



## TEL EPISODE #026:

### *Life By The Cup* with Zhena Muzyka

Show Notes: <http://www.theelpodcast.com/tel-026-life-cup-zhena-muzyka/>

*Welcome to The Entrepreneurs Library, the only book-centric podcast that reviews all the top-selling business books and shares author's perspective, firsthand. This is your resource to finding the next great book that will enable you to grow personally and professionally. Welcome your host, Wade Danielson.*

**WADE:** Thank you for joining us today on the EL. Today we have Zhena Muzyka, author of *Life By The Cup*. Welcome Zhena and thank you for joining us on the Entrepreneurs Library.

**ZHENA:** I'm so happy to be here, thanks for having me.

**WADE:** Yeah absolutely. Will you take a moment to introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about you personally?

**ZHENA:** I am an entrepreneur; it's very good that I find myself on your show. I'm a social entrepreneur, I believe that business can heal and change the world. I actually built a business, I started out with \$6 and no resources, no real business training and a baby who needed an operation and I took my gypsy heritage and background in herbal medicine and created gypsy tea parties which grew into a brand seen as Gypsy Tea.

And over the course of 13 years I built the business focused primarily on covering healthcare for my son and then decide to become an advocate for the tea workers who really needed healthcare in the tea fields, and grew the business, raised a lot of venture capital and got the products into over 20,000 stores and now I am focused on really distilling everything I've learned and putting it in to content for other entrepreneurs to learn from and grow their business.

**WADE:** Ok perfect. Now that we know a little bit about you personally let's jump right into your book *Life By The Cup* which was made available for purchase on June 17th 2014. So we're going to move quickly but here are the top questions

that our listeners who are advent readers want to know. And the first one is what was the inspiration behind writing *Life By The Cup*?

**ZHENA:** Well I started out as a writer then I took a business detour, I was writing about my gipsy grandmother from the Ukraine, fascinating story of what she went through, and then when my son was born I realized that I was going to have to support us as a single mom and the medical bills were really big. So I became a business woman, first I'm a survival but then I realized I loved business and I believed it is the biggest tool for healing and changing the world in a positive way, so I thought that it would sit down and take on the easy task of summarizing my experiences and that's not so easy writing everything that happened over 13 years in a 250 page book. Took a lot of discipline, a lot of help and a lot of corporation but I felt very strongly that I needed to write this book to help other entrepreneurs, as well as just people find their dream, claim it and go after it. And so that was the impetus for writing *Life By The Cup*.

**WADE:** Ok excellent. And what would you say makes your book different from others regarding the same topic?

**ZHENA:** There aren't a lot of books about social responsible businesses. There aren't a lot of books about having \$6 the day you start and building multi-millions of dollars in revenue. And it's also I started each chapter with very central description of tea and the inspiration behind that blend and the life lesson that that blend actually taught me, for instance coconut chai taught me to be curious and stay curious in business even when the numbers don't reflect a reason to be curious. And so I created each chapter short enough to read in the time it takes to have your morning cup of tea or coffee, and that I think is very unique because we're so busy we get up, we check email, we check social media, we check our numbers, whatever we're doing, we serve others, get the kids ready off to school, but if we can actually create a healthy ritual morning of mindfulness and reflection with our tea or coffee then we can truly make change in our lives. So that's why I created the book and I created the chapters short enough to read in the time it takes to have your tea or coffee.

**WADE:** Ok excellent. And that brings you to my next question which is how would you like the reader to engage with your book? Is this a book they should start from the beginning- I know you were talking about you can take it per session but can they skip around and use it as a resource or is this really a beginning to end?

**ZHENA:** Absolutely not. Most readers are coming to me- the book has only been out for a month at this taping but what the readers are coming to me with is that they couldn't put it down once they started which is fantastic to hear as an author, I was hopeful people would love it. so they're reading from start to finish and then they're using it as a reference. Each chapter not only does it have a lesson in it but I actually reflect on that lesson from another person's point of view. So for instance learning to ask for help, I actually talk about a group of fortune 50 executives that I worked with that had a hard time asking for help and so I talk about how others can get to learning the lessons themselves, then it has an exercise. So there's very simple exercises at the end of each chapter that the entrepreneur or anyone can actually use to improve their lives, so I made it very practical and those can be picked up, start to finish, you can pick up the book, open it to wherever you land and actually have an applicable lesson and exercise that you can do any day.

**WADE:** Great, so now that we have a background off your book, this is my favorite part where we basically just going to turn over the mic to you and allow you to uncover your creation. We know authors put their blood, sweat and tears, so I really want just like to give you the opportunity to give us a great summary of what the listener/reader is going to get out of your book.

**ZHENA:** Yeah, you know there are 17 really critical things I learned that I had to really pick, Wade. As an entrepreneur over the course of 14 years I learned a lot and everything from international business strategies to how to get a product into mass market chain to raising venture capitals.

