

a branded world

PODCAST

with
Luiza Campos



032 | HOW TO CREATE A SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATION WHILE ADDRESSING SOCIAL ISSUES AND REVOLUTIONIZING THE FASHION INDUSTRY

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

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A BRANDED WORLD PODCAST – 032 | HOW TO CREATE A SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATION WHILE ADDRESSING SOCIAL ISSUES AND REVOLUTIONIZING THE FASHION INDUSTRY

- Luiza Campos: [00:00](#) You're listening to a branded world podcast, episode number 32.
- Announcer: [00:08](#) Welcome to a branded world podcast where we explore great brands and give you tips, tools, hacks, and guides to create brands that captivate clients and drive growth in revenue. And now your host, Louisa Campo.
- Luiza Campos: [00:28](#) Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of a branded world. A branded world is a member of the Alberta podcast network, powered by ATB Alberta podcast. Network is putting on a live show on June seventh during the inventors conference in Calgary. It's called podcasts. Connect a talk fast about the future. In that live show, you will get to see four podcasts that are part of the network. The podcasts are. That's so maven the work, not work, show future chat in action, and of course a branded world and we'll be interviewing fascinating people so it's really worth your while going. And of course our friends from ATB will also be on hand to answer questions about some of really neat stuff that they're working on. Things like Ai, blockchain, robotics, and more. So you can come for as many shows as you like and the best part is it's totally free, but you do need to register and that's next week.
- Luiza Campos: [01:28](#) So you have to act fast to register. You can go to podcasts, connect dot event, bright.ca and I'll have this link in the show notes so you can just click through there to register and to learn more about these shows and Alberta podcast networks events. You can go to Alberta podcast, network.com. We all know that starting a business can be very difficult. Now imagine you're 22 years old, you have no previous background in, in opening and running a business and you decide you want to open a business in a highly competitive industry in one of the most expensive cities in the world and you're not just opening a business. You are opening a business to cause some positive social impact and not in one or two issues, but in a whole variety of issues.
- Luiza Campos: [02:22](#) This is exactly what my next guest, Sophie Slater did with her organization. Birdsong, Sophie, open birdsong in

2014 with her partner Sarah, and this is an amazing story of how they faced many challenges and founded an organization that brings together, works with many different groups and is addressing issues such as body image, working conditions, fair wages, environment, women's rights, seniors isolation, and many other ones. This is a remarkable story of how one organization is really working with a variety of groups in the community and changing an industry and there are doing this without the use of massive advertising campaigns or marketing campaigns. They're getting a lot of attention globally and a very well deserved attention. As always, you can find out more on the show notes@abrandedworldpodcast.com and I really hope you enjoyed this interview with co founder of bird song, sophie slater. So here's my interview with Sophie Slater.

- Luiza Campos: [03:34](#) Hi Sophie. How are you?
- Sophie Slater: [03:36](#) Hi, I'm good, thanks.
- Luiza Campos: [03:39](#) I am delighted to have you here today.
- Sophie Slater: [03:42](#) Oh, thank you so much for having me.
- Luiza Campos: [03:44](#) I love birdsong of course. And what you're doing with it, you know, so I'm, I'm really pleased to be talking to you today and to find out more information about it and help spread your story because it's, it's a remarkable story. So before we, before we get started on bird song, tell, tell us a little bit about your background and how you decided, you know, what led you to, to, to found birdsong?
- Sophie Slater: [04:16](#) Um, my sort of trajectory to finding a fashion label quite untraditional in the, uh, this is my first graduate job. I'm 26 at the moment, lifted running, but from, for four years with a business partner and um, I'd kind of had a limited but quite a in like, um, what's the word? Kind of a opinion forming a interaction with the fashion industry when I was 15. So I was a very lanky, skinny teenager. I lived in Newcastle, um, in the by the coast quite far up north, so miles and miles and miles away from London. But I was scouted and asked to sign a contract with a big modeling agency in London, which I thought was really exciting and kind of glamorous. Is this like kid from a small seaside town? Um, so yeah, I signed the contract and went to the agency and kind of got to learn more about the fashion world and photographers and fell in love with

the clothes and the photography and all the creative side around it, but it was kind of told that my body would have to stay the same in adult hood and I couldn't really put any way and there was quite a lot of stuff behind the seat.

