

# Interview with Melanie Charlton

*Somer Phoebus*

All quotes are from Melanie Charlton unless otherwise noted.

## 1. Tell us about Brillnt: How it started, who you serve

We serve passionate small business owners who want to make an impact.

We find, build and share your brilliance.

## 2. What's the most surprising thing about where the Lord has taken you in your career? What did you not expect to happen?

I didn't expect to be the CEO, I just want to make the beautiful things.

But it turns out I was already doing it [CEO work] because it all comes down to relationships and I love building relationships.

Building honest relationships is the best part of building a team and serving your clients.

Being bold in our natural tendency to build relationships will position us to lead well.

I wasn't super passionate about business development, but I was passionate about building relationships.

## 3. What's your biggest challenge as first, a Christian CEO, and second, a female CEO? And how do you move past those challenges?

It's constantly an opportunity and a challenge to be a Christian CEO.

My mission in life is ultimately to point people to Christ, so I have to keep that in the center of my decisions, action, and conversations

I have to pray that God would use me before I go into a meeting.

I have to ask myself often -- is there is a misalignment in mine and a client's values? And does it mean I shouldn't work with them?

Be intentional and aware that it can be tricky to be a Christian in a secular workplace I think it's so important that as believers, we don't withdraw ourselves into our own little faith bubble because we're supposed to be about mission and about spreading the gospel.

Being a mom has made me a lot more bold about my faith.

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I want to be the type of leader that I want my daughter to see.

The tension in the secular workplace is uncomfortable, but it doesn't mean it's not of God.

**4. Your role as a designer and CEO is both creative and organizational so how do you give brain power to each without cheating one or the other?**

Hiring well helps.

Having a Director of Operations helps bridge the gap between creative solutions and business goals.

“Are you doing what only you can do?”

**In terms of productivity, do you separate your creative time from your CEO time?**

Create “do not schedule” blocks of time for doing deep work. Be decisive and clear when your input is needed and don't overthink.

**What made you a better decision maker?**

Doing it a lot - practice makes perfect

I have to be confident because if I'm not confident, nobody is going to listen to me.

If it's not clear or it's too soft, people don't act.

Clear direction and reflection from the CEO matters.

When you make a decision, keep in mind there is always an opportunity to pivot, redirect the focus, shift, etc.

**5. You just recently had a baby girl! I have 2 questions about that, first, how has motherhood changed you in life and at work?**

Motherhood has made me so much stronger.

Her going 5 days past her due date made me intentional with that time, I said this is time I will never get back, so how will we use this time?

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I thought about giving birth as a doorway/process that you just have to go through. Even though it's painful and hard, I want what's on the other side of this door. I use that to see a lot of other things in life now.

I'm hyper focused on my daily goals now so that I can be totally present wherever I am.

Limited time doesn't mean we can't be effective.

**Second, for our members that are planning on starting a family soon or who are expecting their first, how did you prepare yourself and your team for the obvious changes that would be coming?**

Document "While I'm Out"

- Who is taking this on?
- Where is it in the process?
- What needs to happen while I am away?
- Who is the point of contact with the client?

Spread your responsibilities across the team instead of just handing everything over to one person so that one person doesn't have to do two roles.

Preparation and a lot of communication.

I wanted my team to know I needed this time with my family but I wanted them to know they could reach out to me if they really needed to.

**When you hire new people, how do you hire owners and not just employees?**

Your people are your brand.

We do a "try before you buy" approach and bring people on for a trial project before we hire.

We interview as a whole team. I want anybody that will work with the new hire to also talk to them and give me feedback.

Their level of humility is a huge piece when hiring someone new.

I infused my belief system into the company's values so that I can hire the right people.

Being a light and a difference - you have an opportunity to share the gospel in a way of being the Gospel.

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**6. What's the best leadership lesson you've ever learned and was there an experience that you can share that taught you it?**

Leadership and platform do not equal each other. – SP

“Your success is directly proportional to the number of hard conversations you are willing to have.” – Michael Lastoria.

Parenting positions you for leadership and leadership positions you for parenting.

The most unexpected things come from people. No matter how many structures or processes you have in place, you have people doing them so it will all go out the window at some point.

Create a space of love for people and embody Christ in your relationships.

You have two options when forgiving: You can write it all down, and tell them how you're feeling or you can just choose to let it all go. – Jamie Caldwell

God gives us the ability to forgive and frankly, forgiveness is more for me than the other person.

I can't be the leader that I need to be if I am holding on to bitterness.

Find your identity in Christ, not your company.

There is a balance between standing in leadership and standing in truth. It has to be both.

It's a dangerous place when we start to focus more on fairness than grace.

**Speed round: #1 Productivity Tip?**

Do only what you can do.

**What do you want your employees to feel at the end of their workday?**

Fulfilled