

Authentic Achievements

Episode Transcript

Kim-Adele: Hello, and welcome to this episode of authentic achievements, where I have the absolute privilege of being joined by Helen Ashton, who founded shape beyond after nearly 30 years transforming complex businesses across manufacturing, business services, retail and financial services shape beyond brings to life Helen's vision of a management consultancy relevant in today's fast-paced, rapidly changing environment. Helen worked at the highest levels as an executive at PLC board level in CFO and COO roles. And as the CEO of private equity portfolio companies Helen's most recent roles have been chief executive officer at GLA a SIM private equity-backed portfolio company, and chief financial officer, at asos.com the global online fashion retailer. And Helen's currently interim non-exec director of JD sports and fashion. Helen. It's a joy to have you here. What an amazing expansive career doing so many of those different sectors. I can't wait to hear about your journey, so thank you for joining us.

Helen: Thank you. No, it's lovely. Lovely to be here.

Kim-Adele: Thank you. So I don't don't even know where you start, but could you tell us a little bit about your journey so far, please?

Helen: Yeah, so I, I, I grew up in the lake district, so I was the second of four children. My, mom stayed at home. My dad was a self-employed architect. And so we're in the middle of the lake district. Absolutely beautiful place to grow up, but not very much going on. It was quite normal. Therefore women to get married sort of 18 or 19, you know, if you were gonna work, you'd probably work in one of the cafes or one of the local shops. And it was really kind of the men's job to go out and, and work. And, and that's, that's, you know, that that's the home that I, I grew up with. And, and so I think when I went to school and I went to the local comp, I was kind of quite focused in my mind that actually I felt that this was a mold that I could potentially break away from.

Helen: Not that there was any problem with that, you know, and I know many people who've stayed up in the lake district and have absolutely loved it. And often I'm quite jealous when I go back up there of, of, of them living in such a beautiful place. But for me, I always felt that there was more out there. And, you know, I was determined to prove that doing a levels and going to university was something that was, was achievable, even though it was something in our family that had, had not really happened before. So I was very, very focused from a, from a pretty young age and I kind of went down the science route. I did a, a chemistry degree mainly cause I, I really liked chemistry. Never wanted to go into chemistry at all, but loved, loved chemistry. I went to Manchester and the reason I picked Manchester was cause it was quite close to home.

Helen: So I could jump on the train and get home when I wanted to, but it was flipping at what a shock to the system after growing up in a sleepy town to all of a sudden being, living in Mo side and, you know, meeting all of these, you know, very diverse and you know, different individuals and, and, you know, went on, did, did my chemistry degree and then very quickly like many people in their kind of early twenties come out of university don't really know what they want to do. So I decided the chem seemed like quite a good thing at, at, at that time I have learned now actually with, with I've got five children and three of them are kind of at university age and I've worked out now that when you come out of university, it isn't accountancy. Everybody goes into, in fact that is the last thing anybody would want, but you it, it, know, to, but it, you know, at my time it was that, and I, and I went and trained as an accountant and then moved quite quickly into, into industry.

Helen: And, and my starting point was in heavy manufacturing and weirdly I absolutely loved it was dirty, grimy, very male dominated. It didn't bother me. It was very Northern sleeves rolled up and I just, I loved the energy and the passion of it. And it was such a good training ground. So, you know, loved, loved working there and then moved into different manufacturing jobs, British aerospace, working on with the tornado or jets. A lot of that to be fair was about going for lunch with the top gun pilots, but the accountants never got the accountants, never got invited to the table with the pilots. So, so, so yeah, so in my early career, I kind of moved through different finance roles in lots of different organizations. And I learn learned really quickly that finance tends to be financed. It doesn't matter what industry you, you are in. The challenges do tend to be quite similar. So, you know, you can learn finance. But then for me, the really interesting bit was the cultures and the leaders and, and how things work in, in, in those worlds, which, which, you know, which was fantastic for me.