Sophie Slater: [05:42](#)

So probably for the best. My modeling career didn't really take off because I was incredibly clumsy. I'm not very graceful and it kind of formed a lot of opinions and instilled in me this love of, of clothes, the kind of behind the scenes work and all of the work that goes into producing fashion. Um, so fast forward a couple of years, I kind of had a lot of jobs at vintage shops and it reads in repo. Um, I went on to study history and while I was at university I got really into feminist activism, um, and we would like to my university women's representative and from then on when, since about the age of 20 have been working with Leland Golf Grade, I'm kind of ironically at the same time, I started working for a ethical clothing brand, you might remember them, called American apparel, which was very controversial at the time.

Sophie Slater: [06:40](#)

So that advertising wasn't particularly feminist friendly. Um, so it's kind of working them on the one side, learning loads about ethical production and that sort of vertical integration model where they worked directly with the factory workers and learning about how the rest of the garment was really harmful. But on the other hand, getting this sort of feminist consciousness where I was saying the commodification of women's bodies and over sexualization, I guess in my mind it was growing. But if I did that, I didn't know why everybody called ethical brand couldn't exist. That was also kind of pushed the boundaries in the way they advertise and market and especially to women. So it will be your ideas to kind of boring and I secretly always wanted to work in fashion, but my dad was like, you'll never get a job. Definitely study history instead.

Sophie Slater: [07:32](#)

Um, which I haven't really used for anything. It was useful, you know, learning how to write and stuff. I do all the comms and pr and copywriting it, that song. So it was definitely that side of things is coming useful. Um, so yeah, I was really into activism, really want to do social work. I got really into activism. I was on same with women and go and body productivity stuff kind of influenced by, um, the realization that I'd been told at the modeling agency wasn't healthy and I was volunteering

at a rape crisis center. And um, yeah I was applying for Post Grad stuff, but the fees in England had just gone up massively so I couldn't afford to the Postgrad course they want Ed. So instead I applied for this kind of experimental post grad. Um, um, my business partner Sarah, it also applied to this kind of way to experimental postgrad.

Sophie Slater: [08:34](#)

So she ended up, um, as head placement on the, on the postgrad scheme, it's called Year Here and it's meant to be a kind of crash course in social innovation. So we were both doing frontline. He was that it's a Atk, which is charity that helps aging and isolation. Um, and I was a homeless hostel, people with complex needs in Croydon, working with women. So she had noticed that the older person there, that there was a bunch of women who had been sitting there for about 15 years together and they was so brilliant and what they did and some of them had even worked and summit sign is when they were younger, um, but they were knitting in the aim because it helps with the arthritis is meditative and it was a really, really beautiful social activity so that I'm so fond of it.

Sophie Slater: [09:26](#)

And they were just giving the scarves and the jumpers to charlie shops or like trying to sell them at bringing by but never really getting more than like 10 pounds of them. Despite our work going into them and I was working, I'm trying to connect different women's organizations in London with the homeless hostels that the women can be more empowered and sign posted. Ten use different services across London. The kind of note is that all the charity that was talking to a really devastated by something cooked. I'm really struggling to make ends meet and unable to connect to any other organizations will reach out because they were so kind of overwhelmed. I'd love to funding and how much work they have to do. So they kind of did some research and we found out that 93 percent of women's organizations that have these funding cuts that were struggling and kind of realized through speaking to a lot of them that the huge amount of women, especially if an older generation or group men happy fantastic crafting skills and at the same time a lot of people coming out of university in Britain like the traditional kind of making skills.

Sophie Slater: [10:37](#)

Hmm fashion courses, so the fashion industry, on the one hand you're saying we've lost all this power in knowing how to make clothes anymore and but then

you have a huge amount of the population, a sort of migrant women, older women who face muscles buried in because we don't have a certificate to say they went to central Saint Martin's fashion. They're not really getting those stuff. So we approached if you were looking at patients and we started selling the older ladies knitwear and then that was kind of a total experiment. Like we have six weeks and I to come up with it as a project and I think if we had this crazy for eight hours where we were kind of just an idea and we were talking a little bit the women's organizing and building the business around their needs and we borrowed some stuck from organizations that we're speaking to. We run a market still. We ran to the park with my friend. We built a website and then we did like a mini launch event and sold half of our stock and that was all in like 48 hours.

