

Danielle Cadhit – Revolutionizing Generosity: The Coralus Effect

Host: Maggie John

Overview:

Danielle Cadhit joins us to discuss her experience bringing a human-centred approach to investing in and empowering entrepreneurs. Danielle (Dane) Cadhit is a creative practitioner, futurist, and strategist passionate about systems design and transformation. She primarily impacts this space as the Director of Systems & Emergent Strategy at Coralus, a global community of changemakers working on initiatives, projects, and businesses practicing radical generosity in order to create a world that has humans thriving. Cadhit shares how Coralus has radicalized funding structures for women entrepreneurs, what it means to practice radical generosity, and why investment structures should strive to imitate nature.

Highlights from our conversation include:

1. Money is just one kind of capital. Entrepreneurs, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, need access to social capital as well.
2. One of the most supportive moves investors can make is to not take equity in the companies they help launch.
3. By making decision-makers more diverse and reflective of Canada's population, we can make way for more unique and innovative ideas across Canada's small business landscape.

MAGGIE:

We are back. This is Magnet Network Live at the Spirit of York in the heart of the Distillery District right here in Toronto.

I'm your host, Maggie John, and I'm now joined by Danielle Cadet. She is a creative practitioner, futurist and strategist passionate about systems design and transformation.

She is the Director of Systems and Emergent Strategy at Coralus, a global community of changemakers working on initiatives, projects, and businesses, practicing radical generosity in order to create a world that has humans thriving. I love this.

Over the last decade, her experiences range from the areas of technology, finance, operations, grassroots organizing, and maker education. Welcome, Danielle.

DANIELLE:

Thank you. So happy to be here.

MAGGIE:

You know what? I have to say, not that the others weren't amazing, but I've been looking forward to this conversation.

DANIELLE:

Oh, thank you.

MAGGIE:

I really have. I'm curious as to what you do. So tell me a little bit more about Coralus.

DANIELLE:

So Coralus started in 2015. It was formerly known as SHE-EO and it was an experiment in what we call radical generosity. And its founder, Vicky Saunders, is a serial entrepreneur who had a dream where she opened up the newspaper and the headline read, "A Million Women Crowdfund a Billion Dollars and Don't Expect a Financial Return."

MAGGIE:

Wow. That gives me goosebumps. Yeah.

DANIELLE:

Yeah. And so she started in Canada first, in living rooms, in cozy spaces like the ones that we've been hosting in at Magnet here, and enrolling women to pool their money together. \$1,100 each, into a half a million dollar fund at first, invited in applicants who are founders that identify as women or non-binary. Apply for this funding. And these are women who majority own the company and are also working on world-changing initiatives, really addressing things like healthcare, sustainability, as well as peace and justice.

And what was very different about this model of funding is that we were overturning power systems where the decisions that were made by a handful of people in a boardroom in the traditional venture capital world, we were allowing the women who pulled the money together to vote democratically on who should receive the capital that year in the form of a 0% interest loan paid back over five years.

And so that was nine years ago. And fast forward, we have really created a beautiful community of change makers who have values based in reciprocity and care and generosity that might not be so radical after all. And since then, we have circulated nearly \$20 million in capital to almost 200 ventures in five countries, Canada, U.S., the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand.

And I think the thing that I want to underline is...the chat that I gave today was about radical capital innovation and about money. But it looks like money. Feels altogether different. And that is the kind of care that we want to create in this world. And we want to invite in the other people who want to practice a new way of being, practice a new way of doing and practice a new way of being in relationship.

MAGGIE:

Why do we call this radical? Because I feel like this is what we do as women, right? We, you know, how many times, oh, I hear of a need and it's like, okay, well, I have this and I have that. And I know that Sheila up the road has...Like we just we just

organically always do this. And yet we call it radical. But it's just like it's innate. It's in us.

DANIELLE:

I think that's the really interesting thing. I've been having a really fun time saying radical so many times today, radical capital, radical generosity, but that's really it, perhaps. Innovation and something that seems so radical is actually so simple. And it's just a return to the values that make us human and have us relate to one another in ways that just feel so much better than what we have now in broken systems and kind of like this disembodied loneliness epidemic that we've been feeling here.