Helen: I, I moved across to work in Asda. So, and, and I would say if I look back in my whole career that working in finance at Asda was probably the job that maybe I, I, I love the most. Why is that? I think cuz I was super lucky to be working with really smart young leaders, very family oriented. The probably the first organization I'd been in where, you know, the, the group CFO was the female. If you went to see her quite often, she had a children in after school. At that point in time, I had two children, I was pregnant with my third. And people looked at you as part of the team. They didn't look at you as a mom or a woman or an accountant. It was very much, you were part of a wider team and therefore you could get involved with anything and everything that you you wanted to.

Helen: And I, you know, I, I, I really thrived in that environment. I, I, I, I loved it. I didn't feel, you know, I didn't feel judged in any, any shape or form. And actually I think working there was the first time I saw really senior people doing really DAF things. And you realize the power of, you know, people not taking themselves too seriously and having a bit of a laugh and just generally enjoying what they were doing. And, and I, you know, I, I loved, I loved it. There got really fun memories. Unfortunately at that point in time, my husband was working down in Milton Keens and we had three children and I was in leads with the children on my own. He was coming up at weekends and he showed no sign of moving north. So he spotted a job for me one weekend and said, oh, here you go.

Helen: This would be a great one. And it was in financial services. And I just remember at the time thinking, oh my God, of all the industries that I've ever worked in financial services is not on my bucket list in any shape or form. It is a unique industry, you know? And after coming from somewhere like as though where it's young and vibrant and, you know, just like, you know, just, you know, very family oriented for, for me, you know, that, that was quite a big shift. After soon that I went to work in Barclaycard, which was a division of Barclays and I've got to say it was, it was pretty entrepreneurial, again, some really strong leaders there. I joined a time when Gary Hoffman was there and then Anthony Jenkins arrived as well. So, so, you know, so working with some really seasoned leaders and, and, and I think I must have been really lucky and I do look back in my career and think that there are just times when I have just been lucky that Anthony arrived in Barclaycard and for him, the big growth engine in the business was international.

Helen: Yeah. And he must have seen something in me that he liked, probably I was just like this stropky Northern sort of see, as it is kind of accountant. And he said, oh, you know, let's move you across. And you can be the CFO in the international division. And I was like, wow, I've never done international before. This is a bit weird. So went across and did that. And, and within probably a few months, the managing director of that division left and literally one morning, I just got a call from Anthony to sit right, your taking over as the managing director of international. So I went really quickly from never having done international, never having done anything, but a finance job to all of a sudden being the managing director of, you know, business, big businesses in Scandinavia, Southern South Africa, Southern Europe, Northern Europe, Eastern Europe, middle east us.

Helen: And you would be, you know, just, just so different culturally quite political agendas as well. And at the time I think I was probably 32, maybe early thirties. And I think that was probably the only moment in my whole career where I've kind of sat there and gone. I, I, I just don't, you know, I don't know what to do. And now I'm supposed to be managing all these businesses with people who know what they're doing. And I, I don't know. And now I'm, I'm leading a team of people who I used to be a peer of, and I don't really, I don't really know what I need to do. And I remember, I remember early on saying to Anthony, well, what do you want me to do in this job? What, what do you need? And he just said, Helen just hit the numbers. And I'll, I'll, I'll speak to you at the end of each month for going on my God. And it was, it was brilliant. It was a bit like, you know, when you see little ducklings and the mother kind of pushes them into the, into the, and that was me, I was like, oh my God.

Helen: And, and, and then, you know, very quickly you just start to navigate your way through that and you learn what works and what doesn't work. And, and, you know, I learned, I learned so much in that role about how different international businesses are different cultures, just how to really use the opportunity to take on different personas and, and, and to, you know, really recognize the power of different cultures and not take it to, to heart. Cause you know, for me, you know, you'd go to South Africa and they would assume you were the PA. So you know, anybody in the meeting would ask you to go and pull the coffee. And, and I think, you know, you can either get really sort of, you know, hoed toy about it or you can get up and pull the coffee, sit down and then start the meeting. I mean, it is, you know, it's one of those things that I, think, and, and I've tended to try and just go with it.

