



# GlobalPDX Podcast

## Season 2 Episode 3 Transcript

With **Anita Ramachandran**

### **Andrea Johnson**

Hello, and welcome to the GlobalPDX Podcast. As we kick off the New Year and try to navigate (both personally and professionally) the ever-changing world we find ourselves in, we are excited to continue his podcast and provide connection, content, and support to Oregon's Hub of global changemakers.

My name is Andrea Johnson, and I'm the Chair of the GlobalPDX Advisory Board, and the Executive Director at *Green Empowerment*. In today's *Speaking Change* podcast I am joined by Anita Ramachandran. Anita is the Executive Director of [Micromentor](#), a Global mentorship network, powered by an easy-to-use social platform that enables entrepreneurs and business mentors to create powerful connections, solve problems, and build successful businesses together.

Micromentor is a social enterprise within the global organization Mercy Corps based in Portland, Oregon where Anita has been leading growth for the program for the last nine years. She has over 25 years of combined nonprofit and corporate management experience, across a wide spectrum of industries and countries. She's an entrepreneur herself, she's a problem solver, a change maker, and she's passionate about mentoring and personal growth.

Anita, welcome to the podcast, I'm so excited to have you join us today.

### **Anita Ramachandran**

Thank you Andrea, so am I.

### **Andrea**

So just to get us started, maybe you could tell us a little bit about your background, and what your professional path looks like. I think folks would be really interested to hear how you ended up leading Micromentor.

### **Anita**

I'd be happy to. This is a story I love telling because I meet so many young people who are wanting to figure out how to do work in the social sector, social impact sector, or



whatever it is the path that they're looking for. It's tough when you're starting out and you wonder how you could get to do the things that you really want to do. And my path, if it's any example, it's a meandering one. There is no straight straight journey. So I came to this country when I was 18, and I was born in India, did my high schooling there, and then came here. I had an arranged marriage when I was very young, I had a kid when I was very young. So I had to pause my education here and there, a few times. Eventually moved to Portland, Oregon and started my undergraduate program through the community college system, which was affordable and accessible. It allowed me to do things in a way that fit the lifestyle of having a young child at home. So I did my undergrad in environmental science and economics, and couldn't find a job in environmental science!

### **Andrea**

Sounds familiar! I did the same thing. (laughing)

### **Anita**

When you live in Portland there are a lot of people who've been doing that for years! And so it was a little hard to break into that field. I ended up working in local government/community programs at Washington County. And then went on to (through Portland State) get my MBA and was fortunate to find a job. I was very lucky to have a job in the marketing field at Freightliner at Daimler trucks. That's another thing I tell people: picking up skills is really important. If you can get that at a place where employees are valued, and you have a good working environment, those things are essential. It may not be all the things that you dreamed of, but I was very fortunate and happy to have had that start.

Continued that on and then moved to Xerox where I managed channel marketing operations for North American business, and as I did that the other track of life, that had started also when I was around 21-22, was to start a nonprofit organization called SAWERA (South Asian Women Empowerment Resource Alliance). A few of us (women who I had met through some social circles (about 6-7 of us)) decided to start that to help South Asian women who were experiencing domestic violence in Oregon. We found that it can be isolating, in addition to the domestic violence itself, there are a lot of factors that prevent women from getting help or seeking help, or even knowing about it. Language, cultural norms, within the society there are a lot of myths and misconceptions about what domestic violence looks like in the South Asian community.

So I started that and that was sort of my volunteer work that I was doing for like 15 years. Eventually, after about 5-6 years at Xerox and I had been doing (ASWERA) for 15 years, I came to a point where I needed to bring some congruence in my life (*do good AND*



*get paid* at the same time). That was around the time when I was fortunate enough to see this opportunity of Micromentor at Mercy Corps. I knew very little about both of them at that time. But they took a leap of faith on me, and I took a leap of faith in this career change. That is how I started my journey at Micromentor. I think I had the right combination of a business background and nonprofit and so it was helpful. At that time at Micromentor there were only two other people and we were really just figuring out how to build a business model for, what at that time, just felt like a small program within Mercy Corps. So, that's a long answer to your short question!