The first chapter starts with how to deal with frustration, pain, heartache and any challenging situation that comes to your life. At the time I was dealing with my son's birth defect and the fact that health insurance companies wouldn't cover him because birth defects, at the time were considered preexisting conditions and

I was very frustrated with the system, I was very scared of my son's risk and I learned from a Tibetan couple that escaped a really harrowing in Tibbett, they taught me to look at pain as the carving of your vessel, basically they said we were born as just a big block of wood and every time a hardship or a pain comes to your life it's actually his knife carving that piece of wood into a vessel to hold more and more light, and I thought God that is such an incredible idea, so I love how we can actually refrain pain and allow it to serve us and create more capacity for success and love in our life.

So it starts with that, then it goes into learning how to ask for help, I had a really hard time, I didn't want to be a burden on anybody, I was taught from being in an immigrant family that you just don't ask for help because you don't want anyone to be put out, you don't want to be a burden, you want everyone to love you and want you around but you don't want to take up too much space and that's a pretty traditional immigrant way of thinking.

So when I had to actually someone for food I was down and out in a really big way, I asked my neighbor for food and got through my fear of embarrassment and she came over a big pot of lentil soup and overtime she ended up becoming my main investor in the beginning of the tea companies.

So I then go into showing up when you don't feel that you're ready to start. I actually put in an offer on a location to open up my tea shop which at the time I thought that was what I was going to do, turns out I was going to go international with a tea brand, but I couldn't raise the capital so I had to actually start to buy consulting with another company and all the little things that happened along the way they were never what I expected but they were always just right.

So in the just show up chapter I try to buy a café bookstore and turn it into a tea shop and the guy said there was no way I'm going to finance this thing for you but I love your ideas, you can bring your son to work and just work here and execute all your ideas. That worked out amazing because I got to learn the ropes of business in a way that I wouldn't have otherwise gotten a chance to learn.

Then it goes into how to turn burden into blessing. We had very limited funds when I started building the brand, we had issues with getting trademarks, all those things, so I really learned how to take every single challenge or burden and actually turn it into an opportunity.

So I teach the reader or I re-accentuate to the reader how they can take every single step back and turn it into a catapult to success. And then also collaboration skills, I teach in chapter nine how to collaborate to be great and then also how to cultivate curiosity, that was a big one for me, coconut chai was failing, I saw it as a product that wasn't doing very well so I was going to discontinue it, and my staff came to me and said no this product only just has a lack of distribution, it's the best product we ever made, we're actually fighting over it so much that we're running out and so we're not selling it, we're selfishly taking it all and drinking it ourselves, so don't judge this tea by its numbers. So we ended up putting it and packaging it and it's what got us nationwide distribution in the whole foods. So that was a great one to learn the curiosity.

And then the chapter twelve, see the forest for the trees, that's a cup of perspective. You know, when we're so busy, we have so much to do, we tend to lose perspective, so I really teach the reader how to gain perspective when you're so busy and there's just so much on your plate, and that's a funny one as well, and then how to self-validate. A lot of times when you launch a product or you launch a business, before you launch it you have to really be firm in your understanding and your belief in the product and your ability to do it and launch the business before you have outside validation.

So that's the chapter on my dad and I broke my first million in revenue and to him that was nothing because he didn't understand, he was a firefighter immigrant, a million dollars in revenue to him sounded big but he'd never seen that much money so he couldn't quite validate me. And then I got a fork lift and then all of a sudden I was his hero and I hung the moon. That one was about you've got to learn how to self-validate all your products and your services and then when it's ready to be validated by people you have to make sure it's also in their language because some people just come at things in a different way. So that's a good chapter and that seems to be most people's favorite.

And then there are several others but the last one is about giving and social responsibility and how generosity can eliminate fear in a business. So if your business is failing or if your product is not doing well or if you're nervous about your bottom line or the outcome of a product launch, this chapter really talks about how you can eliminate the fears and really find solutions by being generous and giving the things you need the most. And that was my tea grower in Sri Lanka.

We were fearful of that the tea workers were leaving. The tea failed to go move towards the cities and the more we educated them with fair trade dollars and built schools and got them computer training I said God, you know, what's going to happen is anyone is going to want to stay and pluck this artisan tea and I was really worried about it. We were creating this fair trade model to educate them but then it might leave us without a skilled labor to actually create the product and he said oh no Zhenia we're going to actually give them the land and make the land owners and here's how it's going to work, and I just was amazed by... he created a better business model for everybody that was more sustainable and more profitable for him at the end of the day simply by overcoming fear and using generosity as a tool to create a better business.

So there's lots and lots of wisdom in here not just from e but from many of my mentors and customers and other business leaders and I really feel that it's a great, quick and entertaining read for any entrepreneur out there.