Helen: So, a lot of, a lot of my time there, I really loved the thing that maybe I didn't love when I was working in financial services was I, I did find it very male-dominated that didn't bother me too much. Cuz I think manufacturing, I, I was quite used to that. The bit that I did really struggle with was I remember Anthony used to say to me from, from a feedback perspective, he used to say, I think you need to be less emotional about what you do. And I used to say to him, I think you need to be more emotional about what you do because for me, constant restructuring and exiting people. And when you knew that 12 months time you'd have to rehire people hiring firing for me, I just preferred developing people.

Helen: I, you know, I, I just had a much more people focus and I remember going home at the end of the day while I was there and looking at the mirror and thinking, I just, I don't think I like what I'm becoming. Yeah. And, and I think that, that, that iPhone quite quite difficult. And I was at that kind of mid thirties. So you're still trying to sort of move up the ladder and you kind of over time, I think you probably don't realize that you eat into your boundaries and over time you actually get to the point where you lose what it was in the first place that you actually enjoyed about, about the job.

Helen: So I worked in, in some different organizations in financial services and then at the age of 40, I think I had a bit of a midlife crisis. I, I had my, I had my fifth child, so we'd had four, we'd had four girls and then we had a boy finally and I was literally gonna be off on maternity for about six weeks, but he was actually really poorly. And I decided that I would take a whole six months of the crazy. And, and I did that. And while he was ill, I think that's the time that I kind of looked back at my job and thought, I just, I thought I really loved it. I convinced myself, I really loved it. But actually when I was away from it, I didn't really miss it that much. And actually I kind of, there was relief about being away from just the same old conversations. So I decided to do something that I'd always wanted to do, which was to think about going into doing a private equity job.

Helen: And that's what I did. And I probably hadn't realized at that point in time, its a bit like dating, you know, you don't just go to the first private equity firm. They're all really different from a personality perspective. So, therefore, picking which one you're gonna work with is really important. And I went and spoke to numerous, but I specifically liked a small private equity firm called TowerBrook because they were just really decent and really nice supportive people. And at the time they had Jimmy Chu and I absolutely like, you know, when you like dream job, Jimmy Chu for me would be a dream job, but they were just selling it. And they said, but don't worry. We've got another opportunity for you. And I was like, well, what is it? They're like its financial services. And I was like, oh, well what's that then?

Helen: And it was, it was a business that bought portfolios of debt from banks and then collected them. Okay. And it, it was, it was one of those that it was like, okay, well I'm not, I'm not really sure about it, but yeah, I'll, I'll give it a go and went in and again, found it a really intriguing organization in terms of, at that point in time, those businesses were becoming regulated. They were unregulated but becoming regulated. So we ended up going through a really large transformational piece of work, really taking that business into just much more customer-centric, much more focused around affordability and all sorts of different things around that. So it was a real cultural shift. The business had about 500 people. So it was quite small. You could know everybody, you knew their families, you knew everything about them and then knew everything about you.

Helen: And it was kind of like having another child like the business was, you know, it really felt like almost like your own business. And, and I, I loved it. I absolutely adored it. And I think, what you realize is it doesn't really matter what the industry is. You have to find something that in you, you recognize it as being worthwhile work and you kind of think, well in a business that buys debt off banks and collects it, how can that be worthwhile work? And we used to go and sit and take phone calls and you would have a phone call off somebody who was literally about to commit suicide. So they've got so much debt. They don't know what to do and they're ringing up and they want help. And you would sit next to, you know, some of the team who'd be speaking to them and they were just so amazing with people.

