

The SOSE Spotlight podcast

Series 2, Episode 3 transcription

Presenter – Lesley Forsyth

Hello and welcome to the SOSE Spotlight podcast.

Wherever you are, in Dumfries and Galloway, the Scottish Borders or beyond, if you're a business, entrepreneur, community enterprise or aspiring to be one, this is for you. We are South of Scotland Enterprise and we're all about helping people in the South of Scotland to thrive, grow and fulfil your best potential.

This series is focused on Pathways, the Scottish Government funded pilot that has been delivered by South of Scotland Enterprise, which aims to help aspiring entrepreneurs across the region to find the confidence and strength to begin their business journey. In these six episodes, we will be speaking to SOSE staff, our dedicated Pathways coaches and the clients to find out all about Pathways and their experience.

We will be finding out: What is it? Why is it critical for aspiring entrepreneurs? Why now? What opportunities are there for you and how can South of Scotland Enterprise help?

I'm Lesley Forsyth and with me today is Martina McKinnel, one of our dedicated Pathways coaches. Martina has experience working in architecture and property development and has worked across private and public sectors. With a creative yet technical mindset, who thrives at a challenge, Martina developed an online bookshop all self-taught. Supporting her husband at home, a busy farmer and two boys, Martina recognises the juggles that come as an entrepreneur and family life. Martina is a great selection as a Pathways coach.

Hello and welcome to the SOSE Spotlight, Martina.

Guest – Martina McKinnel, Pathways coach

Hi, Lesley. Thank you very much for having me here today.

Lesley

Martina, tell us a bit about yourself and how you got into coaching.

Martina

Yeah, well, where do I start. I'm a farmer's wife. Two young boys currently at primary school. I'm juggling a lot of different things. I've got a past career in architecture, and then I moved on to property development and as my children sort of got a little bit older and due to me living in the countryside, I decided to sort of set up my own online book shop which I developed on my own from scratch. I self-taught myself everything and the reason why I did that was because I wanted to get a good work-life balance. Being able to sort of stay at home. And plus being able to earn an income with an online business

seemed like the best fit for me. Pairing that up with, I really love working with people and helping them and I really enjoy helping other people to understand their visions and to help them to move forward with entrepreneurship as well. So, all of that tied in together, sort of made me a good fit, so to speak.

Lesley

It definitely sounds like you've got plenty experience anyway that you can bring forward to your clients. Can you tell me a little bit about what impact do you think Pathways will make to the economy in your local area?

Martina

Yeah, Pathways is an excellent programme and I'm enjoying working on it. So much of the clients are amazing, and every one of them has a different business idea and are developing businesses in all sorts of sectors. So, you know, when somebody starts a new business in an area, they then need to buy stock. They attract people to come to their shop to buy from them, to use their service. Anything from them then earning an income themselves and then possibly wanting to then settle down in the area, to buy their own house. It's really like a sort of circular effect that it has. When somebody starts a new business, also then other people start new businesses because they see that they're doing so well. So yeah, it really can have a great effect on the economy.

Lesley

It increases spending in the area as well. It's helping another business straight away. Can you tell us a little bit more about the variety of clients and business ideas that have come to you so far looking for support? I'm sure you have had many different types of people and ideas looking for your help.

Martina

Yes. So we have so many different clients coming to us with all their different ideas and business ideas that they're looking to start.

Some examples would be a solo singer who is currently singing in a band and she's looking to branch off to expand her career with live performances and releasing her own music. And I also have a client who is a yoga teacher. It's a specialised yoga business in that she's also a midwife and she's looking to also not just provide yoga but provide additional help and services after the normal yoga session.

So there's so many different types of businesses. I also have a client who is a psychologist and she's developing a psychology business pairing that up with a therapeutic outdoor space so that she can sort of blend the mental health support with the healing power of nature.

There's so many different businesses being created, it's amazing.

Lesley

It must be really interesting speaking to all these different people and hearing their ideas and what they want to do.

Martina

Yeah, absolutely. It's it's really is the best part of the job is getting to know everybody and recognising that everybody's so different and it's great to hear all the different ideas and their history and what's brought them to, maybe their education, what they've learned in the past. And what has made them now want to develop that business?

Lesley

What do you think has made them come forward this time because there is support out there? Do you think it's just that extra nurturing support that Pathways gives or do you think it's just been a coincidence that the time has been right for them?

