
Jaime Tardy: Welcome to Eventual Millionaire. I'm Jaime Tardy and today on the show we have Nellie Akalp. I'm so excited. She runs a company called CorpNet.com and she's a mom of four kids. And you guys know how rare it is – I try to find as many female millionaires as humanly possible. I'm so excited that we actually have a mom who's ridiculously successful on the show today. Thanks so much for coming on today.

Nellie Akalp: Thanks for having me, Jaime.

Jaime Tardy: It's so funny because that shouldn't be a thing, right? Like, oh my gosh I can't find females even though I look and I especially can't find females that have kids. Why do you think that is?

Nellie Akalp: You know I'm actually going to refer you to a bunch of friends who are also successful mommy entrepreneurs that you can have on your show. So, I think it was because you haven't met me yet. I'm kidding.

Jaime Tardy: This is so perfect – you've solved my problem. It is kind of insane how many people have come to me asking for that specifically and most referrals we get are men, which is really interesting. So, tell us a little bit about your company and what you do because you help small businesses.

Nellie Akalp: Yes. CorpNet, our company provides new and existing business owners with business filing services ranging from if they want to set up a sole proprietorship or a partnership or if they want to take the next step and incorporate their business or form an LLC or qualify their business to do business in a different state. We can help them with all the paperwork needed to become a business in any state. We provide the services in all 50 states.

We also assist existing business owners with anything and everything they need as far as their business filings to keep an existing business in compliance, ranging from business license, permits, reseller's permits and IDs, trademark protection, and copyrights. And we've been in business since 2009. We are on-track to celebrate seven years in business in July.

Jaime Tardy: Congratulations. Now, how do you get into that? Especially in 2009 there was probably quite a bit of competition before in this space already.

Nellie Akalp: Yes. As a matter of fact for me I've been in the industry since 1997 when I started my first company at the beginning and birth of the internet age. And it was a similar business in the same legal document filing industry. When I sold it to Intuit in 2005 and decided to take some time off and then came back in 2009 the market was completely saturated. So, entry into the market for us was completely impossible, but as an entrepreneur you can't take no for an answer. You have to have that vision that drive, that passion in you to just go for it.

For me that's what I did because in my opinion in my book my mantra is there's plenty of business to go around for everyone as long as you niche yourself and market yourself properly. My reasoning for coming back in the same industry with our current company, CorpNet, was because I found that there was something lacking in our industry and I felt like I can be that company that can cater to that missing element in our industry.

So, we decided to come out and really niche ourselves as experts in our field having been the pioneers in the past of the industry and really go after a very, very social media type driven angle creating that personal touch, creating that personal connection with our clients – that small business mentality connection with our clients. That was really what I felt was missing. That was really the solution to the barrier of entry for us.

Jaime Tardy: You see, and it's amazing – you go to the site; everyone should check out the site anyway – but when you go to the site there are pictures of you and then pictures of you and your family and I felt like I knew you already. Whereas in this space – and I've been to a bunch of these types of websites – they're just like normal, corporate this-is-what-we-do with no personality whatsoever. So that was the main driving factor of putting your face on there then?

Nellie Akalp: Well, you actually hit the nail on the head, Jaime. That's what we really wanted to do is we didn't want to hide behind the brand. We wanted to be out there and we wanted the small business owner/entrepreneur to know who they're dealing with because really in this day and age business comes from referrals. Business comes from social media engagement and who's saying what about you. Really that's how we built CorpNet to where it's so successful today.

Jaime Tardy: Did that make a huge difference? So the market was saturated, I see this hole, and I'm going to go after it – was that the main piece

of your success or was it still like; oh, maybe this isn't enough and we have to do other things? Or was it like you were spot-on the first time?

Nellie Akalp: Well, as you know being a business owner yourself there are definitely many different elements to gaining success in any potential business. I would say that was one major element to our success. I think other factors would include just being consistent with what we do and really under-promising, over-delivering to our clientele and really, really putting out great content out there in the different platforms and forums that I write for and that I'm engaged with that are not self-promotional but merely act as a resource and a tool to that small business owner, that startup, that entrepreneur that really needs those answers when they're starting to really build out their idea and want to launch their business.

Jaime Tardy: How lucky are we that we get to help people and be ourselves and make more money because of it? Like, that's so exciting that we live in this day and age that people care that much about that. Like, I knew when I went to your website I was like; aw, and I saw your children. How old are the kids and tell me a little bit about trying to manage it all.