Helen: And so, you know, supportive and mindful and you know, not, not, not, you know, you have this mind, you have in mind, these bailiff banging on doors and everything. And actually, you know, yes, there are always some people who don't pay about debt, but the majority of people end up in that situation because you know, for many different reasons, but not because they don't want to repay, you know, the lovely and I think being able to interact with people and actually, when they put down the phone for them to think, I feel better now than I did. When I picked up the phone, I found that really worthwhile work, really worthwhile work and training and helping people to get to that point. I loved it. So when we sold the business, I found it really hard. I found it, it was like selling a child. And I think when you're in private

equity, you know, it's all about money. And, and for me it was more around how do we find the right home for that business? How does it carry on and, and, and go, you know, be continue to grow. What about the people who worked in that business? How do we make sure that they're landing the right way? And we were, you know, we're in, we were incredibly lucky with the buyer that bought, you know, bought that business.

Helen: So for me, you know, outta that, you know, the thing that drove me was much less about money and much more around doing something that for me, felt really worthwhile and taking it onto the next level. And then at that point, when I finished there, I again, did something really crazy. An opportunity came up to go and work at air source. It had, it had been having a really tough time. They'd had warehouses burned down, the share price was almost at an all time low, you know, in the market. It, it, it was kind of not in a great place. And I remember the headphones were saying to me, you know, this, you could go into here. This could be a real positive, or it could just be dreadful. And I was like, oh no, I'm up for the challenge. And, and, and, you know, always wanted to work in fashion and, and, you know, and digital and technology. So yeah, it was my first listed role. And over the three years, I was there, the business grew, you know, really, really massively up to about, I think we got to about 6 billion market cap share price was up about five times.

Helen: The big thing I re well, the things that I really remember from there are learning a lot about digital and technology and customer air source. Just, they talk about the customer all of the time. And I love that many other businesses talk about the customer, but not, not to the same sense then, but the thing, the other thing that was really interesting there was after working in banking where the average age was about like 45 there, the average age was like early twenties. So all of a sudden you were working with much younger teams. And, and at first, I thought it was the ASOS culture, but then you realized it was the sort of millennial gen Z culture. And, oh my goodness, have the generations got the ability to coach and developers as leaders because I learned more from those teams and any team I've ever worked with before.

Helen: And, and I had some really, really strong people coming up through the finance team, particularly women actually. And I remember saying to one, once you could have my job at some point, I said, you don't believe in yourself. I believe in you more than you believe in yourself, but you could have my job if you wanted to. And I remember it turning around to me and saying, why an earth would, I want your job? Like you never go home. You're like, you've got no time to yourself. I like, I don't see that as success. I don't want your job. And at the end of the day, you know, when you go home and you think I've worked like 25 years to get to this point, and somebody's just told me that they would never have my job given. And I think, you know, for me, it was really interesting, I think to have that very different context of what success looks like. And I think for me, that was really interesting to work with, with those very different teams, with generationally, very different challenges as well, very intriguing.

Helen: And then in sort of at the end of that period of time, I had a health scare out of nor I was fine, but having some back problems literally went to a consultant. And within a couple of days, I was in hospital having a pretty major operation out of action for six weeks and couldn't drive. And I think that probably was a really defining career moment for me, where I think, again, you step back and you think, you know what? I was like 47 or something, and you kind of think, well, I was gonna, I'll go on forever. I've never done any exercise. I don't eat properly. I don't look after myself. I'm kind of there for the kids, but I kind of don't listen to it. Then it goes over my head. And then all of a sudden you realize actually, you know, you've been giving all of this attention to work, but actually health and family you've been neglecting.