- Sophie Slater: [11:45](#) Yay. The course really helped . In propel things because I think like they really helped to see how we can take like the formulation of an idea and turn it reality. I'm
- Luiza Campos: [11:55](#) the potential it had.
- Sophie Slater: [11:57](#) Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly. So after that, um, we had a few moments to the coolest that we kind of realized that we'd fallen in love with this idea and it was really exciting because there was this huge swell of feminist activism and also the Rondo Plaza collapse that happened 18 months earlier, so people were getting more and more sustainable fashion and fashion revolution and who made my clothes, which is like a campaign to get people to think about the origins and the kids and the provenance of their clothing was really gaining momentum. So it seemed like a really perfect opportunity to night or this energy and turning into something really good that would help benefit these women's groups. It was struggling so much who haven't really felt the effects of feminism. Um, and we know like I had loads of friends who were photographers and fashion photographers.
- Sophie Slater: [12:48](#) So we, we kind of had the context that I work with and I knew quite a lot of people who work in fashion journalism, so we had some seed press context to start with and everything just felt really like an opportunity. Um, so yeah, that was four years ago and we hired a designer about 15 months ago, so the three of us on the team now and we used to kind of buy more from

different international ms dot. That's fantastic. We still did a little bit that, but we're mainly really, really focused on the eight women's organizations that we work with in London and we know all of them by name and we work super closely with them to sort of design stocks that wasn't the best skills and those who make the best, best products. So we've got really beautifully made hunted jumpers. We've got cut and so line and we've got really keep kind of embroidered pieces and stocks for younger customers or people who want to get into the kind of at a lower price point because we want it to be accessible and we didn't want to create in the luxury fashion brands.

Sophie Slater: [13:52](#)

I'm not close our expenses because we pay in London living wage per hour, but that kind of manufactured to absolutely lost. Not Part of I'm missing as well. The such good quality and good fit and they're practical and they have pockets because we feel like that's a feminist issue. Not having pockets and women's clothing estates and yeah, everything's really consider them sort through. And since he's on the team, we've been looking a lot more into environmental impacts as well. So all the fabrics since is I'm enjoying has been either organic or handsworth and huntsman, but different cooperatives or reclaimed, let's say from lumps. So to minimize their rental impacts as well.

Luiza Campos: [14:37](#)

It's amazing for years and you've been featured in many. It seems to me that you've been featured in many different news and, uh, just platforms and that there's sort of this swell of attention that, that you were getting and I think it's very deserving that you're getting that. I mean, in the podcast we talk about a lot. I mean it's focused on brands really that have a purpose that a beyond making, making a profit. And this is why I was so interested in talking to you because yours is not only, you picked a purpose, it seems like you have, you are addressing so many different issues and use your, your values are so strong and you obviously addressing women's rights and how the clothes are made and you working with migrants and other groups of the population that may be more at risk, so to speak, and you're giving them an opportunity. You were sort of reviving skills that could have been lost and you're also environmentally conscious and uh, you know, you're, you're living, you're giving London living wages, which I can imagine are quite high because I can imagine that the living standards, yeah,

