



*Project Entrepreneur*

RENT THE RUNWAY  
FOUNDATION



# THE START UP SPOTLIGHT

An Interview with Prianka Dhir Founder of Beyond  
the Booth – A Trade Show Mobile App

WRITTEN BY: JENNIFER VEGUILLA-LEZAN

**RIGHT PAGE**  
*Vendors check out  
the Beyond the  
Booth app on IOS*

Project Entrepreneur connected me with more female founders than I would have ever imagined. Over the last year since I attended the 3-day startup workshop and venture pitch competition, I've connected with nearly a hundred founders and organizations. Each one has a story that is somewhat familiar, but also incredibly inspirational. I've had the opportunity to share their stories with readers on the blog, in past issues and on our Podcast. Every time, each woman I connect with, inspires me to keep moving forward with the creative work I do. They highlight the grit, inner strength and fortitude that women entrepreneurs & creatives alike have. They are a constant reminder to not quit my daydream.

Project Entrepreneur ignites bold ideas by providing women access to the tools, training and networks needed to build scalable, economically impactful companies. The organization accomplishes this through a multi-faceted national initiative that includes a robust digital hub, multi-city events, a venture competition, and a 5-week accelerator program.

Founded by Rent the Runway co-founders Jennifer Hyman and Jenny Fleiss – in partnership with UBS – the organization is on a mission: to break traditional barriers in women's paths and democratize the knowledge and resources necessary to build impactful ventures. Having raised over \$100 million in venture capital funding for Rent the Runway, Jenn and Jenny have revolutionized the fashion retail industry and want to encourage other women to establish their own disruptive businesses.

The women who I've been able to connect with all have a common thread, an undeniable strength and creative synergy that propel their business forward. Prianka Dhir is another founder who was a part of the Project Entrepreneur cohort who I recently connected with. She's the founder of Beyond the Booth, a trade show mobile app. Prianka founded her company Beyond the Booth in Vancouver, Canada and moved her business out to San Francisco about a year and a half ago. She shared that it has been a really great experience learning the ins and



# beyond the booth

outs of growing a tech business as a female founder and took some time to go into more detail about her journey. Keep reading for the full interview:

## 1. Can you please tell us a bit about yourself, your background and what led you to pursue launching a startup ?

Coming up with new concepts and finding innovative, scrappy, non-traditional ways to grow ideas into business models was something that I truly always enjoyed. I'm originally from Vancouver, Canada and am currently building Beyond the Booth in the technology hub of San Francisco. I graduated from the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Business with a Bachelors of Commerce degree in Marketing and Entrepreneurship in 2013 and I couldn't wait to take on a venture of my own.

Immediately after graduating from Sauder, I launched a Social PR startup focused on marketing strategy for innovative brands in Vancouver. This experience led me to create a women's luxury trade show in 2015



PHOTOS COURTESY OF: BEYOND THE BOOTH / PRIANKA DHIR



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University of Cambridge

**Main Entrance**

**Free Admission**

**Hours**  
10.00 - 17.00 (10.30 - 17.00)  
12.00 - 17.00

**Not open to the public**  
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**For a full list of opening hours**  
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**Entrance**  
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On 22 April 2019, the National Gallery will announce the results of the 2019 Turner Prize exhibition.

For more information, visit [www.turnerprize.org](http://www.turnerprize.org)

No Smoking

featuring 60 exclusive local vendors and 500 attendees, with a core focus on shopping and online promotion. After attending 63 trade shows in 8 months to learn tips and tricks to improve my own trade show, I quickly realized that the problem wasn't launching a new, better show, but rather building a product to help each show and each exhibitor be more successful.

I loved seeing real people make real connections with businesses in a trade show setting, but realized that so many leads were lost due to poor marketing tactics. Launching Beyond the Booth has given me the opportunity to take this challenge head on and work with hundreds of businesses to solve a bigger, global problem in the trade show space.

## **2. Can you tell us more about Beyond the Booth and the mission/vision driving it?**

Beyond the Booth helps businesses secure up to 50% more leads on the trade show floor. We connect exhibitors and attendees through mobile offers and exclusive contests, generating more leads for exhibitors and making a streamlined and engaging experience for attendees. We're motivated by helping businesses to create memorable first impressions, which turn into stronger leads and ultimately more sales for their companies.

