just a beautiful testimonial but it was exactly what the point was and that is... if you think that you can't do something, take a look at what these women have done, you absolutely can, if I did what I did with this 1.8 and stepping into very big shoes with Maria Shriver. I had no business doing that literally. And I was able to get through it.

It's just opening doors up and realizing it's okay not to have all the answers. It's not okay to shut down and say I'm not going to do it, especially if that's your passion, that's what you're driving towards.

John: You can accomplish unbelievable things. I'm going to let you in on a secret. It's not only women that have this challenge. It's guys as well. But there has in men the support

network, jokingly the golf course, golf club and so on. There's been more support for guys. So this is so critical because the one thing we need not only in the US but around the world is we want to use all the talent of our population, no matter what gender, race, sexual persuasion, or whatever. We want the most talented people to really rise above this and oftentimes, talent without going through this kind of rocky road, it doesn't happen. And when you see someone else did it, I can do it. Huge difference.

Let me go to this last section here. And this is all about Resources. I'm going to show two websites. I want to flash the other one. If you just go and look at all the speakers you had at this event, I was just blown away. Can guys come too? I just want to make sure.

Michelle: Do it. And I am very blessed because I've got some amazing mentors and beautiful men in my life. I've shared earlier, 18 years married and I look back and I reflect, would I have been so loving? In the middle of the night, he looked at me and said, "I'm 1.8 million in deficit." what I've said, "No problem, go back to bed." I don't know. I hope that I would have been loving. I don't think I would have been as gracious. So I look at that I think again, there's so many lessons in how we show up. It's not even just the people that are helping us but how we show up.

But back to your question is can men go? So we had 17% come to the conference. We had men that came that filled out the survey and said "I will never miss this conference. The connections that I made were over the top. I cannot believe that this is what you guys do at these conferences. I will only go to these conferences. They're amazing." We had so many come back and say that so that was really fun.

But again I go back to, it's your comment earlier, and Warren Buffett actually made this statement and said Imagine the world if we tapped into 100% of the talent pool and we're just using 50%. And he said, "I'm so excited about the state of the economy for the United States because that's what's happening. Women are stepping into their greatness and they're taking that on."

And I would just encourage women that there are amazing men out there that are great, great resources. And men as well. So we can get to the point where there's no conversation about this anymore. It's you got the best players that are on the team in the position.

John: And these are my key takeaways. Michelle, tell me how I'm doing. I'm going to go number one I just heard from you and it said, never worry alone. We're in the team. This is why you and I are in Mastermind Groups. We hang out with really very successful individuals and I run a lot of problems by them. We learn together.

Second thing that I heard was sometimes we think as entrepreneurs we need to put on the act. There's positioning and branding and all business is business. But it's got to be authentic.

And the other and this is a huge one is when we look at entrepreneurship, women have... there are so many opportunities and so many role models now that are just starting. Second part though is for all the guys out there as entrepreneurs. My senior team is just over half women. Why would you not want that? As entrepreneurs, we've got an opportunity. We're going to build communities. We can take full advantage of this richness that we have of our population both as people we play with as well as entrepreneurs as well as just really the marketplace. And one of the best places to learn more about it is joining Michelle at her groups California Women's Conference and the Women's Network.

Michelle, thank you for making such a huge difference out there and sharing your insights today.

Michelle: Well, thank you for inviting me to be on the show and I can't emphasize enough, you hit it right on the head and that is the financial services piece. I mean women right now, there's such an opportunity and especially in that space that if you enjoy that customer service and helping, there's so many opportunities.

John: Let's go out. Make a difference whether it is starting businesses, creating huge opportunities for others, building communities, making a difference in each of every client's life. Wish you the best of success!

A Second Opinion on Your Finances

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John Bowen
Founder and CEO
Financial Advisor Select