

I recently went one on one with Kelly Ann Winget, Founder of Alternative Wealth Partners.

Adam: Thanks again for taking the time to share your advice. First things first, though, I am sure readers would love to learn more about you. How did you get here? What experiences, failures, setbacks, or challenges have been most instrumental to your growth?

Kelly Ann: I have to give credit to my parents, specifically my mother, because she was a serial entrepreneur and an aggressive investor her whole life. I was raised in a family that had a lot of exposure to wealth and opportunity. Unfortunately, this type of privilege is the origin story for most private equity professionals. In my career, I worked with investors from every background and found that the ones who benefited most from having access to these deals were the self-made hustlers. These small business owners and industry experts needed the doors opened to get to the next level. I have spent my career inviting people to the table who weren't ever being asked before. My biggest challenge has always been being the youngest person in the room, but I can leverage several lifetimes of experience within my network to find those rooms and get deals done.

Adam: In your experience, what are the key steps to growing and scaling your business?

Kelly Ann: Fail fast. Don't sit on a solution if it isn't working, and don't force it to work if you can't think of something else immediately. You will dig yourself into a hole if you don't allow your business to bend and adapt to different challenges. Confidence, you are the best at what you do for who you do it for. Believe in yourself and commit to constantly improving your skills, whether it is education, coaching, exercise, etc. Ask for and accept help from people who know more than you (they are out there, I promise, haha).

Adam: What advice do you have for women in or interested in working in male-dominated industries?

Kelly Ann: Just do it. If you are interested in those industries, just go do it. There isn't a real barrier to those spaces, and some men are very open to sponsoring or supporting your career growth. As women, we feel like we have to overcompensate when we are in underrepresented spaces, and unfortunately, we have to. We must constantly prove that we deserve to be in those rooms when most men just show up and are welcomed; even if they are in the wrong room, they make each other fit. I really believe if more women started their businesses in those spaces, we could begin to really change the narrative. I.e., A woman-owned car dealership, engineering firm, pilot program, colleges and trade schools, banks, etc. Share your story if you are in a male-dominated industry and are killing it. Talk about it, write about it, document it, publish it, and post about it—the more women who

can see you, the better. We don't have the same kind of ego or lack of humility as men. We can float around in the background our whole careers (I know this because I did it for 10 years) and never be recognized for our accomplishments. In contrast, men get literal awards for paying for and showing up to golf games.

Adam: What advice do you have for men in those industries on how to be great allies?

Kelly Ann: Try to have the same camaraderie for your female-identifying and POC coworkers as you do with other men. Everyone has unconscious biases; however, being open to feedback and willing to change/learn will really help create safe places for people who may stand out in specific industries. I.e., Don't laugh when someone makes a sexist or racist joke, refer to women in your office by their name instead of a pet name ("honey, sweetie, girl, etc.), don't assume women want to have you in their space so be mindful of how you approach their desk/cubicle/office. We have a lot that we have to think about and be aware of that men don't necessarily have to deal with. Stand up for your counterparts and talk to them about how you can be an ally to them specifically. Everyone's situation is different.

Adam: How can leaders build truly diverse and truly inclusive organizations?

Kelly Ann: Leaders have to be adaptive. It goes beyond hiring a quota of people. It is a culture and mindset you must implement, encourage, and grow constantly. As communities of people become more comfortable/safe with sharing ways they are excluded, leadership must be willing to accept that information as it comes and work with those people to make changes inside of their organizations. Does everyone get their way? No. But checking in with your team and building solutions with balanced representation will make a big difference.

I work with a lot of personalities. Not everyone that works in my firm can get along with the different types of business owners that I speak with every day. I understand my team's strengths and weaknesses, so I can pull the right person in when I know they can be most successful.

Adam: What do you believe are the defining qualities of an effective leader?

Kelly Ann: You need to be a receptive listener who can quickly receive and understand feedback from clients, employees, colleagues, friends, family, partners, etc.

Confidence, you must make decisions confidently, trust/support your team's decisions, and carry yourself into opportunities knowing you are the right person for the job. Please don't confuse this with arrogance (which people also follow; however, I wouldn't consider these people leaders).

Have an open mind, and remain open to new ideas and solutions as you grow as a leader. The world is moving faster than you think, and keeping an open mind allows you to see opportunities at every crossroads. Stay creative, challenged, and curious.

Adam: How can leaders and aspiring leaders take their leadership skills to the next level?

Kelly Ann: Continually be investing in yourself. Read, mentor, partner with leaders in related fields outside of your own, research, and experiment with different leadership styles.

Adam: What are your three best tips applicable to entrepreneurs, executives, and civic leaders?

Kelly Ann: Take time for yourself (I have a really hard time with this) and work on things outside your leadership role. Some professions teach this to their industry. For example, my wife is a social worker, and they are taught different methods to separate themselves from their heavy workload. Business owners are told to hustle, sacrifice and grind to make it. Leaders carry a lot of responsibility, not only for themselves but for their teams, communities, industries, etc.

Failure is okay. Bad ideas exist. Solutions flop, doors close, and deals are lost. Learn to take the next step forward even if you're stepping from 3 steps back.

Never forget who helped you get to where you are today. The good, bad, and the ugly. The people who lifted you up and tried to pull you down. The people that are cheering you on and the ones who are booing from the sidelines. Be a positive blip in someone's timeline and hold yourself to a higher standard than those who try to keep others from rising.

Adam: What is the single best piece of advice you have ever received?

Kelly Ann: C'est la vie "Such is Life." I've heard this my whole life from people I respect the most. Make sure you remember that you can't control everything and be okay with the unknown.

Adam: Is there anything else you would like to share?

Kelly Ann: Be conscious of the energy you put out into the world because it will be the energy you will receive from it. Be a light and lead with it.

Also, it's okay not to be a leader. It isn't for everyone, and that is perfectly fine. Just be the best version of yourself, and you will naturally flow into your role in the universe. Leaders fill gaps like puzzle pieces, and you can't force yourself into place, so find the right puzzle if you want to be a great leader.

[Adam Mendler](#) is the CEO of The Veloz Group, where he co-founded and oversees ventures across a wide variety of industries. Adam is also the creator and host of the business and leadership podcast [Thirty Minute Mentors](#), where he goes one on one with America's most successful people - Fortune 500 CEOs, founders of household name companies, Hall of Fame and Olympic gold medal winning athletes, political and military leaders - for intimate half-hour conversations each week. Adam has [written extensively](#) on leadership, management, entrepreneurship, marketing and sales, having authored over 70 articles published in major media outlets including *Forbes, Inc.* and *HuffPost*, and has conducted more than 500 one on one interviews with America's top leaders through his collective media projects. A [top leadership speaker](#), Adam draws upon his insights building and leading businesses and interviewing hundreds of America's top leaders as a [top keynote speaker](#) to businesses, universities and non-profit organizations.

Follow Adam on Instagram and Twitter at @adammendler and listen and subscribe to [Thirty Minute Mentors](#) on your favorite podcasting app.