Helen: And that caught upon me. Yeah. And I was very lucky to come out the other side of that in a, in a positive way, other people that I was with at the time didn't. So I think you, you learn the hardware to really think about what's important. And it was at that period of my time of life, really, that, that, and then I stepped back and thought, okay, now I need to think about doing something, something different. And this 24-7 exec stuff I've proved to myself, I can get there. I've proved I could can sit on PLC boards. I've proved everything that I needed to prove to myself as a teenager, but actually, there's, there's way more to life than anything that I've done. And that, and that that's really the pivotal moment that, that got me to step back and really re-look at what the next 10 to 15 years of my working career was gonna be. And it wasn't going to continue in the way it had.

Kim-Adele: I think sometimes life has a way of stepping in and giving you a moment of pause. Doesn't it of saying, you can't, you can't keep doing this. Like if you do this, it comes at a cost. It comes with a consequence. And I think sometimes when we're, when we're in it and we're, it just becomes part of the day-to-day, doesn't it? You don't blink twice at kind of working every hour God sends, or the fact that, you know, people ring you at three in the morning, go, you've answered. It's like you rang. It's like, it's what you expect in these kinds of jobs. They, they expect you to be, to be on all of the time. And then all of a sudden life will give you a moment to say, you've gotta take a moment and you've gotta pause and reflect, and you've gotta make a conscious choice now about which direction that you, that you want to go in.

Kim-Adele: And I think it sounds like you are given that moment of pause and fortunately given the opportunity to come out the other side of that moment of pause and take stock and reflect and, and recreate where you wanted to move to. But what, what an amazing journey and to do it with five children. I mean, my hat goes off to you. I've got one and I kind of you balancing, but the whole making sure that you're doing what, what she needs and, and, you know, also doing what, what work needs doing. And, you know, you've, you've talked about some of the industries that I know really well, so I completely get the challenges and opportunities, that they bring. What I love about your story is that you've also proved that skill sets are transferable. I think we've lived under a misconception that actually what we do is industry-specific.

Kim-Adele: And yet one of the things that I've seen in, in, you know, in my career is when it boils down to it, it all boils down to people, you know, wherever we are, wherever we do, customers are people, suppliers are people, company, people, shareholders of people, colleagues are people. If we get good at people and that sh through your story, we get sh good at people and the rest becomes easy. And therefore it doesn't matter what industry we're in, cause people are people. So, so I love that. That kinda, that just flowed so lovely through the story that you were very good at swapping judgment, for curiosity, learning from the people around you, as much as teaching the people around you. So that together you grew.

Helen: Yeah. I, I think, I mean, what I would say is I, I wouldn't say that I'm brilliant at doing it. You know, I, I think that some things I've done well, I think some things I've done really badly and, you know, you try and learn from that. I'm quite, I'm quite introverted. I'm kind of slightly autistic as well. So I'm very structured. I'm very focused. I don't, I don't mean to come across like that, but that just is how I am. And I think being a female as well, I think it's really interesting that people put different perspectives. That if I was like that, and I was a man, they would say I was focused, but you know, if I'm like that I'm sort of cold or clinical or whatever. And, and, and, and I, you know, I don't see it like that, but I think, again, as I've got older, what I've found is that every individual is a real individual.

Helen: And I act in the way I act because of the way I am, you know, I've got a daughter, that's got autism, I've got a daughter that has ADHD and, and everybody has something that makes them amazing. Yeah. And, you know, you know, and, and you know, my daughters, I wouldn't have them any other way. They are very different and they Excel at different things. But I think it's really interesting that when you work in organizations, you know, there's a lot of training there for commercial skills or using Excel spreadsheets or whatever, but actually skills around how to engage with people, to actually understand what works for them and how do you get the best out of them. And how do you put that time aside to listen to people? And, and I think, you know, many times as a, a female, you end up in an organization where anybody who doesn't want to have a difficult conversation will divert people to come and speak to you as a female.

Helen: And there's the piece for me around how, how do we get people to be less worried about having, and yeah, these are tricky conversations, you know, around people, you know, with anorexia stealing food from bins, or, you know, or, you know, people in the menopause, or, you know, I had numerous miscarriages while I was working. And I didn't feel, I could tell people, but these are all like just human things. Aren't they, they're not, they're every-day human things that are happening all of the time. And yet so many people, you know, if you, you know, the way to put the fear of God through people at work is to say you've got like a woman's problem. And then all of a sudden you'll see people scatter a conversation.