### **Andrea**

No, it's a great answer! I think it's also amazing what you mentioned about developing skills and finding a time where you can combine both passion and having it be your profession. I think a lot of folks that are GlobalPDX members, and our audience, are really interested in finding that, and getting to have both of those things. So it's amazing that you got to have that.

So you mentioned Mercy Corps briefly. Mercy Corps is a founding member of GlobalPDX, I think they are pretty well known in Oregon (and globally), and you are an extension of that. So can you give us a little history of how Micromentor came about, and where you are at now?

### **Anita**

Micromentor was founded at the Aspen Institute back in the late '90s early 2000s. The founder of Micromentor [Karen Doyle Grossman](#) was working remotely from the bay area, in an environment where internet and platforms and doing business online was starting to pick up. Around the same time at the Aspen Institute there was research being done around how social capital could help microentrepreneurs. Because financial capital had been democratized with the micro-finance institutions and the grammen movements had picked up, so around the same time there was research that pointed to democratizing social capital was going to be essential, if not even more important than financial capital. So at the nexus of those two things of Karen living in the same area and being surrounded by tech folks and then this happening in the microenterprise industry in United States gave birth to Micromentos as an idea. This happening in the microenterprise incubated there for a little bit to see if there was traction.

Karen came to Mercy Corps to head innovation back in 2006-07 and brought Micromentor with her. So Micromentor found its new home at Mercy Corps around then. The platform itself was built in 2008 and launched there. So Mercy Corps continues to be the home for Micromentor (it sits within the innovation department within Mercy Corps).



Over the course of my 9 years, Innovations itself has evolved at Mercy Corps. We have a breakthrough pipeline for ideas and ventures, and there are sort of internal ventures that incubate and grow within Mercy Corps and Micromentor is one of them that's still sitting within Mercy Corps as a *breakthrough solution*.

### **Andrea**

That's so interesting. I love hearing how it fits within the world of innovation. So maybe as a next step you could explain: what does Micromentor actually do? What actually happens within this platform? What are the mechanics and tactics?

### **Anita**

Micromentor at its core is to allow entrepreneurs around the world to find business mentors. We are an online platform, entrepreneurs and mentors come, sign up, they complete a profile, they state what they can give (or what they need) depending on what role they are playing. And they browse through the site and they can apply filters, and find the person they are looking for. And really the best analogy I can use is "a dating site". So entrepreneurs and mentors come online, they complete their profile and they decide who they want to connect with. They reach out to folks and sometimes it works out and sometimes it doesn't. The idea is from where we sit, we focus on two core principles of how Micromentor was founded. We continue to hold that even though the platform has grown and the technological advancements have happened.

- One is: we really focus on scale. So, what our job is, is to populate that house, and that community, and help them bring in as many people from around the world from diverse communities and backgrounds to be a part of the community
- And Two is: to keep the decision of who they connect with in the hands of the entrepreneurs and the mentors. They have the agency to select and choose and we are not matchmaking (we do not connect folks). People come on the platform and they can send a message to whoever they want to based on their experience, expertise, industry, country, language... whatever it might be that they are looking for.

Like I said it is sort of like a dating site because you come online and you might meet someone and it might be a wonderful fit, and other times it might not be the right timing. People on Micromentor reach out to a few different people, in fact some of them have what we call a "Virtual Board" through the Micromentor platform because they have multiple mentors helping them through the journey. Whether it is through stages of their business, or different aspects of their business. Our community has been growing and it



focuses especially on business mentoring. And all of our mentors are volunteers, they are providing this at no cost, we provide this at no cost to entrepreneurs and mentors don't get paid for this. So really, why I get so excited is because it is a movement that is really powered by altruism, and folks who want to give back, and pay it forward.

### **Andrea**

That's amazing, I know for me I have a few mentors in my life that have really made a difference in helping me navigate my career. You seem to be using "mentorship" specifically with this. Maybe you can explain a little bit how you define mentorship, and what is different about your model at Micromentor that you think leads to success. I think there are a lot of informal ways to be mentors, but this might be a little more formalized. Talk about that a little bit.

