



Photo by Phoebe Ajia

# HOW A BAD HAIR DAY INSPIRED AN ENDURING BOND

**Vanessa Calvert** chats with social entrepreneur **Hailey Cavill-Jaspers**, founder of Cavill + Co, Australia's first corporate-cause partnership matchmaker.

These days words such as pioneer are thrown around like confetti, but there are few people who have genuinely earned that title like my friend and mentor Hailey Cavill-Jaspers. She started building partnerships between companies and nonprofits 20-plus years ago and she's built 50 partnerships investing over \$40 million into nonprofit organisations.

I first met Hailey in a tiny serviced office in Melbourne. I was working part time to fund my university degree. Hailey was a new face in the building and she explained she'd rented

an office for a month as that was all she could afford. She had a borrowed computer, a telephone and an infectious passion. Her accent revealed she was newly arrived from England and when I asked what her business did it made absolute sense. I couldn't believe that this wasn't being done yet in Australia.

Her idea was simple but powerful. Bring corporates (with their cash, expertise and marketing channels) together with nonprofits (who bring trust, marketing differentiation and volunteering opportunities) in mutually beneficial partnerships.

Our second meeting wasn't my finest moment. I'd had a disastrous haircut, which I was hiding under a hat, and I was close to tears. Hailey picked up on this immediately and offered to send me to her hairdresser to rectify the situation. She also offered to pay, despite struggling in her first month of business. Right then I knew this was no ordinary businesswoman. We became firm friends and one year later, when Hailey moved into another office and I had graduated, I became Hailey's first employee and Hailey became my first boss and mentor.



Fast forward to 2018, we've both enjoyed amazing careers working with business to address social change and we continue to enjoy a special bond based on mutual admiration, a spirit of adventure and, of course, good hairdressers.

I spoke with Hailey about her unique perspective on our sector, having worked with so many nonprofits over almost half a century.

#### **VC: What is the biggest change you've seen over the years?**

**HC:** Corporates have embraced the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as there's mounting evidence that supporting a charity is not just a feel-good exercise – it impacts the bottom line. Customers are more likely to purchase products that support society and environment, millennials prefer to work for companies that are doing good, big government contracts are often won or lost on a company's CSR record. When I began knocking on boardroom doors in the 90s, doing good was seen as a warm fluffy exercise. The chairman's chequebook was rife, and my idea of making it a win-win partnership was scoffed at. It was only when I talked to the marketers about my UK work (cause-related marketing) that my idea really took off.

In the nonprofit sector I've seen a rise in professionalism and adoption of business principles. This is partly organic but also I'm seeing more businesspeople enter the nonprofit sector. People with marketing and business degrees and corporate experience.

#### **VC: What's it like being a consultant serving two sectors? Are you seeing a greater alignment of purpose?**

**HC:** Yes, they're moving closer together as companies become more active in society and nonprofits are embracing commercial practices. The lines are becoming blurred with social enterprises like Street and Thankyou and the emergence of the shared value conversation, with companies developing products and services that solve societal problems.

It's challenging but rewarding. I get bored easily so oscillating between the two gives me great variety. I learn things every day from both sides and share that insight with the other side.

#### **VC: You say it's challenging – in what way?**

**HC:** One of the biggest challenges for me is to maintain my optimism when I must delve into some pretty dark aspects of our society. In the past two years alone, I've had to deep dive into suicide, species extinction, climate change, drug abuse, animal cruelty, indigenous inequality and deaths from social violence. As anyone in the sector would know it can leave you with a very heavy heart. Thankfully I live in nature and I take solace in river walks and feeding my ducks.

#### **VC: What is your focus for the next few years?**

**HC:** This year I'm changing things up a bit. It's time to shift my focus to where I can make the biggest impact. My hands-on work will be mainly with corporates that want to partner with the nonprofit sector. This year I've worked with Carman's, Mondelez, K-Mart and CrownBet and it's been the most rewarding year so far. Of course, this will still benefit nonprofits as they'll be the beneficiary rather than my client.

I also want to continue mentoring others, both in the nonprofit and consultancy areas. It gives me great satisfaction that I have been able to help so many people develop their talents over the years – smart, motivated, socially aware young people who are now respected professionals in their own right. I want to undertake more speaking engagements to promote altruism (what I call DoGooding®) and I've also got a book in the wings.

#### **VC: What's your approach to training?**

**HC:** Training will always be important when it comes to forming and managing corporate partnerships. It needs to be a robust, structured process that not only empowers an individual but embeds a corporate partnerships strategy to build organisational capacity. Ten years ago, I developed my 10-step strategy called HeartSmart® into a modular toolkit which is still available for those who want to follow a tried and tested process. Students can do this at their own pace and access me when needed.

For anyone who has purchased my HeartSmart® Toolkit, I'll always be available for guidance and hand-on brokering – it's such a pleasure to work with nonprofits that are committed to developing their skills and processes and want to develop a thoughtful and professional approach to corporates rather than the common knee-jerk.

I'm also in discussion with a handful of consultants who can embrace and evolve the Toolkit so there's more support in the longer term and to ensure the IP lives on. It's a bit dangerous to have so much knowledge in one head – what if I get hit by a tram?! I feel it's time to pass the baton to the next generation of corporate partnership consultants.

#### **VC: You mentioned writing a book – about what?**

**HC:** It's about the power of altruism, with neuroscience to back it up, along with inspiring stories. I want to motivate young people to be their best selves in an age when materialism is so pervasive. As most fundraisers would know the majority of donors are mature and their motivation is to 'give back'. Millennials are a whole new breed – they want to 'pay it forward' but not just with money; they're activists, and they know how to use social media to change

behaviour and create the world they want to live in.

#### **VC: With your unique perspective, what in your opinion would improve the nonprofit sector in the coming years?**

**HC:** Five things come to mind.

**1** Have a rigorous board selection process: I've seen too many nonprofits with well-meaning but unqualified people on their boards, causing inefficiencies and dysfunction. Board members should be chosen for their skillset and contribution, perhaps with a nominal payment to attract the more qualified and provide some assurance of commitment and delivery.

**2** Invest actual money in training and development: I've been shocked at how many people pay from their own pocket for training, even for a specialist skill such as corporate partnerships! Someone who is skilled in fundraising may not have the skills, tools or processes to negotiate a corporate partnership. If your nonprofit is serious about securing high value multi-million-dollar partnerships, you must invest in your people and train them. And set realistic goals within a realistic timeframe rather than setting them up to fail.

**3** Form alliances and wipe out duplication: Whenever I call for nonprofit submissions for a particular cause area, I receive between 18-75 submissions. It's amazing how many nonprofits are doing the exact same thing, and in some cases pitching 'an innovative new idea' that is already being done by another nonprofit.

**4** View corporates as valued partners: Corporates are more than just cash donors. Corporates can provide mass market channels for nonprofits to spread their message, as well as rich and diverse expertise. The way to unlock their budget is to give them a compelling social goal that you can achieve together and demonstrate the commercial benefits of doing that...and then the money will flow.

**5** Show respect to consultants: Respect their time (don't waste it), do research before contacting them, respect their expertise (follow their guidance) and pay their invoices on time. You will get so much more out of them if you understand that they're running a business and time really is money in their world. **F&P**



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Vanessa is Partnerships Manager at Plan International Australia, where she manages and brokers partnerships with business to transform the world for children.

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