Kim-Adele: I think it's so almost it's one of those ones where, you know, and maybe this is like old school leadership, but old school leaders, we were supposed to know all of the answers. We were supposed to have the answer to everything. Yes. And problems like that. There's no answer to you. Can't solve it for somebody, you know, like you, I've had a miscarriage, you can't solve that for somebody. All you can do is hold the space for them to tell you how they feel to let it out, to share, to be with them in that uncomfortable silence while they find their

way through. And I think that is the bit that people have found really difficult is how do I go in and do something where I dunno the answer and I can't solve it. So actually I'm just gonna have to sit in uncomfortable spaces and just hold the space.

Kim-Adele: And I think if we taught people more around that, if we taught them that it's okay to sit there with somebody in an, you know, in an uncomfortable way and hold it for them, because actually that's an act of kindness to listen, to understand, not to shut the problem down and sweep it away and hope that you know, that you can make them skip out cheerfully. We're not gonna make people skip out cheerfully all the time, but it's why it always fascinates me. You know, we call them soft skills and yet people find them so hard. So why could we not do a little bit more on, how do we help people get comfortable in the uncomfortable? Because when we get comfortable there, it's amazing.

Helen: And, and, and for, for, for me, you absolutely spot on, right, the leaders of today, it's much more this, you know, servant leadership, you're there to help to allocate resources and enable people to get on and do what they need to do. And the way you do that is by understanding and listening. And, you know, the people who are doing the job will always have the answers. If you actually ask them and listen to them. Now, there've been plenty of times where I've made an assumption about somebody and had I taken the time to step back and go, oh, you know, what, why, you know, why are you thinking like that or why? And they would've told you, but I think, again, it's, it's this task-focused leadership, the old-fashioned mentality of I've got 20 things, and I need to tick 'em off. I'll get around to the people things tomorrow.

Helen: And, and, you know, you kind of think that that, that, that kind of approach is long gone. But in many of the organizations I work in, it's still very prevalent. You know, this idea of presenteeism, this idea of, you know, you need to do all of this. You need to work faster, faster, faster, faster, and all of this other stuff that's going on around great resignations and, you know, purpose and people wanting to feel linked with, with businesses. I don't know. I think people are, have got their head in the sands and, you know, they're kind of hoping it's gonna go back to how it was. And it isn't. And I think if I look back at my career actually, where I've spent P time with people, coaching them, developing them, seeing them progress. If I were to look back at my career and think, what are the things I'm the most proud of?

Helen: It would be those things where you've seen people that have got more and more successful and you think, oh my God, I even, you know, I had a, I had a bit, you know, I had, I had something to do with that. And I think that that's, if I could go back and change something, I would go back and, and really think about spending less time on task and more time understanding and supporting and helping people. Yeah. And, you know, I, I wouldn't say that I was bad at it, but I think I could have been better if somebody had actually stepped me down and said, I could have been, I could have been better. And somebody once said to me a phrase, you know, there are some phrases that stick in your mind. Somebody, somebody once said to me, Helen, instead of trying to outwork somebody try and out think them.

Helen: And I think it's really good. I think people are so in the moment of just doing stuff that there's this moment of just going, okay, like let's not move the chess piece quickly. Let's actually think, and let's choose and be more thoughtful about what we're trying to do here. And actually, you know, it's a bit like with your health or your family, you neglect the people who work for you and you go, I'll do that one to one tomorrow. I'm too busy today, or I'll do it the next day. And every time you do that, there's a little bit of a chink that happens in that relationship because that person has been waiting for that session. It could have been that they were gonna talk to you about something really important and you've just binned it off and you think, oh, it's fine. But actually those kinds of things, I think over the years, you realized how much those interactions really matter. And you put them first in the priority list is so important.