### **Anita**

Yes and no, in the sense of formal versus informal. I think one of the things that we do at Micromentor is that we have kept it broad. The definition of mentorship is relatively broad. In fact when I first started I remember, whenever I was in conversations with partners or donors they would say, "What is the difference between mentoring and coaching?" and I am sure that there is an answer to be given that would sound alright. But usually at the core of this is when you are running a business, entrepreneurs are lonely. They are struggling with challenges. They are looking for somebody who can help them get unstuck. And answer some questions. Now that could be a person who calls themselves a mentor, coach, or a subject matter expert, or whatever it might be. That can be a lifelong relationship, it could be a one hour conversation, or it could go on for months. So what we focused on is really the challenges that entrepreneurs come with and providing a community of resources that they can access without having to rely on the people they know, and the networks they have. You know, Andrea, you and I can probably look at our phone and find 5 people we can call if we are stuck with something. But most microentrepreneurs around the world, especially in countries and places and communities where those kinds of resources are not readily available. What we want to offer is that you take the *finding* out of it, you don't have to rely on the social network. So that was the key part is focusing on the journey of the entrepreneur, and where they might be getting stuck, rather than labeling mentoring as, "it has to be this or that".

Once they come to the platform, mentors on Micromentor offer any spot mentoring (which is like you know having one conversation and talking about an issue that is very specific about the business), or it could be a relationship that has just sort of blossomed and grown over the course of five years. And we have both, and then there's everything in



between. So some of the personas or archetypes we use are “subject matter expert”, “project manager”, you know because sometimes mentors come in and help you just make sense of all the different things you are worried about (even for myself that happens!). Lots of things are on my mind! Sometimes I have to just, now I've developed the skills to be able to say, “Okay, let's prioritize which ones are going to be the most important, have the highest leverage on my business, or you know what are the ones that are so urgent that need to be addressed.” Project management as another piece, and then there is the “Life Coach” archetype. Somebody who's been there, done that, have invested in their own personal growth, they have something to give back that is more well-rounded, and really all of those are available. And people are there who can offer that kind of help. And it's wherever the entrepreneur is at, and what stage of business they're in, and what sort of challenge they are faced with. So we really keep it broad in terms of defining mentoring. Really our metric is: are they getting helped? And are they able to feel like they're supported through their mentor? And then make progress on the business from there.

### **Andrea**

It's amazing, I love everything you're saying, especially highlighting that it can be potentially lonely and you get stuck sometimes. I think that could be true in many types of leadership roles whether you're the entrepreneur, or whichever type of thing that you're trying to lead.

So you're mentioning a lot about *accessibility* and *Global*. So can you talk a little bit more about how you see the model that you're using... you know what change are you doing beyond the individuals, or or kind of how you're thinking about this model being so different? I think the accessibility piece is huge, right? When you're talking about: within my network I have people I can call. But most people don't start out that way and I've had to find my way to navigate that and you're kind of making that more accessible to people.

### **Anita**

Right. One piece of this was, you know, are we truly making this democratized and open and available to the entrepreneurs that needed most? So our goal was to focus on the Global South, and within the United States to focus on BIPOC entrepreneurs (the folks that traditionally might have limited access to Social Capital networks/resources). So (A) was the geographic reach of where Micromentor was present. So Micromentor is available in English, Spanish, Bahasa Indonesia (in servicing Indonesia the country and the entire nation (in fact now is the national mentoring platform in Indonesia)), Arabic for the middle east region, and we recently started initiative in Somalia supporting entrepreneurs that are in Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya. And the Somali Refugee population is in Ethiopia and



Kenya so the platform is available in Somali. So language is one way that we can make it accessible.

The other thing we focus on is the ratio of entrepreneurs to mentors. So we've seen that having one Mentor for every 3 entrepreneurs is really sort of like the healthy metric that we track. And when we look at that ratio it's not just globally but also by region and by language. Because we've seen that while cross-border connections are extremely powerful (in fact over 60% of all relationships are happening cross-border). So you have entrepreneurs from Mexico who are connecting with somebody in India, someone from Jordan who's connecting with someone in the United States, but it's important to build trust. So we ensure that we get recruiting mentors from the countries where entrepreneurs are coming. So we're looking at that balance and that's sort of an important piece.

