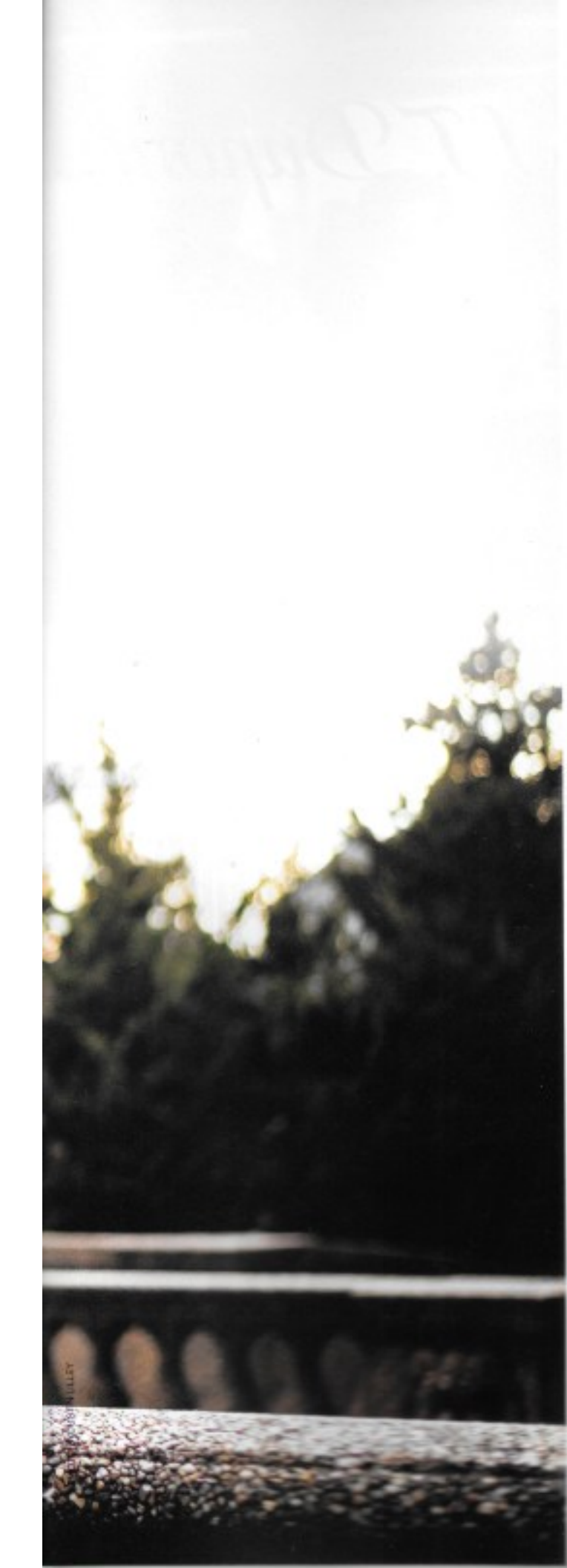


GoodWorld for a Good World

*Dale Nirvani Pfeifer turned her love of social media
into a platform for philanthropy.*

Written by Dara Pettinelli





Dale Nirvani Pfeifer still remembers the first time she asked someone to invest in her business idea. She had spent months waking up and going to bed at odd hours—2:00 A.M., 3:00 A.M., 4:00 A.M.—utilizing every spare minute away from her consulting work in the nonprofit sector to get GoodWorld off the ground. It was to be “the Kayak of new philanthropy,” aggregating different charitable services that one could donate money to, in addition to listing impact investment opportunities. She was excited to present and amped by her belief in the service.

But about three minutes into her presentation, the potential investor started poking holes in her plan. “He just started asking me all these questions and really pushing back on my [business] model really hard,” she says. “He was walking all over GoodWorld.” Though at first she felt defensive and “respectfully disagreed” with his feedback, it ended up being the moment that changed the course of her career.

Pfeifer was raised in a small town in New Zealand by parents fiercely dedicated to helping others. “They put it into my brain to always find opportunities to help people,” she says. In a Huffington Post article she wrote last year entitled “Giving Is Your Superpower,” Pfeifer describes her mother as someone who would make her give away her Easter eggs and take her to babysit for struggling families. This commitment to generosity stayed with Pfeifer through her career, directing the course of her work on an admittedly subconscious level.



FROM TOP TO
BOTTOM:
L-R: Evan Burfield,
Brandon Pollack,
Chelsea Clinton, and
Pfeifer;

Pfeifer with Australian
Prime Minister
Malcolm Turnbull;

Pfeifer with former
UK Prime Minister
David Cameron.



As a researcher, she spent years studying the intricacies of human relationships from the tribal level to the business leadership level. This work led her to job opportunities in the United States, specifically in the nonprofit sector. Being so far away from home, she became a self-described social media junkie, using it mainly to stay close to family and friends. "There's such a power to social media platforms to connect with other people in increasingly meaningful ways," Pfeifer says. While she acknowledges that there's a downside to all the connectedness—such as resulting feelings of isolation—she also believes that social media taps into universal values of love, compassion, empathy, generosity, and gratefulness.