Nellie Akalp: Yes. So I'm a mother of four and I have kids ranging from 14 year-old boy and girl twins, a 12-year-old boy, and a four-and-a-half year old toddler little girl. And frankly it's challenging. I mean having four children – two that are teenagers – it's not an easy task and especially having to balance and juggle running a business, being a leader and mentor to others, running it with your business partner who also happens to be my husband, and making sure that I'm also actively involved in the daily raising of my children – it's not an easy job but you can do it.

All it takes is a little bit of planning and a huge, huge support system and an amazing team underneath you, at my company that really gets the job done in my opinion.

Jaime Tardy: We were just talking. You were saying that you were going to fly out to Austin a couple of weeks ago, but your daughter had a dance recital that you had to be at. I was like; this is exactly what I want to talk about on the show because I don't think those "sacrifices" – I mean I don't think they're sacrifices because you're making a very valid choice on purpose – but those things come up and we don't see those decisions being made. So how did you make that decision and how can you help other people make their priorities

better? Not better in terms of which one is more important, but better in terms of trying to make those hard calls, because that must have been kind of a hard call.

Nellie Akalp: It was a hard call. For me I lost a few dollars on it, too but you have to have your priorities straight which you asked that question and I think it all has to do with your priorities and life and what makes you feel whole and happy as a person. Because I think as any entrepreneur we have to be centered within ourselves before we can make anybody else happy. So, the way I made that call was the fact that even if I flew out to Austin I wouldn't have been really, really available there and my mind would not have been there. I wouldn't have been present to my team or any good to the business because all I would have been thinking about and feeling would have been the guilt of not being there for my daughter and for my family.

She's only 14 and as a 14-year-old teenager you need your parents there at these pivotal moments in their life in my opinion. So, for me the call was really balancing it out and really seeing where I'm most effective. In this situation I felt that I would have been most effective with my family.

Jaime Tardy: How do we decide what the pivotal moments are for our kids though, too because I told you I'm going to my son's play tonight. I try and do what seem to be the big things but I feel like the schools are asking a lot. They're like; can you be the den mother? I was just there two weeks ago. How would I find time for that?

Nellie Akalp: It's a very complete answer. It's called no. No is a complete answer because – and here is the problem, Jaime – as parents and as mothers we always tend to feel so guilty like we're not doing enough. But the fact that you're running this company yourself, this podcast, you're providing for your kids. You're providing for your family and frankly you are there because the fact that you're there watching your son – I mean your son or daughter is not going to care what you do in the background. It's really that they want to see their parents applauding them and acknowledging them while they're out there doing their recital or whatever after-school activity there is.

So, for me that's kind of what I remind myself of because I tend to get into those ruts, too. We're not perfect and we always want to bite more than we can really chew. The trick is you have to as a working mom be able to have the flexibility of saying no and not

over commit yourself. Otherwise in my opinion you're just going to run yourself down and then nothing is going to get done.

Jaime Tardy: So how do you do that on a weekly kind of schedule? I only have two kids. You have four children, you run a business, and I don't even know how big your team is but how do we really manage everything in a week? Because, no offense; there is not enough time in anyone's day in order to get all that stuff done.

Nellie Akalp: Great question. So at our corporate headquarters here at CorpNet we have about 12 people in-office including my husband and myself. And then we have various different people that work outside of the office such as our outside sales person or my social media manager or publicist or my blog manager/editor and then our desk team obviously. So there are a lot of different puzzles that I have to manage on a daily basis and co-manage with my husband.

So, in answer to your question as to how I manage it, we run on the family side as if it's a team. We're a team. Our family is a unit. We're an entity together and the kids are old enough to understand that; okay, you have two choices. You can either have the flexibility of seeing your parents on any given hour because they run their own business or the other option is for having your parents going and working a nine-to-five job and not seeing your parents on a daily basis, having somebody else pick you guys up from school every day and take you to school every day.

And so the answer to that is we all have to work as a team. We all have to be responsible for our portion of the chores within the house and our commitments to each other and to the family as a whole because in order for this work it has to work as a team collectively together.