Then finally I already mentioned that scale is important but mentoring has been recognized, its continuing to gain prominence, yet it remains siloed within small communities and within individual programs. There's every single incubator, exceleator, small business, you name it, has a mentorship element and a component, but they are all siloed. So what we are trying to do at Micromentor is really be able to create a global network effect. Where organizations can power their mentoring programs using Micromentor's technology and community. So there is no reason to continue to invest and build one more silo when they can house their mentoring initiatives on Micromentor and take advantage of either the entrepreneurs or mentors.

So the way that I like to describe this is: imagine Micromentor as sort of this global house and different people can have rooms in this house. But at the end of the day they are all part of this same global community. The state of New York, for instance, runs their mentorship program on Micromentor's technology. So they have their own branded house which is now sitting on top of Micromentor's technology. Similarly I mentioned that the Indonesian government (the national government for SMEs and cooperatives) are housing their mentorship program to support their large initiative that they have by supporting hundreds of thousands of micro-entrepreneurs in Indonesia housed on Micromentor's Global platform coming in through that Bahasa Indonesian-powered door. But Indonesian entrepreneurs have access to the global pool of mentors. We also run employee engagement initiatives with companies like Moody's, and TripAdvisor, SMP Global, Verizon, who are bringing in their employees as volunteer mentors who are now able to serve as mentors for anybody around the world. So our goal is A) make it easy and accessible, have the technology, but really break down some of these silos so folks can continue to be part of this Global Network Effect. So we're hoping that this can be the key that takes mentorship to that next level, in addition to just having scale, making it step outside of these small programs that are managed manually, even if technology is used, it's hard to



get mentors. It's not easy, and often when you talk to a mentorship program they struggle with 2 things:

1. It's hard to keep finding new Mentors, you're tapping in on the same mentors over and over again and
2. You're doing this on a spread sheet and connecting with folks.

So while those problems are inherent I think we're saying, "How could we think of this as a systems change where mentoring is important but how do we embed it into the system that people are used to already?"

### **Andrea**

You are almost doing systems change around *people interacting with people*. So technology is such an important part of it to enable it, and make it easy, but also there's such a human element into what you're creating that social interactions and trust. So maybe for our audience just as they are listening to this, you could give us an example of a success story to really bring it in and personify how you have created some change.

### **Anita**

I am always excited about telling stories from Micromentor's community and you know people that find their either mentors or the entrepreneurs, and I say that because mentors often tell us that their life was changed in (what they believe is) more significant ways than they were able to give back. So it is actually a two-way street. So when you talk about a success story it ends up being both sides (the entrepreneurs *and* the mentors).

So Andrea you asked about a success story and there's thousands of them on the Micromentor platform and I will say that every time we get a glimpse into the life of an entrepreneur and the mentors they have worked with, it's really the thing that gets us all juiced-up, and excited to keep doing the work that we're doing, because sometimes we can get, you know the numbers are what we see and we don't see the faces and stories. I love telling stories and I want to share a story with you about George. And George is a Kenyan-based entrepreneur and he, much like many entrepreneurs around the world, was facing financial difficulties and really he was a person in the community that was already helping people in his community, just out of the goodness of his heart. And his wife suggested that why not he think about ways that he can formalize and do this help in a way that was actually going to support their life, their household, and create a business but also do the thing that he really loves doing. So George started a venture of running small





errands, for a fee, to help people within his community. And then he created a business online to provide services and he started this business called "Errands Guy". Which was, you know, he was able to do more of what he was doing but systemize it and also be able to pay for his own family expenses, but his business really grew and Errands Guy was starting to scale and it had a larger sort of logistics operation. And he decided to start a logistics company to be able to do a subscription basis for small and medium-sized businesses. And once he started this, he was able to employ young people from within his community to start doing this work.

The time when he joined Micromentor, George's logistics company was still sort of raw and undefined, and he needed help developing a strategy and a structure. And he wanted to bring this vision to life. So he signed up on Micromentor and ended up working with several mentors on various different aspects of business. But the person that he ended up working substantially with was a Mentor named Valeria.

