**Futureproof Your Career Podcast - Elise Stevens & Kim Jones "How to Stand Out in the Job Market"**

**Elise Stevens**

Hello and welcome to another episode of Future Proof Your Career! My name is Elise Stevens and today I have the fabulous Kim Jones and we're going to be talking about how to stand out in the whole job application, job submission, job promotion scenarios. So Kim just if you could introduce yourself that would be fantastic.

**Kim Jones**

Thanks, Elise! It's such a pleasure to be here with you today! I'm Kim Jones, I am an Executive career and Leadership coach, my story is that I came to this work after a 25-year corporate career.

I worked my way up from administrative assistant all the way to the C-suite, thinking that it was going to help me achieve my goals and my vision for the career that I wanted to have and found that along the way I continued to struggle with concepts of wanting to have more purpose and meaning in my career.

About five six years ago I finally made the decision to make a move and make my way into work that I love, which I now have. I run a thriving Coaching and Consulting business, I serve mostly women who are in similar situations as I found myself in my career, where we find ourselves having invested so much in the work that we do and wanting to really figure out what might be next for us if it's not the fulfilling path that we had anticipated it might be.

 I work with my clients to help them figure out what it is that would light them up every day and bring meaning and purpose in their lives and then we've set a plan for how to achieve it.

**Elise Stevens**

That's fantastic and I think it's much needed because let's face it, when I started my work life after University, all those years ago, I just thought it'd be like this linear progression and of course it's not and I don't know what I was thinking, just call me naïve.

When you're idealistic coming out of University you've got your first job and then over time the corporate life lose its excitement. I've worked in corporate life for all of my career and sometimes you win and sometimes it's like the old snakes and ladders game. Sometimes you're climbing up the ladder and sometimes you're slipping down the the snake, but one of the things that I am passionate about is, especially for women over 40 and 50s and 60s, is how can we stand out in in the job market.

You read a lot about ageism, people not valuing older women here in Australia, the largest cohort of homelessness is women over 50, who have raised their children, divorced and have no superannuation slash pension.

The question I posed to you today is how can we stand out and have our values seen and what can we do to help achieve that.

**Kim Jones**

It is such an important and great question! I mentioned that I work with a lot of women who are in career transition, a lot of women come to the decision to change course somewhere around midlife, often earlier in our 20s we're so busy building and trying to create the life that we hear from societal messages is the path to happiness and it takes some time to really realize that that is not the case for many people.

Most people are following a script that is not their own and by the time women come to me they may be in their late 40s their 50s their 60s and one of the biggest concerns that I hear from them is that they won't be noticed or considered for the jobs that they might be interested in because of this exact issue that you mentioned around ageism and unfortunately not only is ageism a real thing but we tend to internalize those messages.

We look at ourselves through that lens and think that we don't have anything to offer or we’re not current enough, young enough, fresh enough with my skills and ideas to be considered for jobs in this particular point in time and what I have really come to appreciate, and this is where Covid actually has shifted things in the favor of older workers, is that companies are really rethinking the types of skills that they want their employees to possess coming in.

It's not just about your technical skills, but it could be things about how adaptable you are, how well you deal with chaotic changing disruptive situations. It can be about how much experience you have in navigating the kinds of situations that happen in businesses that people, who don't have a lot of experience have never navigated.

If you look at job descriptions and the way they're written now, you're seeing more and more that companies are recruiting for people who possess empathy who possess emotional intelligence, who are resilient, who are resourceful, who can come back after a setback and guess what, older workers tend to be so much more developed in those areas than their yoga counterparts.

So one tip that I have, one piece of advice that I have for women, who are coming in, is first of all we have to lose the mindset that we don't have anything of value to offer.

If you bring that in it's like you're apologizing or feeling like they would be doing you a favor if they offered you a role because of your age and that's simply just not true.

Instead think about the value, the soft skills, the leadership development, the kinds of attributes that we've developed over the course of many decades and really highlighting that as a contrast to some of the younger workers and ensuring that companies are also thinking about how to be more inclusive, not just of race and gender and sexual orientation, sexual preference, but also around different age and experience groups.

