



GameChangers
Season 1: Episode 7
Ruby Wang

Seth Robinson: Welcome to GameChangers. The show that's about playing by your own rules when it comes to your career. Join us as we speak with people who've taken the road less travelled and found their niche. I'm your host, Seth Robinson.

Ruby Wang: It took me seven years to realize I can control my own life and I don't need to follow that traditional path.

Seth Robinson: Don't quit your day job. It's a warning we've all heard before, but it's exactly what our next guest did. Ruby Wang left her role as an actuary and took off overseas. She came back with the idea for a business, Nudie Glow, which has brought the increasingly popular Korean beauty market to Australia. Ruby, thank you so much for joining us today.

Ruby Wang: Thanks for having me.

Seth Robinson: Tell us about Nudie Glow.

Ruby Wang: Nudie Glow started about two years ago. I was in actuarial consulting work for about seven years, and after I reached my long service leave entitlement I decided to quit my job. At the time, I really did not know what I wanted to do. I had a passion in photography, as you mentioned earlier, with my blog, so I tried to pursue photography and get some jobs with brands and to do some photography work for them. And that wasn't sustainable because it was really hard to get the clients and the work, so I started thinking about businesses.

Ruby Wang: I had no clue about how to start a business, so I decided to take up a digital marketing course. At the same time, I decided to take a holiday overseas to Asia. I remember walking into a Korean beauty shop without knowing much about Korean beauty at the time. My friend told me, "Oh, these are some of the most popular face masks you can buy." And I was like, "Oh, \$2 what a

bargain," so I quickly picked up about 30 thinking it will last me a whole year.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: I guess after spending half an hour in this shop and spending about \$200 I was really amazed at the products, so I came back home and did a little bit more research on Korean beauty products. I found that it was actually really popular in Asia, and America, and of course South Korea. But, for some reason there weren't that many businesses locally providing these products for the Australian market, so I guess I had a light bulb moment thinking, this is it. Maybe this is the business I should start.

Seth Robinson: Yeah, I got a suitcase full of stuff. I can sell it.

Ruby Wang: Yeah. Every girl loves beauty. It won't be a boring job. I decided to take up the challenge and start the business.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: Yeah.

Seth Robinson: That's fantastic. That's a bit of a leap from having your career and doing it for seven years I think you said.

Ruby Wang: Yeah.

Seth Robinson: Having a career and then going traveling and just deciding you're going to pull the plug and do something incredibly different, that's really brave in its own right.

Ruby Wang: Yeah, it was definitely a scary decision when I submitted my resignation letter without knowing the future, basically.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: But, I think I was, after seven years, I really needed a change. Thinking back, I think I stayed on the job for a even longer than I should've. The fact that I decided to quit without knowing what the future holds was a big move, but I think I needed that to give me some time and space to think about what I want to do in the future, yeah.

Seth Robinson: You really put Nudie Glow down to that travel, opening your mindset through travel.

Ruby Wang: Definitely, and just having the time to think about what I want in life. I guess when I quit my job my first instinct is I don't want to go back to corporate.

Seth Robinson: Okay.

Ruby Wang: That pushed me to search for the next thing, or really follow my passion and trying to find something I actually loved, yeah.

Seth Robinson: Yeah. Beyond the suitcase, having your initial purchase, which I imagine you ended up using yourself actually, but, what was the process like? What goes into starting a startup? How did you go about the journey?

Ruby Wang: With no experience in starting a business, I literally went to Google and Googled everything. Google was my best friend. Initially, Nudie Glow concept was a subscription box.

Seth Robinson: Okay.

Ruby Wang: Because at the time subscription boxes were in and I thought it was a much easier start because you only have to curate one type of products, which is just the face masks. I spent one night Googling I guess 100 Korean brands.

Seth Robinson: Wow, okay.

Ruby Wang: And cold emailed all of them asking them for a meeting. I remember at the time when I introduced myself, I had no website.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: I only had a concept. Looking back at the email, I was surprised people responded to me because it didn't look professional at all. I did that cold emailing and waited for a few days and about 10 businesses emailed me back saying they would love to meet me.

Seth Robinson: That's fantastic.

Ruby Wang: Yeah, I was so shocked that it was that easy to get business onboard. I booked myself a flight straight away to go to Korea, even though I didn't speak a word of Korean, I basically just went for it, yeah. When I flew over, I went for the meetings and everything started to seem more real because there were businesses interested in working with me, yeah.