- Sophie Slater: [15:57](#) it's an expensive suit.
- Luiza Campos: [15:59](#) Great. And you're addressing environmental impact from your materials and how they outsourced and a body images, how women is portrayed in a fashion industry. So there's, you're just addressing so many different issues and you had this beautiful combination, right, of different groups that are coming together in a of women and that are working together to address this. I think it's amazing that you are able to be a successful organization and, and still addressing all these different issues, which is something that I, I'm really trying to really highlight in the podcast is success is based on feelings that you make your audience feel right on that connection that you have with your audience or really achieving your purpose. And I think you guys are a great example of that.
- Sophie Slater: [16:49](#) Oh thanks. That's really times. Yeah, I think, I think for us, because at first we were like, oh, we have so much to talk about. How do we condense it into this bond? Is it too much to care about football? And I realized that in our eyes it's just holistically kind of, you know, we always say I'm like, we care about, you know, from work it to where it's just a holistic view of looking at fashion. Then I think being outside this kind of helps as well. That means I both didn't stipulate and we kind of, almost in a really naive, we started from scratch, like how would we build a Fox and supplies in from start to finish if the hadn't been exploitation at the core. Like how do we have you go back to that and get a connection with the makers. Um, but yeah, I think like all the stuff like even non binary and when Toga says I'm [inaudible] this is our models or friends who don't feel represented in the models is a, is another way of kind of makes sense because it's all part of the same issues but kind of feminism to deliberate.
- Sophie Slater: [17:55](#) So, um, yeah, it seems, it seems like a lot, but I think was just a reimagining and like an optimistic life there in Austin.
- Luiza Campos: [18:07](#) Yeah. And you haven't had the experience being a model yourself at such a young age and have firsthand experience with the fashion industry would, as you mentioned, made you very sensitive to some of these issues and as you said, it kind of all makes sense because it, it, it all really falls under this umbrella of championing women. Right?

- Sophie Slater: [18:27](#) Exactly.
- Luiza Campos: [18:28](#) Because we all need clothes and it's not just something that we were because we need to, it's something that we want to wear, something that makes us feel confident or pretty or whatever the case may be, but it's also one of the main industries I find where women is more exploited in a way or there's more sort of conformities I think or we are more imposed sort of the idealistic body type or things like that. So going against that is a difficult thing to do because it's such a huge industry, but I think it's potentially the right place to start. Right?
- Sophie Slater: [19:05](#) Yeah, for sure. I think as well, like um, people tend to come and civilize the fashion industry as well. I think because traditionally targeted an employed so many women. So it's like as a back flush of misogyny, feminism, I mean fashion is kind of trivialized whereas you know, people spend huge amounts of time and creativity and so on the food industry, but you know, food's gotten off your plate in seconds and the workload really important expression of self and you know, we could just go ahead, sucks. But I think the world would be a little bit less joyful and a little bit less than if we did that. So I do think clothes are really important and then yeah, 80 percent of garment workers or as its estimate between 18, 90 percent of garment workers, all women. So they other ones, you know, feeling unsafe work conditions the most or like maternity rights.
- Sophie Slater: [19:56](#) They, ms dot the garment industry. And I think body positivity is come a long way in the past is. But I know when we started there was 90 percent of UK women were in some way dissatisfied with themselves with their bodies. And I think that is getting better because so many brands have kind of. When we started, we know photoshop and it still is, but it feels like more bonds is definitely taking that on board and I'm thinking in terms of representation and hopefully you can diverse in a way that's not trend oriented as well, that it seems like a lot of bigger brands have definitely seen the volume in the. And um, yeah, it seems like, I know I'm, there was like a bunch of ads when we first started in the UK that were for like a protein brand and it said like, oh you beach body ready.
- Sophie Slater: [20:44](#) And it had like this really conventionally kind of skinny woman who you seen advertising over time on the poster. And there was like a massive backlash. And I was

thinking like when we started it, I couldn't imagine the time before that where it would have a public backlash backlash. It was kind of sunk into the background. So I think that um, we have exactly. It kind of elevates that, like seven people invented the light bulb at the same time because everyone was thinking about the idea. But when you have a good idea, a lot of people have it too, so I think yeah, but it was the sort of buddy reading backpack came at the same time we were throwing our brand and I'm casting street models and putting people in an underwear on our website when they had visible stretchmarks and that kind of thing. So it's, yeah, it's definitely the right time for it and people are definitely more of the media and how we come to him as well.

Luiza Campos: [21:40](#)

Yeah, I think it's the right time. People are ready and people have realized I think we have come a long way and we realized that we needed to do something about this and I love also. So you mentioned the website where people can find out more about bird song, but because I think it's really worth for you guys to look at the clothes, the beautiful clothes that guys are making and also how the photos are taking. Because as, as you mentioned, it's like no sweatshops, no photoshops. If this is real women real close for real woman made by real moment. So I find it remarkable and it's, it's totally worth people's time to, to take a look at it and I love that you bringing, you know, migrant women who are very skilled as you mentioned but can't really or couldn't really otherwise find their path or, or as they start or trying to restart their lives and seniors because you, you work also with a group of seniors, right? That to some of the meeting.