What I advise my clients to do is really think about highlighting those strengths and to actively have conversations with potential employers about how they've brought those kinds of skills in, or are capable of bringing those kinds of skills in, to help really navigate the challenges that 21st century companies are facing with all of the disruption and the shifts that we're seeing because of globalization pandemics technology shifts, disruptive patterns and and products and markets etc.

**Elise Stevens**

You bring up some very interesting points in what you just said and I think that one of the things is that we do have to battle and win against societal pressures. People may think that a woman in her 50s is not going to be ambitious and I think that's not true. The ambition might have changed, but it doesn't mean to say that you're still not ambitious and want something fulfilling for your career.

Most people seem to relate ambition to the C-suite and I think that's an important thing to say that it's okay to still be ambitious in your 50s and 60s, to want to do something and to continue to work and not just take the path to part-time and retirement.

There are still people that want to have meaningful careers and so if we look at Dr Fauci, who is 80 something and I think he's retiring at the end of 2022. It's really fabulous to see someone that is still valued at that age and maybe can help change the conversation about the value that older people are bringing to the workforce.

I don't actually like the word older, but anyway we'll move on from that.

**Kim Jones**

Yes, a couple of things come to mind when you mention that. The first is that you're touching on something really important and it is ageism. What sits behind the ageism are stereotypes and biases about what people tend to think older workers connotate.

I don't love the word either, but for now we'll continue to use it because most people understand what that is. For example what generally employers are reluctant about is ambition that's a really key one. They see older workers as being less ambitious, as needing to be paid higher than their younger counterparts and having not working as hard for a higher rate.

They also see older workers as not being up to date or current in their skill sets so a couple of ways to think about maneuvering within that is if you can show an employer early on that you are not fitting the mold of the typical stereotype.

Ways to do that is to show that you are a continuous learner, perhaps you're taking courses or you stay up on certain trends or you know that you are involved in communities and things that are constantly allowing you to grow and stretch.

That's a really amazing way to let employers know that you're not staying stagnant.

Another thing that I advise my older workers to do is to get to show some kind of a tech technological presence because older workers often get tagged with this idea that they're not going to come in and be current on technology.

A really great way to do that for a job seeker is to develop a personal website in addition to a standard two-dimensional CV or resume.

Having a personal web site that shows more of a three-dimensional picture of who you are as a person, so it's partly a LinkedIn profile, partly a resume and then it highlights some of the other factors and the kinds of projects that you've been involved in.

There are really cool ways to have interaction on a website where you're clicking on things and seeing more information in certain areas. There are ways that companies can actually get on your calendar, if they're interested in talking to you, they can download your CV etc.

I actually have an offering to clients, who are interested in something like that, and that's a really great way to show that you are not fitting the mold of the typical worker who's shy or staying away from technology.

And then as it goes to ambition, I think it's really important to point out some of the most successful business people, who are doing amazing things in their careers, are older women, women over 50, in particular 50s, 60s and 70s.

They are taking the experience along with an attitude of “I'm not so geared towards what the world thinks of me anymore, I'm going to make my mark in the way that I want to” and they're doing really amazing things, they're building businesses, they're having huge impacts and coming armed with a couple of statistics about it - I'm really pleased to be in this cohort of women, who are making their mark in the world.

I really plan to do that myself through the work that I could offer to your organization with my contributions and to mention a couple of examples and help people connect the dots. If you look at some of the people out there in the popular space, who are older women, and see what they're doing, it starts to shift people's mindset that people close to retirement are not really going to want to show up and do much.

**Elise Stevens**

Yes, as you said you have to put yourself out there and I love that idea about that website and just being able to show different things, because let's face it, putting your application through the ATS system, you know that it strips all the personality out there.

It's my understanding that they're just searching for keywords and you know perhaps the answer is calling out the elephant in the room and saying “hey you know I am who I am, here's what I can bring to you”. A great way to do that is on your website, having a great cover letter. I know I hate writing cover letters, I have to say I'm just putting it out there.

And the fundamental thing is the self-belief and the self-confidence that you're not a dinosaur and you have something to give and you are staying up with all the tech.