MAGGIE:

How do you see this transformative for the women who receive the capital, but also for the women who are empowered to also give?

DANIELLE:

I think that's where the radical generosity feels like reciprocal and how being able to use money in a different way, where you are also joining this community and contributing to invest in yourself, invest in a better world, invest in founders who are giving you hope for a new future.

And I really think that if we look at money as beyond just like a tool or a way to account for debts and things like that, how could we look at money differently? For example, money as a contribution of love or money as nutrients flowing in? The design of our fund is really regenerative, just like nature. And so we use these principles of nature because it's really a return to the roots of how we are in relationship with one another. Money could also be freedom for many people.

MAGGIE:

How have you seen that embodied, shown in the women who have received these loans?

DANIELLE:

That's a really great question, because a big part of our very simple criteria is that you are 51% or more women or non-binary led. And so that's really important because in order to be able to make some of the bold decisions and really have the leadership that you want to create and the transformation that you want to create in the world, you need to be able to have that majority ownership and to be able to have that decision making.

And because we don't take any equity in the companies and this gift of community capital is in the form of a loan, we don't take any equity and you still own the majority share of your company. And that has enabled founders to be liberated, to feel into the decisions that make the most sense rather than the playbook of success that startup world tells us is what you need to look like. Yeah.

MAGGIE:

How can organizations better empower entrepreneurs, particularly from underrepresented communities, to contribute to a thriving, inclusive economic ecosystem?

DANIELLE:

What I really love about the Coralus community is it really is all ages and stages. And so, I mean, we look very different than we did in the beginning and we're constantly evolving and inviting in new folks. And where else will you see a community where, you know, maybe a former bank executive is voting alongside her 16-year-old daughter and each woman has the same voice and same vote.

And so I think people talk a lot about like including people and bringing them to the table, but then also being able to expand that power width and that equity.

And one of the things that I'm really excited about in the evolution of Coralus is going beyond the capital, because I think if we think about financial capital, there's social capital and relationships that we need to return to that deep intimacy.

And one of the things that we're very excited about is designing structures that allow us to go deeper.

And so we have created a structure where people can find one another and form small groups around topics and themes that they really care about and might be a journey that they want to go on for the next six months with someone.

And we've had 90 people from the community who have volunteered to catalyze a pod on themes that cross so many different topics, whether it's exporting, whether it is looking at sacred plant medicine, or even navigating spaces as a person of color.

And so that really is the depth of being able to not only include people, allow them to find their peers, know that there is no playbook and they get to co-create this with one another, and that they can also have the collective leadership to shape the experience.

MAGGIE:

You know, as you were talking about that, Danielle, I was and as you painted the picture of the mom with the 16 year old and they're both voting at the same time.

So many times, you know, if you don't have the finances to do something, you can think that you're powerless.

And what I see is creating a group where collectively can come together, also provide power for another woman, but also show that your little bit, whatever that is, can help empower others.

And sometimes we can feel like, well, I only have \$100 or I only have this amount.

I can't do this. I can't invest in this area or, you know, I see a need, but I can't really pour into it.

And but collectively as a community, we can make a difference and we can change things drastically, giving freedom to another woman who can then pursue her dream. It's you talked about reciprocal.

It goes on and on and on and on.

One of the things that you touched on was also just like the contribution.

DANIELLE:

One of the things that we have evolved into is we've introduced a sliding scale access to the community.

And so we have different levels of participation because sometimes money can be a barrier and we haven't tiered anything so that you get more if you contribute at a higher level it really is your leap to make to make a contribute contribution to invest in yourself and invest in a better world and really once you're in one of the things that we like to introduce is this idea of broadening our definition of capital.

And we like to think about different forms of capital, whether it's social capital, familial capital, the capital that you have in terms of your innate skills and abilities that you can bring to the table.

And one of our core practices is called Ask and Give.

And so one of the things that you kind of experience when you join this community at first is you'll have a warm welcome. And the first thing people say here is, how can I help you?

And so really, people are leading into that spirit of generosity and the abundance of capital we have here that goes beyond financial.

MAGGIE:

I love it. Thank you so much, Danielle, for joining me today.

DANIELLE:

Thank you.