Sophie Slater: [22:40](#)

Yeah, we do. We have peer groups of elderly women who we worked with, the women that we work with are attached to existing women's organizations or kind of, some of them are really informal and some of them are attached to quite big nationally. So the older people, for example, age UK Day Center and um, they actually to donate their revenue back to their day center, which is really nice because they tend to be retired. So a little bit better off than like some of them were working with here. It might be on benefits for example. Um, and yeah, they've repaid for them like they've paid for their summer room to be decorated the rooms we renovated, they've had new carpet put in the whole center which made it, gives them a sense of pride. Um, whereas a lot of the migrants group that we work with are kind of working

with charities because they might have experienced domestic violence or isolation, um, English might not be the first language.

Sophie Slater: [23:37](#) They might have had mental health problems for example, so they get living in London living way through the character when we commissioned them to pieces, but they also get the support that charity, which is really nice. Um, I mean ideally like, and if we have time, we'd love to work on opening a cooperative where we can have child care, sort of yoga classes and I'm employed to women directly. But as it stands, I think supporting these existing women's organization to be fiddling otherwise is really important to this because they're the experts. They've been winning for sometimes the eas to support different, like mostly migrant women in the area. So, um, but yeah, most of the groups are based in tower hamlets, which is the poorest burroughs in London and it's a really interesting area. You've actually got canary wharf, which is the financial capital London. I'm in tower hamlets on one side and then a few kind of like 10, 15 minutes down the road. Do you have some of the most like pull people in housing mistakes? Um, I'm kind of muffled.

Luiza Campos: [24:48](#) Yeah.

Sophie Slater: [24:50](#) Exactly And you can see the banking towers from most of these dates. So it's really divided. Yeah, there's a huge amount of inequality and yeah, a lot of migrant communities there and a lot of people on state benefit. So that's kind of mostly why the charities we work with have been set up to support these kind of women. I'm a really good example of one of the groups you work with is Heba Women's workshop and they was like a group of eight Bengali women for women of Color, um, and maybe who gone through domestic violence or what's learning and um, it's kind of really emblematic of the kind of groups who work crews because they had this fantastic work room where they could report 60 women at a time. I sit with free alongside the sessions that had English classes. I can cough. This is like a really brilliant project.

Sophie Slater: [25:46](#) And it was kind of state funded. Yes. They had this business alongside where they would sell the close nearby market, but then the market got very gentrified and a lot of change mood. Then they like stop making so much money and they really want to sell online, but they

really liked the physical confidence and sort of skills to do that. So we approached them, we started working together and shortly after we started working together, their landlord died and I'm the of London that they're in. It's a really rich, amazing history of like the huguenots moving in and different weavers. And lots of people moving in and traditionally that's where all the clothes are made in London. So there's like huge areas, so for fashion and talent, but it's not really been protected as such. And it's like really expensive rent, trendy part of London now.

Sophie Slater: [26:38](#)

Um, so the, yeah, the landlord died and the kids tripled the rent overnight and them 10 days to move the crush out. Um, so as it stands we did like a bunch of fundraisers for them and they're still manufacturing first, but they've had some massive massively downsized. So that's kind of a really typical snapshot of the community things that are, that we work with. I kind of going through and what we're trying to work to support. Does that make sense? Um, and it takes them seven years to train up seamstresses to like an industry level, um, because you know, the garments and making for us a really beautifully made and they knew pain cutting and grading and they can kind of make a garment from start to finish, which is a really rare skill and takes a lot of learning. Um, but it's really hard because a lot of government projects to kind of stayed on, funded on getting them straight into up and there's so many invisible barriers before you even get into your own confidence language, total care kind of thing that these women's organizations have really good at kind of supporting. Um, so yeah, we really like unbelievable supporting those projects and I think that's why we moved to working purely locally to manufacture, even if it means the pain, like, you know, 15, 10, 15 pounds an hour for London living wage, it means we really get to know our makers, which is really bad. And really knowing, um, especially when typical fashion industry supply chain from 100 layers and it's so easy to kind of possibly. And if anything goes wrong or if anyone's excoriated we, no, he's made ours.