Seth Robinson: That's really, really something very special. Once you did that initial trip and you started to develop some relationships, is that when you started to get into things that were a little bit more regimented? Now, I know you've just finished the Melbourne Accelerator Program for example. Was that the next step that came after that?

Ruby Wang: For the business, it actually took a long time to get it off the ground. I remember the first three months I didn't actually tell my parents, so because I had no clue what I was doing.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: I was testing out different things trying to get it to work, and it just didn't pick up the first six months. Sales were really slow. It didn't look like it had a bright future. My parents were pushing me to find another job.

Seth Robinson: Back in corporate?

Ruby Wang: Back in corporate.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: Telling me that, "This is not worth it. What are you doing with your life?" I never really had a plan at the beginning because I guess it wasn't what I expected starting a business. It was a lot harder.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: Because I've been out of work for half a year already, which I also didn't tell my parents. Yeah, it was a big struggle at the start I guess, no income, no... really slow progress with the business, no future, it didn't look like it had a future, and all this stress coming from family. Also, I guess friends didn't really understand. Yeah, I didn't have a plan for the next step and in the business at the time.

Seth Robinson: How did that end up coming from there to here? I mean you've had a few stops along the way.

Ruby Wang: I obviously tried to connect with more people. For example, I met the Melbourne Uni Accelerator people, and I'm able to connect with some other people in business to get more advice and use Google a lot to find ways to make a... find different traction channels, for example, to get the business off the ground.

Ruby Wang: I guess about, I think in 2017, I found out about Melbourne Accelerator Program and I did apply. At the time, traction was wasn't very good, so it didn't get through. Then that's when they introduced me to the Velocity Program, which is the pre-Accelerator Program. I applied for that and got in. That was the next stage of the business where I got into a program and I was able to learn from others, and get a little bit more experience in this business world.

Seth Robinson: Developing the fundamentals in business.

Ruby Wang: Yeah, yeah.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: Then that led to applying for Melbourne Uni Accelerator Program to now.

Seth Robinson: How have you found it being part of that startup ecosystem around Melbourne? Has it been quite a supportive community? Do you feel like you're networking a lot?

Ruby Wang: Yes, definitely. I think it was very important for me at the time to get into these communities and network with others in this space. I think it's really important because you learn so much from other people, whether it's their mistakes or tricks to E-commerce.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: You get to learn so much by just talking to people.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: If you can avoid a mistake by listening to someone else's mistake, I think that's, that will save you a lot of time.

Seth Robinson: Absolutely.

Ruby Wang: Yeah.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: It was really important for me at the time to be able to connect with some of these people in the community.

Seth Robinson: Where is Nudie Glow at now? I think I read the other day that you were celebrating some sort of milestone, something along the lines of sales.

Ruby Wang: Yeah. We celebrated two milestones last month. The first one is that we reached \$1 million in sales.

Seth Robinson: Fantastic.

Ruby Wang: Yeah. That was a big one.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: It happened three days before our second birthday.

Seth Robinson: That's really great.

Ruby Wang: Yeah. I guess I never expected to reach this milestone so quickly. When I realized, super excited that we reach this milestone, yeah.

Seth Robinson: Yeah, that's incredible. Has business picks up even more since then? Have you found that now that you're getting that traction you've reached critical mass?

Ruby Wang: Yeah. We get lots of new customers every month. I think most of these are coming from word of mouth. People are spreading the word. People love us enough that they want to share with all their family and friends.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: We haven't done too much with Facebook ads or any advertising.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: It has been growing.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: Now we are trying to do more advertising to get, I guess, to reach more people because we've had so much great feedback from existing customers, so we just want to share more with the rest of Australia.

Seth Robinson: It sounds like you're at that moment where you're shifting from, I guess, organic growth to having to push your brand out there a little bit more.

Ruby Wang: Yeah.

Seth Robinson: I know that we've spoken before. One of the things you mentioned to me at that time was that in the future you would like to be the new Priceline and have physical locations and that sort of thing. Is that still something on the cards?

Ruby Wang: That's still a big challenge for me. We are still only a team of two.

Seth Robinson: Okay.

Ruby Wang: There are lots of things we want to do, but we don't have the resources to achieve everything, so we have to make decisions to where we want to go next. Currently, there are a few options for us.

