



Among Tacoma Innovators:

Interview with Laura Malcom, Founder – Give InKind

Icebreaker: What is the best gift you have ever received?

*I am ridiculously practical, and so it's pretty logical that I would build Give InKind; trying to make gifting helpful + thoughtful = effective. Before kids, I think my favorite gifts would have been quality coffee supplies! A new coffee grinder that lasted me 10+ years, or a durable, steel french press topped the list. But nowadays, the best gift you can give me is babysitting and direct orders to leave the house, with money for dinner. Grandparents are great at this!*

Give InKind is a compelling example of using lived experience to bring a highly relevant service to the marketplace. [Just this month, the platform supported surviving family members of a tragic diving boat accident in Oakland, CA.](#) Can you speak to the value of translating your personal story and expertise in to a marketable product?

*For better or worse, I have more experience with unexpected family and friend loss than I would like to - and each one of these experiences shaped how we thought about Give InKind. One of the most important parts we considered wasn't just how we make support easier for those that need it, we also looked at the needs of those that want to help. We felt like there was a real shortage of resources to help friends and family that might otherwise feel helpless or unsure of how best to help. We also knew that many of us no longer live in the close communities our parents or grandparents grew up in, and so dropping off a casserole to a sick or grieving friend just isn't possible. I knew from my experience that there is a gap between wanting to help those we love through hard times and the ability to actually take action it - and that we could change that.*

While tech businesses are somewhat place-neutral in that they can serve customers and partners “virtually” anywhere, the factors that enable success often rely on the presence of a local ecosystem of mentorship, networking, and education. What was your experience building and launching Give InKind in Tacoma? What about the place and people made your experience distinct?

*I am very fortunate that I am a Tacoma native (Charles Wright '00), so my experiences and mentorship in the area started before we launched Give InKind. There are really incredible, focused business support groups in the area, and I know there are many more I haven't connected with yet. [Startup253](#) has been great supporters of ours, and they're working hard to bring attention to a growing technology community here. I also turn to a local women in business Facebook group for*

*finding local vendors for everything from printing to photography. The size of the community is just right to get enough resources while being really supportive of one another. I got asked by an investor this week if I'd consider moving our offices to Seattle if we grew much larger and I emphatically explained why Tacoma is, and will continue to be, our home. I know there are many people here who are commuting to Seattle to find jobs - I want to hire at home, give us all some time back.*

**One of the unique offerings on Give InKind's site is [suggested gifts from affiliate companies](#). Not only does this show your ability to understand the needs of your customers - it emphasizes the value of partnerships. Do you have any sort of future vision you are working towards in this area? To what needs do you feel Give InKind can continue to adapt its response?**

*This is my favorite future to think about. My background is in local listings - I worked on the digital team for Dex for several years - and I am well aware that local businesses struggle with changing times on how to connect with their customers without paying a ransom to Yelp. I know that there are so many small- and medium-size businesses around the country who support our customers on a daily basis, from restaurants to dry cleaners to landscapers, and I would love for Give InKind to be able to feature those businesses; to say 'if you can't be there to mow your friend's lawn while they're recovering, here's a landscaper that you can call and send over to them'. I believe there is a future where for every dollar we spend on a floral bouquet, we instead put back into a local business, and people get real help instead of something that will wilt in a few days. If I ever land in the hospital, please send a housecleaner to my house!*

**Lastly, congratulations on your recent acceptance in to Ready Set Raise! A notable feature of the accelerator is the provision of childcare during the two week-duration of the program. This is a subtle yet important step for supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion among founders. What other efforts do you think can move the dial forward on making entrepreneurship more accessible for innovators?**

*I've learned through this journey that so much of 'it', whether 'it' is moving up a corporate ladder, or finding customers, or raising money, is about connections. For women and other minority founders, there is a lot of new ground to be forged in finding those board seats and executive roles and venture capital. Anyone who is working to democratize that access - and there are a LOT of people out there doing that work - I believe is taking the steps that feel small now, but will result in shifts in the business community over time. I think one of my favorite questions right now is "how are you sending the elevator back down?" It's very important that each one of us that has the opportunity to, looks around and asks how we can all collectively rise from our individual actions.*