Luiza Campos: [28:13](#)

I love that. And it's very true to your brand. And I always always say that when you define your brand purpose, you need to be really conscious of the fact that you need to then live by that brand purpose. Even if that means making hard decisions and decisions. That would be much more costly, like you were mentioning, working

with the group, the local group, it's much more costly because you have to pay them in London living wage, but that's staying true to your brand of really knowing the makers and really understanding where the provenance of the clothes were, where these schools are, who is making them in and making sure knowing that they are being paid fairly, being treated fairly and all of that. So that's a great example of that, of used staying true to, to your brand and I love that you're not only helping these women, you know financially, but for a lot of them and I imagine including the elderly women that you work with, it gives them a sense of purpose, a sense of pride and value.

- Sophie Slater: [29:16](#) I think what's really nice about transparency at the minute, and I know that's cool brands, that's fantastic and it's great that, that I'm like, I'm becoming the new norm hopefully, but I like the upper on a particular kind of transparency both ways. So our clothing cards come with a picture of a woman from the group who made it and the signature of the woman, he made it along with a little bit of blurb about grape, but also any customer selfies, we get any press, we then send back to the makeup and they get really, really proud. Um, we've got them on like a whatsapp group and we've got like a newsletter that we send out to them. So, um, yeah, they get really stoked when they see, see people wearing this
- Luiza Campos: [30:01](#) to have that. They get really excited that some of these groups decide to give back to their or their organization that they belong to. So it's that circle of improvement that keeps going on.
- Sophie Slater: [30:21](#) Yeah, really nice. So we, three years ago is on the older woman, she's 86, um, we cast her to star in one of our campaigns, so makeup done and we work, um, and it was seated on the BBC, like knits a lot of our scarves and things. And um, yeah, she, she got filmed with them. That was part of a BBC, uh, near the vessel that went out across London and she got so many phone calls the next day, people who'd seen it on the news and she said it was like one of the best days of her life. It was really nice because that, you know, really helped her with her kind of isolation and stuff. So that was exactly the kind of impact that you create by putting her as the face of that campaign to make her vulnerable and then give her voice. Sorry,

- Luiza Campos: [31:17](#) you must, I mean it must be so rewarding for you and Sarah too, to see the fruits of your labor to see all of this and how it's helping so many people and really changing, you know, pushing back on a lot of what was wrong with the fashion industry and really pushing back on that
- Sophie Slater: [31:36](#) in love so much. And it's so much fun. I think it's because we're still quite a small scale. We work with eight women's groups that they're all pretty tiny and um, yeah, we just, we'd love to have more women than I think the three of us on the team at the minute. So we've got um, yeah, it's great. But I think when you're really passionate about anything or you just want to like push it further and further deeper and do more and have sort of endless drive for that. So, but yeah, it's great. I think yeah, it's, it's, I'm really lucky that as long as my team age.
- Luiza Campos: [32:12](#) So, how do you see this evolve from an organizational perspective because, and I asked this question because um, there's often this debate about growing a business versus just being successful sometimes may mean restricting a lot of the size of it. So I wonder what your thoughts are on this because how would you be to continue to have the knowledge of the workers and that contact with them and where your clothes are coming from and how they're being made and how these women are being treated if you grow too much. So I wonder if you can tell me what are your sort of plans for the future and how do you see the organization grow?
- Sophie Slater: [33:00](#) Definitely consider a huge amount and I think um, I mentioned before this idea of setting up like a worker cooperative but still relatively small amounts by name. I'm really support women like holistically onsite there, the classes and I think one of our aims is to create a blueprint for a better fashion industry. So we're hoping that lots more designers, one of manufacturer best of ethically and other brands kind of see that they were both manufacturer in east London for good wages. So this idea of setting for workers cooperatives and maybe getting other brands to manufacture with theirs as well so that there's always, there's no supply and demand issues that the women have. Constant work would be a brilliant way I think to do that. And I think if you look at brands like reformation and everybody don't world, they've really got that down and they're doing it really well and just kind of, you know, would be great to do

that with the added a social benefits that women get in their charities.