And Val was able to work with him on assistive technology, and create a business called *Innovate Now* and is continuing to build out his Venture in so many different ways that he says he wouldn't have been able to do without the help of his mentor. Not only was she able to listen, think through all the challenges that he was faced with, and he had a partner that didn't have to be his family and friends and his wife and you know somebody else that was able to sort of thing through this. But he was able to really sort of push through any of the barriers that he had, or the blockers that he had, working with his mentors (including Val). And what I think makes this such an interesting and powerful story is that he ended up founding a separate organization called [PWDgigs.com](http://PWDgigs.com) because he was able to find gigs for people with disabilities, to help in his business. So here he was: he started the Errands Guy, started the logistics company to help small and medium businesses, and then founded this other company and was able to give work for people with disabilities to be able to, you know sort of, support his other ventures (and whether it was the errands or the logistics for small businesses). And really that cycle, and that impact (the layers of impact) is what just sort of always blows my mind. When you're able to really empower and support change-makers like George, it supports not just one person but an entire community.

### **Andrea:**

That must be amazing too, because there's no way you can even track the ripple effect of that impact. So you can focus on George and the mentorship program, and what he's created but obviously you know supporting somebody like him through that venture must have impacted so many other people. So how do people like George and Val become involved? Like how do you get involved with Micromentor?



## **Anita**

So as I mentioned, getting on Micromentor is pretty straightforward, people can find us through different means. But we've been able to really achieve the kind of scale that we have primarily through tapping in through social media. Folks find us with our ads that we place on Facebook, Google, Instagram, now we've started on YouTube, and we have a small presence on Tiktok, and we're trying to get to places where entrepreneurs are. You know even in a refugee camp in Jordan, people have access to (I wouldn't say everybody but), folks find a window into the world through a phone. A mobile device. And Facebook tends to be really the place where most people are finding out, getting information. So that's a great place for us to be present, to provide this sort of information, have people both find a mentor and volunteer, and give back as a mentor as well. So many people find us through social media outlets.

We also show up in Google searches, when you look for business mentoring Micromentor ranks pretty high up there now so be your folks find us through that. And the third way people find us is through Partners. As I mentioned we have, you know, organizations that we work with and they're housing their initiatives and they're also able to promote Micromentor through their own networks and so we have Partners through whom mentors and entrepreneurs are coming in. If I'm not mistaken one of George's mentors was a gentleman who was an employee at Verizon, and we have an employee engagement program through Verizon. And so he joined micromentor through the Verizon employee engagement program and ended up connecting with George who was in Africa. That's really the story that even my mentor tells me is what's so beautiful is that the most unlikely of connections and relationships happen within this format and setting.

## **Andrea**

What an awesome thing to be kind of enabling such positive Global Connections as well. I think that we're in a bit of a divisive time in the United States and in the world, and so creating something that enables those types of really positive human connections is just really amazing to hear about. So you have mentioned scaling a few times, and we just heard George's one story, but what is the scale of Micromentors impact?

## **Anita**

Micromentor is, what we believes, the world's largest business mentoring platform today. When I started we were about nine hundred or so coming to Micromentor annually. Now, in this past year (in the year 2020) we had 63,000 entrepreneurs join, and over 16,000 mentors join our community.



## **Andrea**

That's a lot more than 900!

## **Anita**

Yeah! It's a lot more than 900! And the year before that we were at 25,000, and then the year prior we were 10,000, and the year prior we were 4-5 thousand. And this year we are tracking to reach 150,000 entrepreneurs from nearly 200 countries. People signing up from nearly 200 countries. Our goal is to reach millions. And really when I think about that number there still feels like there is a lot of work to be done. This is where that systems change element really becomes important. How do we embed into networks and communities that are working around the world in large volumes (whether that's existing platforms, whether that's banking structures). We work with several financial institutions now where we are starting to embed micro mentoring as an important component side-by-side with capital loans (and other financial instruments that are being offered to small businesses). So we are really just entering into that space and hoping that will take off. So I gave you pure numbers, but last year alone about 6,000 hours of professional support was offered to entrepreneurs, an estimated 15 million dollars in pro bono volunteering work that was provided by our mentors from 126 different countries across 57 different industries. So it sort of spreads across the whole gambit.