We're currently working with many business to consumer (B2C) trade shows across North America spanning the bridal, baby and health/lifestyle spaces and we've been able to create our own niche in the market by identifying how we can better serve the B2C show space. Many exhibitors at these shows are smaller, local businesses that have simple needs – more exposure and more sales. We've found the best ways to deliver exactly what they are looking for in a format that they find useful. Exhibitors are some of the happiest business owners because by investing in a trade show, they are opting in to invest in growing their companies. We love working with businesses that care about growth and are willing to put the time and energy into reaching their customers.

## **3. What was the process like building up your company from concept to final execution? How did this all unfold?**

Ideas usually come from necessity. As a first-time founder of a trade show with no prior experience in the trade show space, I knew I needed something to differentiate my show experience and also give my exhibitors measurable return – something they weren't getting at any other trade show. After seeing a recurring problem of measurable return at other trade shows, I sought out to build a solution that targeted the B2C trade show space and that gave me and my exhibitors analytics from the trade show experience. After putting together a business plan, I connected with an incredible investor through a mutual contact. I received great feedback from the investor, who then suggested we stay in touch over the next while to see how the product changed. After monthly Skype meetings for a year and a half, numerous product iterations and a complete rebrand, I was ready to build the product. The investor, who had now become a mentor of mine, gave me some of the best advice I ever received, "Go sell it." Without a product in hand, I was confused on how to execute sales, but he reassured me that if the idea was viable, I would be able to get signups with customers willing to pay for my service. He was right. I signed up exhibitors and shows and then my investor's development and strategy team helped us build the product. Today, we are supporting trade shows across North America, with some of our biggest shows having over 200 exhibitors each.

## **4. How is your company looking to innovate within the tradeshow/sales industry? What are you doing differently?**

Trade shows are considered an "old school" marketing method. With a growing number of companies opting for online marketing, the trade show industry needs innovation to keep it relevant, without losing the charm of engaging with people face-to-face. Event apps have been created by dozens of companies to add a more mobile-friendly experience to trade shows. However, many event apps really miss the mark when it comes to consumer (B2C) trade shows (ie. Bridal shows, baby shows, food shows, health/fitness shows, etc.) because of their lack of understanding of the attendee psyche and exhibitor goals. Most event apps are purchased by the organizers to benefit attendees and focus on the organization or planning of the show, with features such as attendee chat, photo sharing or event scheduling. None of the current platforms create an ideal experience for a

short-term event attendee looking to connect with vendors. We've challenged the current status quo with event apps and have created a vendor and attendee-friendly alternative to the traditional event app by giving attendees an easy and meaningful reason to participate on the app, while delivering the most return to exhibitors. The average event app has an attendee adoption rate of 30-40% while our platform has an attendee adoption rate of over 85% on average. More attendees on board bring a higher level of engagement and ultimately more return to the exhibitors and organizers involved.

## **5. Can you offer some insights on how your service/product works to make doing business easier for both exhibitors and trade show organizers?**

Paper promotional materials are expensive and rarely ever returned. Exhibitors spend thousands of dollars on creating brochures, pamphlets and coupons and these materials are usually thrown out immediately after the show by attendees. We push any promotions exhibitors would traditionally offer on paper (ie. contests and special offers) and move them to mobile. Through our web-based app, attendees can easily get access to all of the exhibitor specials and information they are interested in and access them whenever they wish, without the hassle of paper. In return, exhibitors get more targeted leads and a way to measure their success at the show. Organizers can now show their exhibitors the exact return that their show was able to generate, reduce vendor churn and keep exhibitors year after year.

## **6. It seems your business is based in building meaningful and beneficial relationships with potential clients? What has that journey been like for you and your team? Has the tech aspect of your business helped or hindered that?**

We've loved seeing the power that our platform has on helping businesses to have more meaningful interactions with potential clients. Exhibitors at B2C trade shows usually spend a lot of time during interactions with attendees sharing special offers or having attendees fill out contest forms, but our business has helped them to transition their conversations to be about their specialties, their story and what sets them apart from competitors. Having exhibitors come to us post show and share how grateful they are to not have to

worry about rushing attendees to fill out forms and to have the platform work for them in the background of their trade show experience has been incredible.

Technology has helped us to have businesses build more meaningful connections because of the content of what is being shared between exhibitor and attendee. We've been able to find ways to help attendees go to various booths and engage with businesses based on what they see on the Beyond the Booth web app. More exposure with a strong focus on engagement has given us the ability to empower all of our users.