**Kim Jones**

Absolutely, and if you look at some of these amazing women, who are doing incredible things in their 50s, 60s and 70s, I can tell you right now that they are not apologizing for their age and experience. They are not thinking that they're dinosaurs, they are coming at it with things that they can add value to, with a belief in the contributions that they can make and that kind of energy is so important for us to convey.

So my thought is for us to just stop apologizing for the fact that we are the ages that we are and start to really celebrate the things that we've learned in our time in business and how that can really be a significant contribution to so many companies and if the company is not going to look at you for your age then it's not going to be a great environment there are plenty of other companies that will.

**Elise Stevens**

So we talked about self-belief, embracing Tech, having a good presence on social media, whether it be a website or investing in posting on LinkedIn is always a good way. What is the importance of being proactive about keeping your Tech skills and your other skills current?

**Kim Jones**

I find that it's important to be fluent in how the world communicates today through technology. That's first and foremost.

The other thing is to not fall into this mindset trap that if you're older you're not capable of learning tech. I think that's what holds a lot of people back is they get afraid to get in and try and to experiment with different things.

I love your comment about posting on social media, even just learning how to post a video, how to make a video. There are YouTube videos out there on almost everything that you can imagine and I don't have a lot of knowledge about specific technologies either that I need to run my business, but I'm not afraid to go in and just do a Google search, it comes up with a video, I watch it and find that this is actually five steps and it's easy.

That's the thing I think to note about technology today is it is so user- friendly that literally anyone can do it with a little bit of effort and the right mindset.

So what I would encourage people to do is just get fluent in how they can present themselves and then with respect to what they need to know coming into a company, if there's a platform that you don't know that they use they will teach it to you.

The important thing is a lot of companies will say well do you know this platform or do you know that that technology, and it is important for people not to apologize for not knowing it, but just saying that they are not familiar with that specific application, but they dabble in all kinds of different Tech areas and love learning about new ways of doing things using technology and they are looking forward to getting oriented with that technology.

A quick learner who is not afraid to learn is a lot better than someone who is apologizing for not being familiar with an application.

**Elise Stevens**

And what about visibility in your local market? I live here in Brisbane Australia, how important is it to get out and meet people in real life?

**Kim Jones**

It is very important and I might be biased, because if I look back on all of the most significant accomplishments that I have achieved in my career, whether in corporate or now that I'm running my own business, almost every single one of them, without exception, can be traced back to someone that I've networked with a connection that I've made through my network. It's amazing how much being present and in a conversation with people and them getting to know you and you getting to know them leads to an insight or an idea that can lead you to a really great place.

In the example of an older worker, who is trying to get back into the workforce or they want to switch jobs and they're not feeling confident that they'll get recognized, the best way to overcome ageism and age bias is to actually have people get to know you.

How often have we had a thought about someone based on their demographic, that when we get to know them we then think that this person doesn't fit the typical profile.

Getting out and networking is not only a great way to become aware of opportunities, that you might not have otherwise even had any inkling about, but it's also a great way for you to start to get to know people, so that you can bust through some of those biases, that can can be closely held, if you're just looking at a person on a piece of paper or talking to them for five minutes in a informational interview or something like that.

**Elise Stevens**

What are your tips on finding good and effective networking groups? As I look around Brisbane, it's really difficult to find something that I can contribute to and to engage with.

**Kim Jones**

There's a couple of tips that I have. The first would be to check with the local Chamber of Commerce, they almost always have specially business oriented networking groups that you can participate in. The second thing is my answer to almost everything, which is Google is your friend, so just even doing a Google search on Brisbane networks in-person networks or networking groups based in Brisbane would be a great way to see what's what's out there.

And then that networking doesn't necessarily have to be face to face, it can just be online where you are participating in virtual networking groups. So if you happen to be affiliated with a certain type of profession, you can find networking groups for almost any type of profession or interest group. And most now have online networking communities, for those two and a half years of Covid I was doing all of my networking virtually and it did not slow down the benefits that I was getting from networking. So my advice is to just start to do some research on what's available in your area and for your profession or interest area.

