

GMCP Ep. 070 - Secrets to Building a Strong Community with Nerida Bint

[INTRO MUSIC]

This is the Grow My Clinic Podcast by Clinic Mastery where we help you deliver amazing client experiences to grow your clinic.

JACK: Well welcome to another episode of the [Grow My Clinic](#) podcast. My name is Jack O'Brien. And we really appreciate you joining us for this episode today, because joining me is a special guest. We have Nerida Bint on the line. Ness, how are you this morning?

NERIDA: I'm really well, thank you. So happy to be talking to you this morning.

JACK: Great! Well, for those who are uninitiated or unaware, Nerida owns and runs [Lissome Gym](#), which is a fantastic health and wellness community here in Newcastle where I am based. So, I've known Ness for a couple of years now. We've worked together as a partnership with business and what she has built is quite remarkable.

And what I might say listeners is, before you switch off and change episodes because this is about a gym and not a health clinic, I'd say lean into this, because the lessons that Nerida can share around building community, creating client experience are priceless and really applicable to what we all do in a clinic setting.

So, with that in mind, Nerida, can you share your back story for us? How did you get involved in health and fitness?

NERIDA: Jack, I'd love to share my story. It's something that I'm very passionate about and it's actually quite an accident that I came about this journey, which fundamentally changed my life. About seven or eight years ago, I found myself really overweight, really unhappy and depressed, and just really, really down in my life.

And I came across joining a crossfit gym which, by large, definitely helped me to lose the twenty kilos excess weight that I was carrying, but also taught me how to

get strong, how to get fit. And also, the most important part of it was, I was part of a community.

So for the first time in my life, I found myself training in a place where I was really a part of the family. I created friendships that lasted me years and years. And that was the beginning of me changing the rest of my life.

JACK: Okay. And so, you were just training there. You weren't a PT or a coach or a gym owner at this stage, right?

NERIDA: Oh, not at all. Not at all. And actually, I'd never ever imagined myself becoming a PT. I was training there for a number of years, and obviously going through such a huge transformations. So many people have seen me go through it.

People were asking me questions constantly. What am I doing? What am I eating? How did I lose the weight? And people just saw me so much happier as well. So, what eventually ended up happening was, once I'd been doing crossfit for a number of years, it gave me the strength to quit the job that I was unhappy in.

I was also in a relationship at the time I was really unhappy in, but had stayed in because I felt too vulnerable to leave. So, I really gained this confidence to be able to slip away from the things that weren't serving me anymore. And it wasn't until I quit my job without knowing where I was going or what I was doing next, when my boss asked me what my plans were and I told him that I had absolutely no idea.

He was worried that I would be going to a competitor, and I assured him I wasn't. I was just taking a break. I just want to tap some time out and to just figure out what I wanted from life. And he was the one who suggested to me, "You should become a PT." And I'll never forget him saying to me, "Nerida, you glow, like you light up when you talk about therapies."

And it's true. I am very passionate about all things health and fitness, because I know from sharing such experience how much it has changed my life. In saying that, I didn't take that onboard. I kind of laughed it off and I went a couple of months, so I didn't really worked at all. I was just floating around and just not doing too much.

And it wasn't until I came into contact with a women's only [inaudible] based in the town that I got talking to the lady. I approached her for some work selling

supplements which I also knew nothing about. And she said to me she didn't have any work but maybe I could start a boot camp that could promote her business.

I remember just the second time hearing that thinking, "Oh, I just didn't know who would want to be trained by me, and who would be happy to be coached by me and pay money to someone who"-- I didn't think I knew much at the time.

Anyway, a week later, we started. We sent out a text to ten girls and we had a couple of slam balls and skipping ropes, and that was definitely the first day that I found, and I know it sounds cheesy but my calling, it was. I absolutely love creating workouts, teaching women how to get fit and strong, like encouraging women to introduce themselves to each other, get to know each other, build friendships and create a community. I was very, very much excited by that.

