

**Sheila:** Hello, everybody! Welcome to the Head of the Table podcast, my name's Sheila Long and I will be your host for today's show. Hello everybody! Welcome to the Head of the Table podcast! My name is Sheila long, and we have a great session for today! One of our wonderful members here who has done a lot to really grow MalamaDoe, our co-working community for women, and really inspire a lot of women leaders is here joining us. Her name is Kerri Balliet, and she's with the Red Baron Group. Welcome, Kerri!

**Kerri:** Thank you Sheila, I'm so happy to be here with you today!

**Sheila:** Alright, great! Well, based on our conversations and what I know about you, you're a coach, you do a lot with career development, performance management, engaging customers, you're all about building teams, but why don't you tell us a little bit about what you do, in your own words, with your business?

**Kerri:** Sure! So, I am a transformational coach, and I like to say that I work with companies to create cultures of human greatness.

**Sheila:** Alright!

**Kerri:** So, I believe that each and every one of us is capable of greatness and I really like to be an influencer in the corporate space –

**Sheila:** Okay

**Kerri:** I also work with individuals that are looking to play a bigger game in life, and want to collaborate and co-create with a coach to bring their big dreams and goals to fruition!

**Sheila:** Okay, yeah!

**Kerri:** So I actually launched by business, The Red Baron Group in April of 2018 after transitioning out of a 35- year corporate career-

**Sheila:** Really!?

**Kerri:** Yes, yeah! So, big change for me- I was in operations and business management for a very long time so-

**Sheila:** Okay

**Kerri:** - so being a transformational coach is very fairly new for me.

**Sheila:** Okay- transformational

**Kerri:** Yes, transformational, yes!

**Sheila:** There you go!

**Kerri:** It's been a very personal journey!

**Sheila:** Alright.

**Kerri:** Mhm.

**Sheila:** Wow. Okay, so what lead you to wanting to be a transformational coach or like what put you down that path?

**Kerri:** Well, I was working in corporate in the media and publishing space and as we all know that space has gone through a lot of change, so I was going through a lot of transformation in my business life, and I also was going through a really big transformation in my personal life. I had something happen almost ten years ago that really lead to a personal transformation for me-

**Sheila:** Okay.

**Kerri:** -and as I was going down my personal journey I thought, 'wow, wouldn't it be really cool if I could help other people transform, as well.'

**Sheila:** Wow

**Kerri:** And so that gave me the transformational bug.

**Sheila:** Wow. Okay, great!

**Kerri:** Yeah!

**Sheila:** Alright, so your current role, you're the owner, you're the founder, how is it going for you? Is there anything that you found really exciting about it, or is it really going down the path that you thought?

**Kerri:** It is! I launched by business in April of 2018, I transitioned out of corporate in October of 2017, and this is the third business that I've launched-

**Sheila:** Really?

**Kerri:** -It is.

**Sheila:** Way to go!

**Kerri:** Yeah, thank you! But this is the first business that I've launched on my own.

**Sheila:** Okay.

**Kerri:** My other two businesses I launched with my wife. And when you launch a business with a second person, or even a group of people, you have this built-in structure.

**Sheila:** Okay.

**Kerri:** And, because I launched this business on my own, and I changed careers, it's tested me and challenged me in ways that I never thought that it would. So, it's been both exhilarating and terrifying all at the same time.

**Sheila:** And that's just how it is, right?

**Kerri:** It is how it is; I think- you have to- we get to choose- we get to choose the stories we tell about ourselves, we get to choose how we want to show up in the world, we get to choose how we manifest what we do, and that's been the fun part to watch that manifestation happen.

**Sheila:** Okay

**Kerri:** The challenging part has been challenging those stories that I have to tell about myself-

**Sheila:** Okay

**Kerri:** - and really figuring out what my values are, how I want to show up in the world, who I need to become to be able to do all of the great and wonderful things that I want to do.

**Sheila:** That is so cool. This is why I'm just so happy that I know you and you're such a great value in our community. Just being around you- just the fact that you would say something like even though it's terrifying, it's really important and to show up and to really let people know what your values are. So, thanks for just being you

**Kerri:** Oh, thank you Sheila.

**Sheila:** Alright, so, we're talking about Head of the Table on this podcast, so what does that mean for you?

**Kerri:** So, I really had to think about that question, because Head of the Table has a very different meaning to me now that I am a transformational coach-

**Sheila:** Okay

**Kerri:** - and now that I've been on this journey of self-reflection of learning and growth. So, when I really thought about head of the table, for me, I see the words as a metaphor.