- Sophie Slater: [34:02](#) I'm already an added kind of social care and holistic aspects as well. But we can imagine we should be able to scale quite a lot because I mean at the minute as well, but when you're working in pretty small work groups, so I think hopefully I'm in talks at like different councils about getting a space as well, which just really exciting. It's a little bit thicker or the groups to kind of meet in one under one roof where they make learning the skills and maybe do a bit of head office stuff or like learn a bit of graphics if they wanted to expand their skill base as well. So that's the dream.
- Luiza Campos: [34:39](#) Yeah. So there's, there's room to steal scale within the model that you have. But I love this idea as well of creating a bit of a blueprint that can be then replicated in different areas of the world.
- Sophie Slater: [34:51](#) Yeah, definitely. And then, so I'm from the northeast, we've mentioned in so many amazing scaled women's organizations as well because in the northeast and the northwest where the, you know, the cotton industry was kind of masters and industry related happened in Manchester where I studied with huge amounts of really skilled, fantastic on these projects as well on online and don't have any websites, but you know, there could be fantastic a bit done to setup really ethical factories are as well. So I think, you know, if, if the whole world started Ford start shopping ethically, then we could, we could take on the supply. So is enough of us.
- Luiza Campos: [35:35](#) Let's hope that that happens will be definitely. So Sophie would have been through this for years, uh, with bird song. What has been some of the, sort of, the challenges that you've faced as well as maybe some of the surprising things that have happened as, as you build this organization?
- Sophie Slater: [35:58](#) Yeah, so I think we're surprised by how global outreach has been, so we don't spend any money on marketing and we do all our press in how we do everything in house. It feels funny to call it in house because it's just us doing and we started to kind of get to the point where we can lead it, control go and sort of employed people to do other things. But yeah, we've been featured in press in Japan, South Africa, America, Canada, Germany,

Scandinavia, and we sold in 30 different countries which really surprises, like every time we get, I don't want it from another country. We were really surprised because apart from being a pop up shop in Germany, we've never kind of deliberately taking it elsewhere. But um, let's spread, which is fantastic. And Phil's Phil's amazing. Um, I think the challenge is like selling a business so young was given away because we were so naive and so much energy, uh, that we kind of felt like any challenges into mom's both. Um, and maybe if we'd been a bit more world weary, we were lucky.

Sophie Slater: [37:09](#)

But yeah, we've kind of had to teach ourselves from scratch and starting a business in London is not an easy feat. So between us has been a lot of moving back in with pens. So we, we raised some investment, I think one of the challenges was that we were told we wouldn't be taken seriously as a woman, um, by an investor who I think was trying to protect us in a way, but, um, felt really unsafe. So we kind of decided to take matters into our own hands because the investment is so scary and intimidating and isn't particularly kind of particularly friendly to anyone who's not, I don't know, like a guy running a tech company. So we had to, um, decide to raise the money ourselves and that went really well. But again, that was really hard and we have to teach them everything. But um, yeah, I think being, having a self belief that, you know, you can do it and talking to investors and convincing them that you're worthy of the money has definitely been a challenge. But one that we absolutely believe is, you know, the right thing to do. Um, but yes, does that make sense?

Luiza Campos: [38:21](#)

Yeah, absolutely. I can only imagine being that you would have a lot of things against you, the fact that you're so young that you sadly, I believe being a woman, as you mentioned, me not being in one of the industries that are more, more sort of glamorous, so to speak, like tech or innovation, but also that you, you didn't have any background before on, on generating, right a successful business. So I can see how all of those things and, and you're trying to create a business in a highly competitive industry and in a very expensive, a good barrier. And so I can see how all of those things are massive barriers or challenges to face and but again to your point being young and actually being a bit naive about it would, it would probably have been an advantage for you.