**WADE:** There is a ton of wisdom and that's what makes the next question I think so difficult, and that's If the reader could only take one principle or action item or concept out of the entire book what would you chose that to be?

**ZHENIA:** I do think it's answering the call. I talk a lot about answering a call in business and in life. You have no physical proof or evidence that that call, that purpose for your being is necessarily real, it just is a feeling, it's a hunch, it's an intuition. And I actually teach the reader how to hone and clarify and discern their calling and how to really believe in it and become a follower of that call even if there's no physical evidence or proof yet of that calling and how that usually leads to the greatest fulfillment and the greatest ideas and that happened because I

had an instinct that I had to go to India and Sri Lanka and meet my tea workers, and everyone was saying you don't have the money, you've got the son who needs special care and why are you going to leave. It's so selfish and I just knew I had to go meet these workers, I knew in my core I had to.

So I went against all my doubts and I got over there and I met the workers and I realized why I had chosen the tea business or the tea business had chosen me was because I found one garden that was changing the paradigm of tea growing and fair trade and organic sustainable agriculture and that became such a blessing to my business that when I came back and told The SafeWay and Kroger and Whole Foods, I showed them the pictures, I showed them the business, they all wanted the product and they rolled it out nationwide because the mission of it was so strong to end poverty for tea workers and create a new paradigm of agriculture in a commodity market and really make a difference in the world. So I really teach the reader how to answer the call even when all the doubts are chasing you with the big stick.

**WADE:** Yeah, that's a phenomenal story, thank you for sharing that.

**ZHENA:** Thank you

**WADE:** This next question might be a little awkward just because it gives you the opportunity to brag on yourself and that's do you have a favorite quote from your book, something that you wrote that you went wow, this is profound and if not do you have one that is resonating well, maybe it's something that you wrote you see trending on twitter or something like that you see that you're getting great feedback from the readers?

**ZHENA:** Yeah, I'm actually getting a lot of quotes on Ttwitter, a lot of people are photographing their favorite segments of the book and posting them but I actually have a lot of great quotes from others in the book and I just close my eyes and open up to one quote by Frank A. Clark and I would have to say this sets the tone for the book and it says "If you can find a path with no obstacles, it probably doesn't lead anywhere." And then a quote of mine that a lot people are using is "With a mission to serve, you cannot fail." And that is if you're really



focused on serving others success is eminent and that seems to be a quote of my own that a lot of people are- it's resonating well with them.

**WADE:** Perfect, so you gave us a quote so now the next question is what's a book that you recommend, and this is not just any book, a book that helped create a paradigm shift in your life?

**ZHENA:** There are so many of them, I probably have 5 to 10 books going at any given day. I'm a huge reader. There is a Facebook picture that one of my favorite authors put up which was a bed made out of books and it was real books and they actually made a bed out of it and I thought "oh that's what I could do next."

I would say as a women entrepreneur and men can take or leave this and I know Wade as a man who is bringing books out for others, I really found very intense, it's kind of my bible is *Women Who Run With The Wolves*, because in business I'm a woman in a man's world in many instances and I really found there were a lot of traps I really fell into, traps of wanting to be liked, traps of trying to act like a man to be included, traps of giving up my handmade funky creation for a big fancy potential opportunity, traps of thinking consultants were so much smarter than me, that I actually listened to them against my instincts and that book *Women Who Run With The Wolves* is actually how to cultivate your wild nature and your intuition and your instincts to find your path rather than listening to all the outside people telling you. So I go back to that book at least once a year and reread certain stories in it and it really has helped me hone my strength and helped me with my discernment on what's right for me is not always going to be what's right for others.

**WADE:** Ok great Zhenas after this interview a lot of our listeners are going to want to know how to get more information on you and on your *Life By The Cup*, how would you recommend they do best the both of those?

**ZHENA:** They can read a free excerpt and watch the book trailer, and also read how Mark Wahlberg optioned the book for a series on Zhenas.tv, and if they Google Zhenas, not a lot of us out there, pretty much it's either the tea company I founded at Zhenas or my book website which Zhenas.tv, and on that website I also





have tools for entrepreneurs, I have a blog and more information about workshops and retreats that I hold for entrepreneurs as well.

**WADE:** Ok, thank you so much for coming on and sharing your book with us.

**ZHENA:** It's been a great pleasure. Thank you for illuminating great books for entrepreneurs, this is a service that many of us need.

**WADE:** Thank you for listening in today. If you'd like to get your hands on *Life By The Cup* or any of the resources mentioned by Zhenya just look at the show notes at [theelpodcast.com](http://theelpodcast.com).

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#### **LINKS AND RESOURCES MENTIONED IN THIS EPISODE:**

Check out [Women Who Run With The Wolves](#) by Clarissa Pinkola Estés on Amazon

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