**Sheila:** Okay

**Kerri:** So, head of the table, for me, means- it's about owning my own power, and knowing that I am enough while remaining humble, grateful, and open to receive.

**Sheila:** Wow

**Kerri:** That's really important for me. It's also about being intentional about how I show up in the world, and how I choose to live into my values, because it is really a choice for me. And one of the things that's so important to me is about making connections and about making meaningful connections. So, when I thought about 'the Head of the Table,' that to me insinuates that there are other people at the table, that I'm not the only one that's sitting at that table.

**Sheila:** Okay

**Kerri:** And that means that I get to connect with every other person around that table, and learn about the gifts that they have to share, and the lessons that they have for me to learn, and then the opportunities and the possibilities for me become endless!

**Sheila:** Really?

**Kerri:** Yeah!

**Sheila:** That really energizes you!

**Kerri:** Absolutely! Yes! Because it means that I get to co-create with other people; I don't need to have all the answers, I don't need to be the one that everyone is looking at saying, 'what are we going to do?' It's really the difference between command and control, and influence. And that is such a big shift for me, personally.

**Sheila:** Okay, so, why?

**Kerri:** Because for many many years in my life being in corporate, and being in an executive level corporate, I felt like I did have to have all the answers. I felt like people were looking at me saying, 'Kerri, what are we going to do? What should we do? And it was really about command and control for many of those times when I was feeling insecure and I didn't have the answers, I felt like I had to command and control my way through it, and now for me, I know that I don't have to have the answers. I don't have to command and control my way through it, I just have to influence, and I have to be curious, and I have to ask questions, and I have to be open to receive so that I can be open to all of the opportunities and possibilities that are out there.

**Sheila:** That is just so neat. Because I worked in corporate for over 11 years and I know the command and control- it depends on your role, I guess, but you definitely have to have your game face on, you have to know what you're doing, and then when you're running your own business, it's a different type of game face.

**Kerri:** It is, absolutely. And when you're running your own business, learn what vulnerability looks like for you, and so many times in corporate, it depends on the culture that you are trying to create. And I always like to think that in a corporate culture, when you can connect deeper with your employees, and create a profound sense of belonging, and create trust, and vulnerability, and productive conflict, then you can connect even deeper with your customers. And so many times I think corporate skips that middle step of connecting with their employees- they want to connect with their customers, they know that that's important, but sometimes we forget that we need to do that through the people who we are working with on a daily basis to help us connect with our customers. That becomes a really powerful message.

**Sheila:** Awesome! Yeah I always worked in sales, in some capacity, in corporate, so I was always connecting with the customer, and then I'd have to reiterate what the customer said to the people, I think, that you're saying are setting the tone of the culture. And so I really appreciate that, and that's what you're able to do with your business

**Kerri:** Yes- that's what the coaching and the facilitation and the leadership, that's what all of that is about.

**Sheila:** Okay, so you're able to help people do that and really just take your experience being in it, but then really now being able to use how you're able to influence and use your curiosity instead of that command and control to really just help people lead more fruitful companies

**Kerri:** Yeah I like to say that I am the conduit- I'm the one that asks the curious questions that gets people thinking,

**Sheila:** Okay.

**Kerri:** I'm the one that allows you to maybe step back from the situation that you're in and have an elevated view of what's going on, and help you get curious so that you can see all of the doors that are around you, and help you to open the doors that you want, to become the person that you want to be or create the culture that you want to foster for your company.

**Sheila:** That is so neat- awesome!

**Kerri:** It's really powerful!

**Sheila:** It is really powerful. So who influenced you? Like who are your role models?

**Kerri:** So, I thought about this a lot as well, last night as I was thinking about this podcast today, and the first person of course that came to mind was my dad. So, I actually named my business the Red Baron Group because my dad's nickname for me was snoopy when I was a kid.

**Sheila:** Oh really?! Who knew!?

**Kerri:** And I wanted to give a nod to my dad because he was a serial entrepreneur, and my dad was not afraid to march to the beat of his own drummer. And I'm very much like him- very much like my father. My father was also an amazing networker and a connector. My dad knew everyone. And he was amazing at making connections and putting people together. And he wasn't afraid to talk to anyone. He always was interested in people and their stories and the gifts that they had to offer. And so, I look at my dad as a huge influence and inspiration in my life. And then of course I have to put my mom into that category.