Pfeifer remembers a post she came across while browsing her newsfeed, written by a renowned Afghan educator. She decided she wanted to donate to his cause, but while trying to do so became frustrated with the multistep process and bad user experience. "We're so used to things being easy and seamless these days," she says. "I realized there was an opportunity to increase that level of love, empathy, and compassion on social media just by making it easier for people to connect through giving."

The market confirmed this hunch. In the midst of her nonprofit work, Pfeifer had been witnessing a huge change in the way people were giving money to charities. "In just three years, the amount of people giving online went from 12 percent to 17 percent," she recalls. "As I noticed this trend that was happening, I was captured by this idea of 'How can we bring giving to the Millennial generation, and how can we create these moments of connection and generosity on social media to do that?'"

After creating the concept for GoodWorld and coming to



terms with the constructive criticism of her potential investor, Pfeifer ditched the idea of creating a site that social media would drive to and instead focused on using social media as both the vehicle and the platform.

"What I realized was that if we could sort out how to do donations on social media, we could also figure out how to do financial payments on so many other verticals—commerce and politics and all sorts of other things," Pfeifer says. "That push from him, even though it was a pretty tough moment, actually turned

out to be a catalytic moment for the organization to create the business model we needed to attract the investors we have now."

Today, GoodWorld boasts 1,600 partner charities—a mix of internationally recognized organizations and smaller, local ones—and over 30,000 users across Facebook and Twitter. The concept is simple: When someone wants to give money to a charity, they simply post on a partner charity's Facebook page, or tweet the organization with the hashtag #donate, plus the dollar amount they want to give. The company operates on a transaction-based fee model: 4.8 percent of a donation goes to GoodWorld, and 2.2 or 3.2 percent (depending on the credit card type) goes to Stripe, the company's payments processor.

Just this year, GoodWorld was recognized by *Fast Company* as one of the top 10 most innovative companies in social good alongside Facebook, TOMS, and Indiegogo. To date, it's the only hashtag-to-donate technology provider on both Facebook and Twitter.

The days of Pfeifer struggling to convince others that GoodWorld has potential are moving farther away; it's a far cry from the \$100 she had in her bank account back in 2012. During that time, GoodWorld staffers included herself and a couple of devel-

opers who worked part time to build the early product. With little funds, Pfeifer convinced a friend, who happened to be an award-winning developer, to take a month off from his day job and help her perfect the product at a significantly reduced rate. "It was a huge leap of faith," she says. She was able to pay him using money she made through the consulting jobs she did on the side and with a little help from her mom. "I literally had no money for two years—I was barely scraping by—but I was so passionate about the mission of the company and the good I thought we could do in the world, I just knew I [had to] keep going," she says. "During those really tough days, there was the prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi ["For it is in giving that we receive"]—I used to listen to it a lot."

Pfeifer is driven not only by a desire to do good in the world but also by a fear of failure. Rather than focusing on how she can't do



Pfeifer leading a GoodWorld workshop.

PHOTO BY JEREMY LONG

PROFILE
DALE NIRVANI PFEIFER

something, she will work tirelessly until she figures it out, a skill that has served her well in her career as a researcher and later as an entrepreneur. "I know that if I can focus on something for long enough, I can find a path through. That's from perseverance. People celebrate me as this really intelligent person. I don't really know about that. I just think I'm really, really hardworking." So where some people see unbeatable challenges, Pfeifer sees possibilities.

It's this problem-solving mindset that serves as the foundation for GoodWorld's company culture. "We're so committed to finding the right path and questioning all of our assumptions about everything," she remarks. "We [want to] create a payment system that results in something really good happening every time someone makes a payment through it."

So far, this commitment is seeing results. Now equipped with a staff of 16, GoodWorld has helped to raise \$3 million for charities around the world this year alone. Next on the horizon are plans to expand to other social

networks such as Snapchat and Instagram, creating a referral program for donors, and developing corporate partnerships. Though Pfeifer has a distinct ability to stay focused, she does share a very common trait among successful entrepreneurs: the ability to identify and seize an opportunity.

For the last four years, GoodWorld has been the solution that Pfeifer—and perhaps the world—has been looking for. Pfeifer has presented her company to President Barack Obama, former United Kingdom prime minister David Cameron, former *Washington Post* publisher Katharine Weymouth, and countless dignitaries, some of whom became investors. To keep GoodWorld's momentum going, Pfeifer works practically the same crazy hours she did while getting it off the ground. In between networking, traveling, and sitting in product meetings she makes the time to meditate, a practice that keeps her connected to her personal mission and, in turn, GoodWorld's mission.

One of the things it has taught her is how to align the head to the heart and action. "One of our company mantras is 'Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity,'" she says. "It's about removing all the barriers to giving. So if you see a child in need on a post and you can act on it right there in the moment, then that creates an aligned, spiritually uplifting experience. If we can create these experiences en masse on social media, what could that do to help humanity?" **LM**



L-R: James Windon, Sheila Herring, Pfeifer, and Colby Itkowitz