**Elise Stevens**

It's a good point and I think that I know for myself I go in peaks and troughs about interest in networking. I think the important thing is not to see it as like this Global Mass, but to think of it more about one or two people and simply reaching out to someone on LinkedIn that you haven't seen for a while or you know just to catch up and say “hi” it's just as good.

**Kim Jones**

It is just as good and Linkedin is an amazing tool for networking, you can do searches and find specific people. Let's say that you're interested in a particular line of work you can do searches of your own network and your networks on certain job titles. There are ways to do all of this in LinkedIn, you can connect with them, ask them for a 15-minute call to get to know them etc.

Let's say you're a woman, who wants to change her career and you're interested in going into Learning and Development, let's say you can go into LinkedIn, you can search your own network for anyone who has Learning and Development in your in their title, you can search their networks and if they know people you know, you can ask them for an introduction.

There are all kinds of ways to build networks in areas that you are curious about.

I should mention that you and I got to know each other through a connection that was made in a network, that I belong to Provisors and one of our mutual colleagues and contacts.

I thought we would be great for each other's businesses and here we are on a podcast, so that's how it happens, so I highly encourage people to invest in networking.

**Elise Stevens**

And how I got to make our mutual connection, Susan, was that I was looking to interview someone about emotional intelligence and I saw that she had done something and so I nicely wrote to her via direct messenger on LinkedIn and I have made some lovely relationships with people by taking the chance that someone will respond and not think that I'm a nefarious person.

**Kim Jones**

It is such a good point because I think this is actually one of the reasons why people shy away from networking is because they are worried that they won't get a response, or that they're going to feel like they're wasting somebody's time.

The way that I advise my clients on this is to think about the fact that people who like to network, and make it a priority in their lives, are the kinds of people that you're out there trying to find. If you happen to try to connect with somebody and they don't respond back to you, it's more than likely that they fall into the camp.

But thinking that I don't have time to network, I don't see the value in it is a mindset flaw. When you find those people who are fellow networkers and they have large groups of connections, that they can extend to you, and they're very well resourced, you only need a couple of those in your own network to really have it make all of the difference.

It's not about focusing on the five people who never responded back, it's about focusing on the other five and then maybe there's a subset of one or two in there that really become invaluable for you and whatever you're trying to accomplish in your life and business.

**Elise Stevens**

Such a great chat today, so I'm just going to wrap up and ask you your top tip about how to stand out.

**Kim Jones**

My top tip about how to stand out is to be unapologetically who you are as an older woman, with lots to offer and to really help craft a narrative that ties in all of the strengths and the skills that you have developed, as someone who's had years of experience and to use that as a contrast.

Not to say that you know there shouldn't be other types of workers coming in at all, but just to say that it's in the balance of having folks with these particular types of experiences, and then people from different age groups with other types of experience that really create that inclusive environment that companies are striving so hard for.

Link your strengths and who you are to that broader goal that companies want to have such as diversity and inclusivity, that is a great way to make you stand out in the job market.

**Elise Stevens**

Yes, I agree totally just own Who You Are. I can't stress enough that knowing who you are and what's important to you is so important. From my own experience, I've had to twist myself into 100 different ways to fit situations and it never ended well.

**Kim Jones**

It is so true, it never does end as well if you try to fit the mold of what you think other people want. I didn't leave my corporate career until I was in my late 40s. I launched my business at around the time that I turned 50 and the biggest thing that I did for myself was to ignore the messages that were in my head and in the world telling me that I was too old to do this and that I should be thinking about ways that I could shrink into my next couple of decades, and not listening to that has been the biggest gift I could have given myself for my career.

**Elise Stevens**

Yes and I think that's the big thing, thinking big rather than thinking smaller. We all have different journeys in our 40s and 50s and 60s but live it.

**Kim Jones**

100% agree

**Elise Stevens**

I love that, well, Kim, so fabulous to talk to you today!

**Kim Jones**

It was wonderful being here on your podcast, it was such a pleasure thank you for having me.

**Elise Stevens**

Thank you for sharing your fabulous insight that ends another episode of Future Proof Your Career.