JACK: Yeah, right. And so, you're back on this journey of business ownership which a lot of listeners here would do the same. They're probably a clinic owner who found their genius in the technical stuff of what they do, decide to launch a business, and then realized that running a business is going to be different to being a physio, or speech pathologist, or a gym owner. [Inaudible] of being a coach versus a business owner?

NERIDA: Well, it all kind of happened to me at one time. I only really ran the boot camp for a couple of months before I went all in, and decided to open up my own business. But the journey has been completely one of the most challenging but most rewarding of my life.

I don't know one personality that really knows what they are doing when it comes to running their own business. I think we're all winging it. I think everybody is just doing their best every day. That's what I am really, really conscious of making sure people know that, because I think people have this deception that businesses are killing it or doing really, really well.

But really, they don't see the hours, the work, the effort, the stress. The inconsistencies that's going to it, and I definitely have felt all of that. And in saying that, I think that it does get easier as you go on. I'm in my fifth year now, so I definitely think that if you build a good reputation and you build really good relationships with other businesses around you, I think you can succeed. And if you genuinely love what you're doing, you will succeed. But, it's definitely very hard work for sure.

JACK: Yeah, I love that. I think that would resonate with a lot of people, that we're giving it our best and there might be some successes along the way. But the reality is that we're all pretty humble, open-minded, ready to learn and embrace change, and continually get better. I think you really personified that.

So, there's a couple of threads that I want to pull on here, Ness. And the first one would be, not what we mentioned at the top, but women in business and leadership. You know, I personally am a little bit torn. A part of me goes, "Yes, let's empower women and celebrate women in business."

The rest just goes, "We're kind of no different, right? We're all just business owners doing our best." But can you speak in to some of the challenges and lessons that you've learned as a woman and a prominent woman in a competitive space in business?

NERIDA: Like I said, going back to touching on how important it is to build relationships. I would have to say that's my number one focus. I am forever wanting to get to know other business owners in the industry, in the area, and even in other industries.

Because, I think that I can learn so much from them, and just all kind of being in the same corner and working on the same thing together I think really helps. I really believe that your own development and your own personal journey—I tried to read whatever books I can read, listen to whatever podcast I can get value from, just constantly learning.

And like I think that when it comes to being a woman, I don't know. I don't really feel like I've really experienced—I think I really experienced more of challenging my previous role than I did having my own business. You know what I mean?

I actually think working in a really male demographic, like a really strong kind of cultural male environment was more challenging for me than what it is now. And I think because I am a leader and I am the one that is forging the path for the girls that I work with. I can just run things how I like and I can create the culture that I think is best from that perspective.

I tend to spend a lot of time networking with other women, other businesses, and stuff like that. I don't think I've noticed any kind of discrimination or anything from

that point. But, I think, in my previous roles, definitely certain more so.

JACK: That's fascinating. That's really interesting. Can you give us a snapshot about Lissome, about the gym? And tell us the 30 thousand-foot view of the type of gym you've created. Because this is not just another crossfit gym. It is not just another bootcamp. It's pretty special. Can you describe it for us?

NERIDA: The best way that I can describe it is that we are just trying to bring women of all ages, shapes, and sizes together in an environment where everyone is on the same playing field. Everyone's just working out to be the best that they can be. So, we're not all about anyone thing.

We're about getting women fit, getting women strong, and getting them skilled. So every day, they come in. They're working on their strength. They're working on their fitness. They're working on learning a new skill, and that's what keeps it enjoyable. And no two days are ever the same. You will never walk in to my gym and do the same workout that you've done previously.

The beauty of that is that variety is what makes people keep coming back. But also, creating an environment where people have to be humble. People have to be a part of a team together. So, we're really big on our high fives. We're really big on putting those women up on a pedestal that on any given day, wouldn't be—they come into the gym and they might be overweight, or they might be older, or they may have come from absolutely no background of doing any kind of training before.

And we really like to put them in the limelight, put them up in a pedestal and show women what is achievable and what is attainable if you are brave enough to step through the doors. I really understand how nerve-wrecking it can be, coming in and trying something new for the first time. But it really is just functional, fundamental exercise. It's just making women fit and strong, and trying to encourage them to live their best lives.