**Sheila:** I know, it's so hard, this question is so tricky!

**Kerri:** I can't say 'well oh well, it was just my dad' because everyone thinks that my dad was the brains of the operation, because he was the one who was out there, the connector, the networker, but I am here to tell you that it was my mother who was the brains of the operation. So she was the master implementer, and the executor of all of my dad's ideas. You know- they had-

**Sheila:** What a great partnership!

**Kerri:** It was an amazing partnership, they both had strengths that they brought to the table and they both knew it and so I love that and my mom is one of the strongest and most courageous women that I know, so I put her in that category. I have to give a nod to my wife, who also inspires me. Unfortunately, my time with her was cut short –

**Sheila:** I am so sorry.

**Kerri:** Thank you- she passed away almost ten years ago from ovarian cancer after a five-year battle with cancer. But I credit her of my inspirations because she really taught me what unconditional love looks like, and acceptance. She really accepted me for who I was, and embraced me-

**Sheila:** That is so neat!

**Kerri:** -With all of my strengths and my flaws, and my shortcomings that I have. And she really helped me understand that in the end, it is the love that is the element that carries us through when all else is gone- everything else is gone and the physical body is no longer here, it is the love that carries us through, and remains; it's the thread.

**Sheila:** Wow. That is so great. And it's so true- you forget about it, you know?

**Kerri:** You do! And you get so many times, and in the past ten years, you know, in getting caught up in my grief, I forget that, and then I always come back to the fact that I had the pleasure of having her in my life for 12 years. And I'm so blessed by that. And she's given me so much, and continues to this day, to give me so much because that love still remains.

**Sheila:** Wow. I'm very emotional. That's just such a sweet story and I know as our parents age or whatever we're going through, as people begin to change, and, you know, our relationships change because, you know, maybe they're getting older, but you still have to remember that- it's just so important to really have the love really shining through. And just remembering it's such a gift.

**Kerri:** It is a gift. And it's why we grieve- we grieve because we've loved and if we can look on that as this amazing experience in our life, I miss her, and if I could change it I would, but I can't. and so I choose to embrace all the positive and the love that she has given me, which then has really put me on this transformational journey. It's where my transformational journey started ten years ago. Because I needed to figure out why. I was so trying to figure out why did this happen? What was the bigger meaning around all of this? Because it could have been a not really positive experience and I wanted it to be a positive experience for myself. So, I have two other people on my inspiration list, I do- my first one, I have to give a nod to my first boss, Ray Wolf, because he believed in me when no one else believed in me, not even when I believed in myself, so that was really cool. And then my other one is my transformational coach. I work with a transformational coach. Her name is Jill Borsos, I've been working with her for about eight months, and she has changed my life- she really has. And she is my champion, she pushes me when I need it, she gives me support when I need it, and she also gives me that unconditional love and I know that she's got my back.

**Sheila:** Okay, well thanks to Hill!

**Kerri:** Yeah! She's amazing- amazing coach.

**Sheila:** And also just like to that first boss, I've been thinking a lot about this because we deal normally with people who are pivoting in their career, but we've learned a lot, normally when you're mid-30's or older than that, and we are an all-women community here, but a lot of times our first boss is a male, and I know I've learned from my bosses- and it sounds like you did, too- that they really do push you and teach you, like what to write in the email, and what to say in person- whatever it is, and if you don't think you can do something they stand with you and help you and cheer you on after that.

**Kerri:** Yeah he was a really big influence in my life. I really credit him with changing the course of my life.

**Sheila:** Really!?

**Kerri:** Yeah. Like I said- he believed in me when I didn't believe in me, and I remember thinking, well if he thinks I can do this, then I think I can do this. And he was just this really positive influence in my life when I really needed it. And I'm forever grateful for the universe for putting him in my life.

**Sheila:** Yes, the universe, it always comes back to that.

**Kerri:** It does! The universe always gives you what you need.

**Sheila:** So you started out with your dad, probably as a small child, so charismatic, then your mom, you know like she's really gettin' the things done, then you have a great boss, a wonderful partner in life, and now like a great coach. So all of those things- and I know there's more- because there's never- you've never mentioned everybody, but-

**Kerri:** Well when I think of all the really great things that I've done in my life, Sheila, I realize that I have not done them alone. I always do them when I design a supportive environment around myself, because it makes me a better me. And so often we find our self in silos, right, and sometimes that comes from our fear that we have and if we can open ourselves up and design supportive environments around ourselves and let people in and co-create with other people, that's when the magic starts to happen, and that's part of what I love about being a transformational coach, is really when I first start working with companies who are trying to create new cultures or individuals who are trying to play a bigger game, from the first session to, maybe the twelfth session that we're doing, which is usually about six months out, there's such a change- and it's that co-creation part, and seeing all the possibilities and the opportunities that come up, and it's really cool to see, and to be a part of! I feel honored that I get to be a part of that journey.