## **Andrea**

Do you have a sense of how COVID has impacted some of those entrepreneurs, or how your program was able to grow despite COVID over the last few years?

## **Anita**

One of many things that happened during COVID (one of many things that happened during COVID) was people were able to look beyond preconceived ideas: that mentorship needs to be across a table in a coffee shop, or at an office. And that connecting with folks virtually was really the new way to be. It broke down some barriers that folks might have had about an online mentorship program. That might not be individual people, but donors, institutions, partners, funders, that whole group of folks who had some ideas about what might be the key elements of a mentoring program, for lack of a better word.

So that happened but we saw small businesses shutting down their doors in the largest, sweeping scale that we have ever seen in our lifetimes. So mentors stepped up in incredible ways. We were able to make a mentor task force called the *COVID Response Taskforce*. And we were badging mentors who were stepping up and saying they were going



to respond to every message they received. It was an incredible outpouring of support. We had several thousand mentors sign up on the platform. What we saw from a survey was they were 16% to see COVID support resources as a result of working with a mentor. They were 26% more likely to be successful in securing support that was being offered as part of the COVID support structure either through government or other partners.

And most importantly, one of the things we started tracking this year was psychological well-being. Folks feeling that support, and help, and feeling better about their situation. That was something we have been tracking and measuring. We saw there was an uptick in that when that had a connection with a mentor. So these were some important pieces and when we talk about impact, we look at... scale is one element of it because our theory of change suggests that when entrepreneurs have access to a mentor they are able to make better decisions, improve their skills, have access to resources, and ultimately why we are doing this is so they can have venture-level outcomes. And jobs is really what we are measuring (at the end of the day, how many jobs are being created). What COVID did was give equal (if not more) importance to *jobs being retained*. Because we saw so many of them being lost. So we started measuring jobs retained, businesses that survived, new businesses being started, as well as net additional jobs being created. Even though as George's story indicates, the impact doesn't stop there. It is far broader and wider than this could be, but COVID really brought it to the forefront. How we think about impact, adding psychological well-being measures, and including jobs retained were two significant things we did on our end.

### **Andrea**

That's, I think, inspiring for hopefully a lot of our followers. Just thinking about the silver linings of moving to the virtual world and how you can actually create more connections sometimes, versus less. Because I think a lot of us were missing some of our connections. So you mentioned that you have a mentor, in one of your responses earlier. So what does mentorship mean to you personally?

### **Anita**

It's been life changing, for me. My mentorship journey through the years has been life changing. I think only when I started this job was I able to go back in time and say, *Who were mentors in my life?* There were several. Teachers, friends in the community, folks who believed in me when I wasn't able to believe in myself. I had a professor when I was in Community College who, he said to me one day,

"What do you want to be?"

And I said, "Well, I think I want to be an accountant."



And he said, "Why?" I mean it's, nothing wrong with being an accountant he was just was curious why I wanted to be one.

And I was like, "Well, I don't know... I took accounting classes..." I had a very fixed mindset because I done my, what they call "pre-university courses", in India was accounting so I just believed that that's what I have to do.

And he's just said, "You know, you can be governor of Oregon if you wanted to! What makes you think that you have to be only an accountant?"

Or rather that specific role. And you know as it turns out I would have been a very bad accountant! I have people who do that much better than I ever could. And it was that moment of just allowing me to think differently. There are other possibilities and I could be doing something else. And one of the co-founders of ASWERA, she is a dear friend, and she just showed me how she could balance having a full-time job, and being a mom, and still pursuing the things that really mattered to her with volunteer work and that was also sort of new to me. So there were a lot of people along the way, now that I look back on it, who were able to provide that sort of life changing advice or be that person but most significant for me has been my work with Brian, who's my mentor, who we found through the platform.