JACK: I love it. Can you talk us through then now that you've mentioned the experience? What is it like? I know you are very deliberate around the onboarding and that initial client experience of Lissome members. What does that look like?

NERIDA: Generally, when people come in to the gym the very first time, we would buddy them up with a friend. And everyone has been through this process. And the beauty of this is everyone really understands how daunting it is. So I think,

buddying these girls out with someone else's who has been through that journey is excellent because they get it. They can relate.

So we buddy them up with someone, and that person kind of be your buddy like when you first started kindergarten, and you had that older friend kind of holding hand and walking around the school and showing you where everything is, that is exactly what your buddy at the gym will do. So, that is kind of your very first session at the gym.

Then, as you start to progress and you start to get your own bearings and you know what is happening, and you can get a kind of feel to the place, you are kind of branched out to be on your own, but people will still be checking with you. You obviously, constantly got coaches who are able to help you out and keeping an eye on you.

Like, we might have anywhere between one and five given new girls at any one time, so we are very much always making sure that we keep an eye on them, see how they are going, making sure they're being given really adequate progression.

So, I think what is really intimidating is girls look at our Instagram and see videos and photos of girls doing pull ups and girls lifting huge weights. But, you have to remember that they didn't start there. They progressed. So, for anyone, there is always a progression, and we can tell pretty much when we assess you, what your capability may be. And some girls go straight to doing pull ups for the day. Some have to do ring rows. But there is something for everyone.

JACK: I love that. But this makes a lot of sense as well. And I am interested how clinic owners can take that lesson into their clinic, and perhaps leverage those long term clients, and introduce them to perhaps those early on in their clinical journey, at the beginning.

Another thing that really fascinates me Ness, is how you got—you practice fitness. You practice group-based gym classes. But beyond that, you've created a community. You provide not just fitness classes, but there's breakfast, runs and retreats, and all these stuff. What's the theory behind that, and has it worked for your business?

NERIDA: A hundred percent it has. It's the best thing that we've ever done. We really had created these little habits that are just such a part of our culture. People

know that it happens every week, regardless. And you know what, this is something that I find really interesting. I feel like we've been talking about community for years. So, we've been talking about how important it is to have a community. That is all well and good, and that is one of my big focuses.

So when it comes to, say, Wednesday morning after run, going for a coffee. When it comes to Saturday mornings, I'm there and so are all my coaches and they know that a part of their role is being a part of the culture and the community. Turning up to Saturday morning breakfast—every week, regardless of whatever they've got planned.

If someone has a birthday, someone has an engagement party, like you do your best to go along, and I feel like so many gym owners these days are talking about community, but they're not actually really doing what needs to be done to create it.

So, for four years, I put my members and their social experience in front of my own. There have been plenty of times where on a Saturday morning, I'm absolutely exhausted and I'd much rather sleep in, but I know, I have to get up and I have to go. And the beauty over it is, as soon as I'm there, I feel so much better and being around the girls energizes me and it's why I do what I do.

They probably don't even request that I'm there. It's not a big deal to them, but it's a big deal to me, and it's really important to me that my coaches see me doing it. So, therefore, they have to do it. Building those little habits and those little rituals in, I think, has been the best thing for our gym, and it's something to be constantly being commented to me about.

They're always saying, "Oh, we noticed you do the run, we noticed you do the swim. We noticed you do the Saturday morning breakfast and it's such a big [inaudible], and it is such a big part of what we do.

JACK: I love that, the ritualizing and making it a habit, making it a culture to provide value for your members, but also with your team. That's a really key leadership lesson there. I think that in a clinic sense, often, clinic owners struggle with practitioners who just want to do the treatment and neglect the rest of the client experience.

And so, what you are saying here is, have your staff not only deliver your core product or your core service, but make sure there's a culture of going above and beyond to retain a member for life, yeah?

NERIDA: One hundred percent. I probably lean the other way; I'm more about the client experience than I am the actual product. And the girls always laugh at me because the trainers are always bringing stuff into me and showing me things. I'm always absolutely in awe of how knowledgeable and how much they are constantly learning and advancing, and how much they are actually all super interested in strength and conditioning training, functional fitness and the actual ins and outs of all the exercises.