### **7. What kind of successes have you seen since launch?**

We're currently working with trade show partners across North America, supporting hundreds of exhibitors at each show. We have a 100% rebooking rate for any shows we have worked with and are super thrilled with our over 85% attendee adoption average per show. One of our biggest clients to date was San Diego's largest bridal show, Bridal Bazaar with over 210 exhibitors and thousands of attendees in their January show.

### **8. What are your goals for the next few years when it comes to the work you are doing and your growth overall as a business?**

We're currently focusing on growing our impact in the bridal show vertical and expanding to other B2C trade show verticals as well. Over the next few years, we are working towards becoming the new standard in consumer trade show marketing across all B2C trade show verticals. We've kept our company pretty lean but we see it continuing to grow as we begin to learn and implement new ways to support our large exhibitor and attendee base.

### **9. Have you faced any obstacles while building Beyond the Booth, if so how have you overcome and what kind of advice would you offer startups who are facing rocky roads ahead?**

Definitely – we wouldn't be a startup if we didn't face a few challenges along the way! We've had our fair share of trials and tribulations. One of the main challenges we had was in understanding the sales cycle of our market. It took us a while to learn that trade

shows operate in long cycles, where many are planned 6-8 months ahead of show time. In order to have the most successful attempt at making the sale, it was important for us to enter into conversations with show organizers well in advance of their shows to give us the best opportunity to be included in their budgets. With this in mind, we've been able to make adjustments in our sales cycles and work in sync with our industry.

I'd definitely advise other startup founders to constantly be open to learning while building their startup. There is a ton of resources available for sales, marketing, and technology or growth tactics through books, podcasts or blogs. Following individuals or companies you find interesting and reading or discovering new ways to approach similar problems has been extremely helpful for my company and me as I'm sure it would be for others.

### **10. What is the future for the tradeshow and retail industries? We hear so much about the traditional models like brick and mortar and event concepts dying out, what are your thoughts? Does a company like yours work to marry these experiential focuses with the tech side of business?**

The trade show industry is growing 2-3% every year in North America. With the rise of more online alternatives many believed that the trade show industry would also transition to become digital and that virtual trade shows would dominate the space. However, the face-to-face engagement at trade shows is truly what drives the growth of the industry as many new relationships are formed with potential clients or industry experts during these experiential events. New product testing and discovery keeps these events fresh and interesting for attendees who aren't able to have the same experiences elsewhere. With Beyond the Booth, our goal is to maximize engagement, increase lead acquisition and derive more analytics from the event experience with the help of technology without losing the personal experience that the attendees come to the event for. We believe it is completely possible to improve the event experience with technology, without taking away from it.

### **11. What kind of advice would you give a budding entrepreneur when it comes to jumping into the shark tank so to speak?**

I would advise any new entrepreneurs to look to build solutions for markets that they understand. A more powerful connection to the needs of the customers happens when founders have personally felt the pain point themselves and have tried numerous alternatives that didn't solve their problem. Time and time again, founders jump to create products without fully understanding the needs of their customers. A lack of depth in understanding customer needs makes it more difficult to acquire new customers and sustain a business. By understanding your customer, you'll be able to preemptively address their needs and relate to them on a personal level when making sales.

My second piece of advice is to constantly be learning throughout the entrepreneurial journey. There is a ton we can learn about areas of our business which we are not experts at through books, podcasts, blog posts or even social media. Discovering new techniques, solutions, alternatives or skills will only help in the growth of your company and in you as a founder.

### **12. Finally, where can our readers learn more about you all online? Where can potential exhibitors or tradeshow clients connect with you one on one?**

Check us out at [beyondtheboothhq.com](http://beyondtheboothhq.com)! We have a ton of resources available that showcase how our platform can benefit your event and best practices for the trade show space when it comes to being an organizer, exhibitor or an attendee.

Feel free to drop us a line anytime at [info@beyondtheboothapp.com](mailto:info@beyondtheboothapp.com) or reach out to connect to us if you're in San Francisco or at one of the trade shows we support across North America. We'd love to chat about the trade show space, how we can impact your next event or just connect with like-minded founders or marketers doing big things – we're all about making meaningful connections and we'd be thrilled to hear from you.

**VISIT BEYOND THE BOOTH ONLINE:**  
<http://www.beyondtheboothhq.com>