## **Andrea**

It's definitely a good sign when the person who manages something also uses the product

## **Anita**

Absolutely! Brian was the founding COO of the Build-A-Bear Corporation and after being in several executive roles decided to commit his life to supporting social impact leaders around the world, and joined Micromentor. It's an Avenue for him to find other social impact leaders and that's how I found him and actually somebody on the Micromentor team connected with him and then she said, you know, this would be really great mentor for you, and I ended up messaging Brian online, and we connected. The journey with him has been just incredible. It's the life-coach-version of The mentor that I mentioned along the Spectrum. He certainly does a lot of sort of spot mentoring and subject matter expertise but you know he was a he certainly is the "life coach" sort of mentor. He helped me both believe in myself, but really come face-to-face with my own resistance and places where I might be stuck, not necessarily from a skill standpoint, but as a leader. So in my leadership Journey it's been... I don't think I'll have words to describe how incredible that support has been for me. I often joked with him that I get upset sometimes when he has something to say and gives me advice, and I know when that



happens that I'm hitting those resistance points. He is saying things to me that nobody else would because he has nothing to gain from this but to see me succeed and by association for Micromentor to continue to grow and thrive. And Brian's a mentor to several other entrepreneurs around the world who are doing social impact work. So have to say that mentoring is unequivocally life-changing.

### **Andrea**

That's really beautiful. And kudos to Brian. I think if he's having an impact on you he must be having that many others as well! So you know you've mentioned so many positive stories but I also know that managing a small organization over the last few years has probably been challenging. So what's something that keeps you going? What keeps you feeling hopeful and motivated?

### **Anita**

You are right, Andrea, and I am sure that you know the feeling! There are a lot of challenges, in fact. There's sort of a big one that I'm thinking about, and trying to see how we can all tackle as a company, as we step into 2022. They're never ending, there's always a new thing on the horizon.

But what keeps me going is really stories like George's. And we have, during our monthly gatherings with staff we highlight stories and we are able to see what our work is powering at the end of the day, and I think that has been super energizing and helpful. The other thing I will say is that the team, the folks that are on the Micromentor journey with me, Motivate me, they inspire me, they keep me going. And seeing everybody's dedication, everyone on the team feels so deeply, and cares so much, about supporting entrepreneurs and so passionate about the work we do, and the impact it has, that it's infectious. On a daily basis it is never hard for me to go to work (even though I am not physically going anywhere these days). It's never hard for me to go to work because I know that I am joined by a group of people from around the world who care as deeply about Micromentor and mentoring as I do.

And when I'm not thinking about work, really the thing that feeds my soul and feeds my belly is *cooking*. Really cooking is my love language, and how I decompress and unwind. In fact a couple of my girlfriends were here, maybe three weeks ago, and they said, "you look tired."

And I said "Yeah, I am really tired, so I need to cook a big meal!"

### **Andrea**

Well it sounds delicious!



**Anita**

Yes, it is, and we certainly are due for a cooking session ourselves so we can talk about our own journey as leaders of social impact organizations, and as folks who like food.

**Andrea**

Yes, perfect! So before we are sign off, is there anything else that you wanted our audience to know

**Anita**

Andrea as we usher in the new year, and considering the timing of this conversation in January: January is National mentoring month in the United States, and January 17th also happens to be International Mentoring Day. For folks who are listening, you know there are small businesses and entrepreneurs out there who could use support, investment, in ways that, when I say investment I don't mean money. An investment of time and energy. So if you're inclined to sign up as a mentor! Often people wonder if they can be one. As I mentioned, you know if you have a skill, if you are a professional, whether it's building websites or doing accounting or HR, or legal, there are lots of skills we bring to the table. Consider being a mentor, and whether it's on Micromentor or not. Mentoring, as I mentioned, is life-changing. So maybe honor the mentors in your life and thank them.

**Andrea**

Wonderful thank you so much for joining me today, and thank you for being a Global changemaker! For our audience, GlobalPDX is dedicated to keeping you connected and engaged. For resources from this podcast and more, [check out our website](#). If you aren't already a member, please consider joining our community, and feel free to email [Communications@globalpdx.org](mailto:Communications@globalpdx.org) with any questions. Stay tuned for new episodes of our podcast and please share with your fellow changemakers.