

BUSINESS

The original Smart Girl

SCARLETT V Clark became a teenage CEO, after setting up the female empowerment community, Smart Girl Tribe, from her dorm room at the University of Bath, where she studied European Politics and Modern Languages. By the time she graduated, Smart Girl Tribe was already having an impact and it continues to grow. Now, she has written *The Smart Girls Handbook* to help women tackle self-doubt and pressure.

What was your dream job as a child?

To be an author. I was obsessed with books and aspired to be like [Roald Dahl's] *Matilda*. As a child, while out shopping with my mum, my nan and an older cousin, I often begged my mum to let me go to Waterstones and sit there reading, while my cousin watched over me. Even now, when travelling, the first thing I do is scope out the local bookstore, knowing that when needing comfort, escapism or even a place to laugh, it can all be found there.

What did you do after you graduated?

I secured a position at a prestigious PR company. While it was fun organising events, especially for celebrities, it wasn't ultimately what I wanted to do. I had started Smart Girl Tribe at 19 and by the time I graduated three years later it was a fully fledged business. However, I held on to the belief that success meant sitting in an office cubicle, working 9-5. After three weeks in the role, I plucked up the courage to leave, move to New York and focus on Smart Girl Tribe.

Were you tired of gossipy women's magazines?

Absolutely. I envisioned myself as a journalist, but my ethos didn't align with the major women's publications. Magazines were focusing on features such as 'how to make him want you' or 'how to lose seven pounds in seven days'. These publications were doing women a disservice and the platform that was needed didn't exist. Rather than complain, I did something about it. Smart Girl Tribe has carved a space on the internet where a range of women's stories are told. Stories such as 'how Netflix can affect your mental health' and 'the secret of happy and powerful entrepreneurial couples.'

What challenges did you encounter?

Being a teenager and a student presented a challenge, as did not having any business experience. Also, the lack of support from other women was a challenge, too. Throughout my journey I have been rejected countless times by editors, brands and agents

SMART GIRL TRIBE CEO SCARLETT V CLARK HAS MADE IT HER MISSION TO HELP WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD TO ACHIEVE THEIR ASPIRATIONS



Speaking out: Scarlett has taken her message everywhere from Harvard, above, to Tanzania, left



for not being an influencer or YouTuber. Yet, thanks to my ambition, tenacity and overall mission to stand up for women, I have succeeded in building a thriving community, challenging institutions and the status quo. I'm grateful for getting older, as I'm taken more seriously now – imagine how many more people will be listening when I'm old and grey.

How are you doing now financially?

Like any student, my money would go towards food and bills, but building a business meant sacrificing nights out to invest in a web developer, or to pay for my transport into London to attend networking events. My life is different now, but there are still financial struggles. For example, the heart of the business is the online magazine, but I don't have ads run by the articles because I don't want to clutter our message. Instead, I only work with specific brands across our social media channels. As a business owner you are required to make some tough decisions, but I have grown Smart Girl

Tribe to the point that we have a top-rated podcast, a successful event series and a popular online magazine. I am rich in experiences and no pay cheque could buy the journey I have had in leading a global business.

Was a toxic relationship the catalyst for your success?

No. I've always been focused, worked relentlessly and been unapologetic about my drive, but during the relationship, which lasted a year, I felt I had to dim my light and shrink my accomplishments. I even found myself apologising for my ambition. However, ending the relationship made me realise my self-worth and that I had a latent strength that had been minimised over that year.

Tell me the inspiration behind your first book?

The women I meet through my work are the inspiration behind it. During a year-long speaking tour, for example, I realised how many women would queue, sometimes for hours, just to

ask me one simple question. They needed something tangible to walk away with, so I pulled together the questions they asked me, and the ones they would whisper to me afterwards or email me a few days later. My work at the NSPCC also inspired me to write a book, and at a separate event a mother even shared that her daughter had been having suicidal thoughts for years, but then changed once she attended one of my talks. These are the women who motivate me every day and served as an indisputable catalyst for the book.

What are some of the topics covered in the book?

They include confidence, purpose, boundaries, fear of failure and toxic relationships. The book arms women with the knowledge and tools to fulfil their destiny. There is a superwoman inside all of us, but she is buried under expectations, fear of failure, pressures and other people's opinions. I show women how they can liberate themselves, so that they can live freely as their most authentic selves.

Advice for someone who wants to be their own boss?

Be prepared to work like you have never worked before and be resilient. Not everyone will fully grasp your vision, but remember, losers quit when they fail, winners fail until they succeed. Networking is the secret to business success. I met my first few writers on Twitter, and panellists who have spoken at the Smart Girl Tribe Summits at business events.

How is your working life?

I work six days a week. My working day begins at 8am and finishes on average at 8pm. My days are spent writing, recording podcasts or videos and connecting with Smart Girl Tribers in our private Facebook group or on Instagram. I am a travelling speaker, and prior to Covid-19 I was speaking and working in various places across the world, including at the UN, the Houses of Parliament and Harvard University. I was scheduled to speak at the Smart Girl Tribe summit in Sydney last year, but it was cancelled due to Covid. It took place virtually instead.

What positive changes do you want to see by 2030?

The gender pay gap will have closed and America will have a female president.

Plans for Smart Girl Tribe?

Writing more books on the female experience and post Covid, travel, to help as many women as I can. It's my calling to raise awareness for under-discussed issues such as the one in three women physically abused by a partner and to stand up, show up and speak up for women across the globe. I want every woman to realise she is more than an image being sold to her.

■ Scarlett's book *The Smart Girls Handbook*, published by Welbeck Balance, is out now, £10.99, smartgirltribe.com

INTERVIEW BY ADELINE IZIREN