**Sheila:** Wow! I think that is so great. I think everyone should look you up on social media! What are your handles?

**Kerri:** Well, I hashtag the Red Baron Group, hashtag transformational coaching, that's another big one of mine.

**Sheila:** Alright, and then you have a website.

**Kerri:** I have a website, redbarongroup.com. I've got some business coaching on there, I've got some individual coaching on there, and then I also do some workshops and seminars and some speaking engagements, as well.

**Sheila:** Okay, so workshops, speaking engagements, personal and team coaching.

**Kerri:** Yes

**Sheila:** Great! Alright, so, what is your biggest accomplishment?

**Kerri:** Boy oh boy. Well, I love what I was able to do in the corporate setting, in my last job. So, I worked for Trusted Media Brands here in Milwaukee, a publishing and media company, and one of the values that I really like to live into is being impactful- being impactful is really really important for me, and I was really able to be impactful at Trusted Media Brands. I was able to move the business forward in lots of positive ways, and make a really big financial impact for that company, so that was really big for me.

**Sheila:** Oh really? Congrats!

**Kerri:** Thank you, thank you! And, I absolutely loved all of the people that I worked with. They were passionate about their jobs. They were always willing to go above and beyond and do whatever it took and we were always trying to transform that business because media and publishing is transforming at such a rapid pace now. And, so, I really loved working with people who were so committed and passionate, and it felt like an extension of family for me. And we were all closely connected and that was a really cool experience for me. I am also really proud of myself for changing my career.

**Sheila:** It's amazing, I'm proud of you too!

**Kerri:** Thank you! It was hard!

**Sheila:** It is so hard- nobody gives it credence- you know, it is so tough, it's so scary, there's a lot of financial risk involved, and a lot of really just doing without that you didn't, so I'm happy for you.

**Kerri:** Thank you, thank you. And you know, lastly when I really thought about this – what am I proud of- I am so incredibly proud of my two children. So my son Nicholas and my daughter Megan, both of them are here in the Milwaukee area, and I just really really love the people that they have become, and the lives that they have created for themselves, and you know, the three of us have been through a lot, we've been through a lot, and we are a really tight unit, we have each other's backs, and I'd like to think that I had a little bit of influence in how all of that turned out with them, so I just absolutely adore my children.

**Sheila:** Okay, well, congratulations on raising- I don't know, you never want to say raising great children, but just on really being happy with all the work that you've put in to fostering that close-knit community of family that you built.

**Kerri:** Yes, thank you. I love the word "close-knit community," because I now do look at my children as part of my community, and we are able to have really meaningful, provocative conversations about a lot of really cool topics. And we don't always agree with one another, but it's the provocative conversations that I really love having because it's really being able to look at those different points of view, and being able to incorporate those into my life, and allowing me, then, to see a bigger picture, a new way, just a different perspective.

**Sheila:** Okay. Yeah, and that's just so important- and those conversations end well? The provocative conversations?

**Kerri:** They always do, because, for my children, and for me, I know that it's unconditional love, Sheila!

**Sheila:** There you go!

**Kerri:** It's the love!

**Sheila:** It's that thread, that just shines through, right?

**Kerri:** It does, it does! Because that will always bind us together- no matter what, the love is always there.

**Sheila:** Thank you. This has been such a meaningful talk!

**Kerri:** Thank you!

**Sheila:** And it's so great to see you, I haven't seen you in a while. She's been off traveling and so, it's great to have you back.

**Kerri:** Thank you it's really good to be back here, it's really good to see you, as well. Thanks for having me, I really appreciate it.

**Sheila:** No problem! Alright, well, at MalamaDoe, we're all about having you achieve success, which is one of the taglines on Kerri's website, and we really do want women to succeed, to really build themselves a table where they can sit at the head, and they can use their talents to really flourish and be all that they can be, so that they can continue to build the close-knit communities here where women can be bigger leaders, and we can have more of a say in what goes on when decisions are made that impact our communities. So thanks to everyone for tuning in, please stay tuned for future episodes. We are having a great time interviewing all of our members, and hope to be inspiring all of you now, and in the future. Thanks, everyone, bye-bye.

Thanks everyone for listening to Head of the Table podcast! Please, feel free to look for us wherever you find your podcasts, let your friends know, as well. Thanks, everyone!