- Sophie Slater: [39:21](#) Yeah. Yeah, it's, it's really hard and I think like 14 percent of investment goes to female founders, women founders companies, or maybe it's like 11 percent and that gets even lower for sort of women of color founded companies as well. So it's like, you know, we, we find it really hard, but there's also like other people who find it even harder so it feels like, you know, so it's definitely really good. Another thing, but,
- Luiza Campos: [39:56](#) and again this is why I admired the work you're doing so much so because you and Sarah just faced all of those challenges and, and created this beautiful organization that is, is really helping so many women and really helping change the way we perceive women and young girls perceive themselves and being environmentally friendly and conscious. So I, I really admire what you stand for and what you're doing.
- Sophie Slater: [40:27](#) Thank you so much. Yeah, I really hope so. I think yeah, I hadn't really. It's interesting because when my friends go online shopping now we're kind of shocked by how airbrushed and unlike the women look like us, which is quite a nice side effect of, of kind of, yeah. Having website where you look at your friends all day.
- Luiza Campos: [40:49](#) Yeah. And it's interesting because I actually don't think that a lot of women, and particularly a lot of young women understand how much those ads are. So photoshop that is totally out of reality if they actually went to see the real images or the amounts of makeup put on. So it's so refreshing to be able to see photos of real women and it's so important to have young women see this, you know, and understand that that's, that's what actually people look like.
- Sophie Slater: [41:26](#) Yes. I feel like it definitely helps me with stuff as someone who's kind of handled a lot of stuff when I was younger from the fashion industry, you know, like feeling like I had to conform to an ideal because I was told though is perfect when I was very, very underweight I think like yeah. So me and it really helped me. I still do kind of a seat body positivity workshops with teenage girls and getting to hear the boy really helps inform what we do. I think because they are getting more savvy about at brushing and makeup and things like that. But it does really help to remind myself because they'll say things like, oh, maybe if I follow all these accounts cements the government will make me feel bad and I can follow that.

Make me feel like less like I'm comparing myself and I'm thinking that we should be aimed to be one of those brands that they follow where they go see a diverse range of women and women who are visibly, you know, completely smoothed over and perfect looking. So I think, yeah, definitely inspired by hopefully how younger younger girls would say is as well.

- Luiza Campos: [42:36](#) Absolutely. Again, I really love the work you were doing and how you really changing the industry hopefully and I really hope that this blueprint that you will, that you are able to create this blueprint that others would follow and I'm so happy to see that you're getting so much attention from different countries because I think it's really important for everyone around around the globe in other women to, to stick together and really work together for something like that.
- Sophie Slater: [43:05](#) Yeah. Yeah. That's how we feel too. Thank you.
- Luiza Campos: [43:08](#) So Sophie, where can people find out more about birdsong?
- Sophie Slater: [43:12](#) Yes. So we are [www.birdsonglondon](http://www.birdsonglondon.com) online. Uh, and you can sign up to our mailing list to hear new events. We ship internationally everywhere in the world. And you can also follow us on social media, facebook, Pinterest, instagram, twitter @birdsonglondon, um, and yeah, and we, we post like really fun 10. We've got a blog. Um, yeah, we could pull out some models and were really interactive with our customers and we really care about your feedback as well. So even from things from the design to testing, like when we do mobile and we love people getting in touch and want to see ourselves as kind of a collective that kind of said like, so can you give us the follow if you like what you hear?
- Luiza Campos: [43:57](#) Perfect. Thank you so much sophie. Really appreciate your time today and telling us the story of birdsong. Been a pleasure. Thank you.
- Sophie Slater: [44:06](#) Thank you so much. It's been great.
- Luiza Campos: [44:08](#) And there you have it. I hope you enjoyed this interview with sophie slater. It is an amazing organization and again, to find out more, you can go to the show notes@abrandedworldpodcast.com. Now a word from our sponsor, the Rotary Club of Edmonton West, on

behalf of its entire district, invites you to dream, connect, and inspire at the district five, three, seven, zero conference in October. A number of stellar speakers, both local and international, are sharing their stories at this conference. Among them is Barbara Stegman, founder of the seven virtues, a perfume company that sources organic oils from country's in turmoil to help return some stability to their economies. She was inspired to do so after her best friend was wounded in Afghanistan and believes in using business for good at home and abroad, so right up the alley of some of the speakers that we have here at a branded world.

Luiza Campos: [45:11](#)

The conference conferences open to the general public. It would also attract rotarians from all over western Canada and the world, which means you'll be in a room with some of the kindest and most community minded people around. So come to the Shaw conference century, Ned Minton from October 18th to the 20th. To learn more, you can go to conference five, three, seven, zero hyphen two zero, one eight.ca. There's a video there, there will tell you more, and I'll also have the link to the website in the show notes. Thank you for listening and until next time.

Announcer: [45:48](#)

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