Kim-Adele: That's, that's so true. I mean, I remember somebody saying to me many years ago, and it's kind of stuck, which is, you know, people see what's important to you by where you choose to spend more time and, you know, for a long period, like, like you, I didn't see it was choice cause no, no, no, cuz I've got this list of things that I need to tick them off. Cause that's what we're being measured on until I realized that actually I'm choosing to make that my priority and I could choose to do something different instead. And actually similarly, probably to, to you, you kind of the, the latter years, I was much better at the being present, being in the moment. Yes. Listening to people, helping develop them. And one of the things I lived in your story was when you shared about one of the ladies that worked for you and you said that, you know, she, she could do your job.

Kim-Adele: I appreciate she didn't want it. But you know, almost that piece of saying actually what you were able to do was give her belief. And I think that is one of the greatest gifts that we can give somebody is to give them our belief in them. So until they can find their own belief, because sometimes we see that potential in people. Don't we, we can see that. So if you just trust yourself, you could do, you know, you could do anything, whatever you want, even if you don't want what it is I can see for you. But trust that you can be the best that you can be. So if you, if you had to give us one last bit of chat all day, I'm very conscious of your time. If you had to give us just one final Pearl of wisdom, what would it be?

Helen: I oh, it's hard to pick one. I think that it's so I, think with hindsight, I think that you've got to be really clear on what you think successes and it isn't necessarily what you would come, you know? It wouldn't be the immediate thing that you would just answer. Yeah. You know, so, so for me, it would've been always very much, you know, I wanna be a FTSE PLC or I want to be on a board or I want to blah, blah, blah. And for many years that would've immediately come out. Yeah. And then as you hear with many people, they achieved those things and then they go, oh, well I don't feel any better actually. I probably feel a bit worse now. Cause I'm not sure what that next thing is. And I think, you know, I, I was 50 a couple of, of weeks ago.

Helen: And I think, you know when you look back on your life and you got 50 years and there are loads of things that, you know, I can look at and go, yeah, they were all great. But actually, how many of them may MIS smile? How many of them made me happy? Probably not that many of them. And I think now when I, you know, I speak to the children, I feel there's an opportunity for them not to make those same mistakes. And therefore, you know, when they're saying, you know, I want to go and do this at university or, you know, I want to be a lawyer or whatever, you know, for me, then I go, well, why do you even know what a lawyer does? And actually, you know, you are so beautifully creative. Why, why, you know, why, you know, just help me to understand because if you think that that's what success looks like, or that's what we want you to do then for god's sake, don't do it. You're young, go and set up a business, go and do some of the things that, you know, a query. It doesn't, it doesn't matter.

Helen: But you know, with the best will in the world, life is short and therefore spend time understanding what it is that really makes you happy and, and, and really focus on that. And, and if it's not making you happy, just make a change because it won't get any better. It's like you will either, you know, you will either fit, feel that you fit with something or you don't. And whenever my values have been out of sync with something, generally, it really sucks on your energy. And you've just got to get out and do something that makes you happy.

Kim-Adele: Oh, I love that. Helen, such great advice here. And I think we're all here to do what makes our soul sing. Aren't we and reminds me of a Pablo Picasso quote, which is the meaning of life is to find your gift and the purpose of life is to give it away. So find the thing that makes your, so, and then share it widely with the world. Helen, it's been an absolute privilege. I hope you will come back again and we can have another conversation, but in the interim, how can people get in touch with you?

Helen: Well, they can get in touch with me via LinkedIn or certainly via our shape beyond website as well. They can, they can come via that route. So I'm, I'm relatively easy to get hold of.

Kim-Adele: Perfect. I will make sure all of the links are in the show notes. Helen. It's been an absolute joy until next time. Thank you for joining us.

Helen: Thank you.