And that to me, like that's secondary, and I know that probably sounds really bad. But at the end of the day, I do barely any coaching now, so I've effectively managed myself out of being a coach in the gym, I now just run the place. And I just create the experience for my leaders to follow through with. So for me, my girls—they have all the knowledge. They have all that. What I'm trying to do is bring that into the culture of what we have at Lissome and put that extra element on top of it.

JACK: And I guess you've got to put aside your own selfishness or pride and go, "Maybe I'm not the best coach. Maybe I am not the best health practitioner anymore. My primary role as the owner is to take care of the team. The team will take care of the clients. And the clients will take care of the business." Is that right?

NERIDA: One hundred percent. I think this is one thing. I've never had a problem with putting my girls up around, like I joke about, constantly with the girls, that they don't need me around anymore. It's like I'm old news. I may as well just go away and I love that. I'm not threatened by that at all.

And I think if you are, you need to have a good long hard look at yourself, because the worst thing you can have in your business is people that are incompetent. When people are running that business for you and doing a better job than you, I know it is scary, because I constantly worry about my girls leaving me and going to work for someone else.

But then I think, "Well, how can I make it, so that my business is so good and I look after them so well, and I create such an amazing experience for them working at Lissome that they would never leave?" So, that then creates this whole element of

not only the members really enjoying training there, but my coaches like, they love what they do. And I love that.

I love creating this little team, and creating this little hub of women. That's my big goal, not only to affect tens of thousands of women to be stronger, fitter and a part of the community, but also to create a couple hundred women working in careers that they love, that every day they go home and they just, hand on their heart, love what they are doing and they feel that they are making a difference in the world.

Like, I joke about that all the time. I have no problem. I am the worst coach at Lissome. I'll tell you that right now, and I am happy about that. I am happy about that.

JACK: Look, if I was a female, I'll be signing up the coach at Lissome.

NERIDA: We get that all the time from plenty of guys, don't worry.

JACK: Look, there's so many great lessons in there, from women in leadership and business, through to creating community, amazing experiences. I think the listeners have got so much out of that. And I would love for them to be able to see what happens in action. So, if someone wanted to check out Lissome or yourself, what are some of the social channels or websites they could have a look at to see it for themselves?

NERIDA: We have a website, lissome.net.au. We also have a very active social media pages, so we have [Miss Lissome](#) on Instagram and Facebook. I am also very active on my own Instagram and Facebook as well. My name is obviously Nerida Bint. So, please, head on over. Check out what we're all about. We've got heaps of FAQs on our website. So, absolutely, any question you might have can be answered there.

We do a seven-day trial as well for anybody that might be interested in coming. And, we're about to open up a new site in Maitland soon, so in the next twelve months, I really am focused on growing this business to be as large as it can be and trying to affect as many women in Australia as possible. So, hopefully we'll be coming to a city near all of your listeners very soon.

JACK: Super stuff! And to be clear, for listeners, Lissome is spelled L-i-s-s-o-m-e. So it looks like Lissome. To some people, it's lissome—l-i-s-s-o-m-e.net.au or Miss

Lissome on Instagram, especially that there's heaps there to checkout. Ness, thank you so much for joining us. That has been amazing.

NERIDA: Thank you for having me. I am so enjoyed to [inaudible] I always do. I always learn so much from you as well. So, thank you for having me.

JACK: My pleasure. And listeners, for any of the show notes, all links to those social platforms or websites, you can head over to www.clinicmastery.com/podcast. All the show notes, links, everything you'll find over there. And if you need any help to grow your clinic, that's the place where you can jump on, grab our free master class.

You'll have the tips and tricks to be able to grow your clinic for free, if you head over to that website. We would love to see you over there. Thank you for sharing your earbuds with us. As always, we really appreciate your reviews and ratings, and tagging your friend, and sharing this out with the world. And we look forward to bringing you another episode really soon. Bye for now.

This is the Grow My Clinic Podcast by Clinic Mastery where we help you deliver amazing client experiences to grow your clinic.

[OUTRO MUSIC]