Ruby Wang: Having physical brick and mortar stores is something I eventually hope to achieve, but after running a business for two years you have to evaluate things. It's not about the perception of a brand. You really have to figure out the numbers behind every action and opening a physical store might look great for a brand, but it might not be the best for the business at this moment because everyone is going online now. When I tell people I want physical stores everyone questions why when you have such a successful online business. Whereas, there is no need for a physical store.

Seth Robinson: It sounds like that's very much part of the process as well is thinking about how the business adapts and what form it actually is in really changes over time as you actually go through the motions of working in the business.

Ruby Wang: Yeah, definitely.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: As I progress, I learn more and I start to think differently as well.

Seth Robinson: That's really cool. On the numbers side of things, that's what your study was in originally doing the bachelor of commerce in actuarial science.

Ruby Wang: Yeah.

Seth Robinson: I know the other aspects of the business you had to self teach and learn on the fly. Do you feel like having that grounding in numbers was useful when it comes to managing this?

Ruby Wang: Oh definitely. I guess having that background in numbers, statistics and even the analytical skills, they were really useful for me starting a business. I definitely avoided making lots of mistakes just because I have that background and I can pick up things a lot quicker when it comes to numbers or analytical data.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: Yeah, so definitely,

Seth Robinson: I imagine those are a lot of the life and death mistakes you managed to miss as well.

Ruby Wang: Yes.

Seth Robinson: Because I mean if you're broke, you can't run a business, right?

Ruby Wang: Yeah, definitely, yeah with the numbers, especially Excel spreadsheet.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: I used to work with Excel every single day, so yeah, it's really handy to have those skills, oh yeah.

Seth Robinson: Now that you've been in it for a couple of years and you're continuing to grow and it sounds sustainable, do you have advice for people who are maybe thinking of leaving the corporate world and launching their own business?

Ruby Wang: Because I've only done it for two years, I can't say I'm an expert in this. I'm still trying to figure everything out myself. But, for people who are looking who are currently in corporate, or who wants to start something but too afraid to, I think just do it. That's the thing no one told me back then. No one really said, if you don't like what you're doing, just quit.

Ruby Wang: It took me seven years to realize I can control my own life and I don't need to follow that traditional path. It's definitely worthwhile getting into corporate role and have that experience. I highly recommended it. But, if it's really not for you don't stick around just because it's a securer job because life is too short to work in a job that you hate.

Seth Robinson: Yeah.

Ruby Wang: Yeah, just go for it. Maybe start on on the side if you do have commitments with your financials and things, but definitely give it a try. There is just so

much, so many resources out there for free right now. You can have access to so much information, the communities, just make the most of those and if you really want to do something it's not that hard to achieve it.

Seth Robinson: Awesome.

Ruby Wang: Yeah.

Seth Robinson: Is there anything you would've done differently if you had the chance to do it over?

Ruby Wang: If I could go back in time, I probably would have tried this whole business thing or even quit my job a little bit earlier.

Seth Robinson: Yeah, right.

Ruby Wang: Yeah.

Seth Robinson: Just do it, Nike philosophy.

Ruby Wang: Just do it. Yeah.

Seth Robinson: All right. Well this is one last question, which is one that we sign off with all our guests on.

Ruby Wang: Yeah.

Seth Robinson: What's one thing that's not on your resume that's got you to where you are today?

Ruby Wang: Great question. I think the one thing that really helped me get to where I am today is probably my partner. Having a really supportive partner was crucial to me growing a business, getting that motivation, encouragement to continue when I was almost going to give up and go back to my corporate job.

Ruby Wang: Because I think especially for, I guess female founders, there is the perception that we are less likely to get into business and start a business. The support is not not as great, so having that support at home really made a difference for me. I guess for anyone who's looking to start a business, I think it's really important to find that support elsewhere because it's really hard to do it alone.

Seth Robinson: That's fantastic.

Ruby Wang: Having that support just makes it 100 times better. If you currently don't have one, go find a group of people that share the same experience or have done it before. Yeah, it just helps you keep going.

Seth Robinson: Tap into a network.

Ruby Wang: Yeah, yeah.

Seth Robinson: Well Ruby, thank you so much for joining us today. It's been an absolute pleasure to have you in the studio.

Ruby Wang: Thank you so much for having me.

Seth Robinson: You've been listening to GameChangers. GameChangers is recorded by Chris Hatzis and produced by Sophie Thomas. I've been your host, Seth Robinson.