Martina

I think that Pathways is providing a service that's never been here before. And particularly, looking back at my own experience when I was starting up my own business, there was nothing like this.

So, in the very, very, very early stages of a business, now there's help for that first step, whereas before, there wasn't that help. It might just be the help to help them gain confidence. Or to actually action priorities that they need to get through to be able to launch their business. It's just that tiny little baby step almost. It's just amazing that this support is available and I think that that's why there's so many people are jumping on board really and they can recognise the importance of the programme.

Lesley

Yes, I think that's important to say that baby step because it's not necessarily the first step of business, but it's that client's first step. And for them, typing that email, sending that contact form or picking up the phone was probably a massive hurdle for them. So, that even the fact getting over that baby step.

Martina

Yeah. So, the baby step for one person will be very different than the baby step for another person. So, some clients come to us and they're already quite advanced, but they're stuck with something that they are troubled with. So it might be that they don't know how to set up accounts or something like that, or you might have other people who are just at the idea stage and they just don't really understand enough about setting up a business and for them, it's the really, really early days.

So, everybody's step is at a different level.

Lesley

Yeah. Obviously for you, these clients are getting in touch. They're all at different stages. So you've got quite a lot going on. So as a coach, what are your priorities to make sure that you're supporting your clients?

Martina

You really need to be able to get to know the clients quickly, get to know what makes them tick, get to know their history, their past, and why they are now looking to set up a business. And as soon as you get to know them then you can really help them because we're offering six sessions, it's essential.

You can't just do this in one session, so the first session is all about getting to know them. Then you can tailor the support based on that individual person and what their needs are, and also just prioritising being able to be there for them.

So because Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders are very, very rural areas, I think, looking back again, when I was setting up my own business a lot of courses, events, etc are held in very centralised areas. Which you can see why that happens. It's easier to get everybody to come to one area, but this programme is flipping that upside down and it's really about going out to where they either live or where is the best location for them. And I think that is really why it has been so successful because the help is being brought to them. And that could really be the main problem why they have not gone forward with an idea originally, but now that they've got this help that's coming to them.

Lesley

So that tricky hurdle at the beginning that would have possibly stopped somebody in their tracks, that's now out the way, and it lets them actually look into the business idea. Look into this dream rather than that static problem in the first place.

Martina

That's it, yeah. I mean, as I said, it's such a rural area. Some people don't have even have transport. So, if we can meet them in their local village or town it just takes away that first barrier and then we can get straight into helping them to then go on to set up their business.

Lesley

Your role as a Pathways coach must have been really busy and you've seen lots of different people and lots of different ideas over the last few months and working with loads of different clients. Can you tell me what you think has been the most rewarding part of your job as a Pathways coach?

Martina

The most rewarding part so far has been seeing two clients have already actually launched their businesses and are taking their own customers. And seeing them like really, really increasing in confidence to be able to do that is just really, really rewarding. And that they actually tell you back, you know, "You've helped me do this". So for me, that's the ultimate goal that they launched their business and that they're confident enough to do it. and I've been lucky enough that two clients have actually done that so far.

Lesley

I'm sure that was a very proud moment. Seeing them open their doors, whether it was a physical shop or a virtual or whatever they're doing. And you know , getting their first customer in to their business.

Martina

Yes, absolutely, absolutely. And to still be there with them, helping them even once they've launched. It's just really giving them that extra helping hand.

Lesley

Finally, Martina for any listeners today thinking about starting a business or if they have a business idea they're looking to expand, what advice would you suggest to them?

Martina

Definitely get in touch with SOSE today and don't delay because the help is there for you no matter what step you are on that ladder to success. There's help right from the very, very, very beginning from no matter what it is, whether it's a location problem or whether it's something that you're needing to learn, or you just don't don't even know where to start. Then get in touch with SOSE and the Pathways coaches are there to help you with a really, really very personalised approach.

Lesley

Thank you Martina, for coming along today and sharing the successes and the experiences you have enjoyed as a Pathways coach. South of Scotland Enterprise is proud to be supporting new entrepreneurs.

To find out more about Pathways and the success stories along the way, visit our website: southofscotlandenterprise.com/Pathways or why not send us an email. Our email address is clienthub@sose.scot or give us a call on 0300 304 8888, that's 0300 304 8888.

We'd love your feedback and please subscribe so you don't miss our next episode. I'm Lesley Forsyth. Thanks for listening to the SOSE Spotlight. Do join us again next week for more inspiring Pathways stories from around the South of Scotland.