Jaime Tardy: So, what do you do in terms of; do you have family meetings? How do you deal with chores? I want to get the personal side because we run SOPs and stuff in our business. What do you do on the personal side to make sure that it's running like a well-oiled machine in the best way you can with four children?

Nellie Akalp: The quick tip is to plan ahead. Everything is planned ahead. Number two is that my two 14-year-olds are really, really self-sufficient, so they're at a place and I've raised them with such an entrepreneurial mindset from when they were such young kids that in this world you've got to take care of yourself. You've got to ask

for what you want otherwise you won't get it and in order to be anything in the world you have to have a great education under your belt even if you want to go into entrepreneurship for yourself.

So, it's pretty straightforward. I mean on a daily basis they get up, if it's school time they get up and dress themselves, they go to school, and we pick up – they normally have some sort of an after-school activity and then it's homework time and then it's out to dinner and we have dinner as a family. And then normally our dinner time is when we kind of reflect on the day and then we talk about the plans for the next day. So, we're always in constant engagement with each other because I think that's the foundation to having healthy, happy kids that are really, really engaged with the family and have that family foundation as the base.

Jaime Tardy: So how do you run the business side? I've worked with a bunch of married couples in business. It can be a little bit crazy because things from outside come inside and all that stuff, so how do you manage that especially with your team? Like what's your role versus what's his role and how do we keep it in the marriage working communication-wise working well?

Nellie Akalp: Great question – we've learned through having multiple businesses in the past and one thing that we've learned in co-running a business, co-founding a business together is that it is to be linear. One cannot be above the other and vice-versa. So it has to be completely linear roles and we can't be overstepping on each other. Ultimately it has to do with knowing who is doing what, separation of powers, but always coming together and being unified together. Unification in my opinion is key both at the business and in front of our children because when you're unified the power of two is just amazing.

That unification is what really takes it to the next level, because when your team sees you as one unit then that's really when the respect kicks in. But in answer to your question, we have separate roles. I'm the CEO and he's the CFO. We obviously wear many hats because we are a small business although we're a multi-million dollar business but most of it is automated. So we wear different hats, different roles but it's very linear.

He's really in charge of the overall vision of the company, bringing in traffic to the company; he's our Chief Financial Officer, so he's always looking at the financials and the books. As a CEO, I'm in charge of reviewing those books, the P&Ls and just setting the

overall strategy for the day-to-day operations of the business.

Jaime Tardy: Did you always know that you were good at that? Like I know you had the business from beforehand. I feel like one of the key pieces that people keep saying – and I feel like you’ve done this really, really well – is know what your strengths are versus not. You’re like; oh, he’s really good with the numbers. You’re going to do that and I’m going to do the strategy based on this, right? But it comes as an evolution so how did you figure that out?

Nellie Akalp: Well, I think it really, really through all of the years that we’ve been partners in our variety of different businesses together and in all honesty and in quite candor it’s about really getting that business coaching that we needed to get to where we are today. I mean listen; we both, although we’re successful we have a ton of room for growth and we too need that guidance and coaching as well even though we’re at a different level than maybe other entrepreneurs.

But we don’t always get along and we don’t always see eye-to-eye and we don’t always agree on each other’s decisions and that’s where we need to go a third party who’s not biased and is going to really give us some unbiased advice. We each have to put our egos aside and decide what’s going to be best for the company.

Jaime Tardy: Thank you so much for saying that, too because that’s the thing: I’ve worked with so many married couples in business and it is kind of crazy because you have to go back home and live together.

Nellie Akalp: Yes, and that’s really where it becomes tricky because you have to leave the business at the business. That’s really where it gets hairy and that’s where couples such as myself and Phil have the test out for us to see if we can do this. And obviously we’ve been able to do it because we’re able to really look at it and go; okay, business is business. Even though we’ve had a crappy day today we’re going to leave it behind and we’re going to go and now be husband and wife and have that intimate relationship at home with our family.

But sometimes it won’t happen either. I mean something in the business has really gotten you wired up so it’s not like I can go home to him and be like; hey honey how was your day?

Jaime Tardy: But it’s awesome knowing that, right? It’s a very big difference of being aware and going okay; it’s just going to take a little while to

cool down and get over this beforehand and then keep moving forward because you're on the same united front like you said. You keep moving forward. What is working ridiculously well for the business right now, whether it be in sales or in marketing because it sounds like you're on this trajectory of growth and you're only – seven years is a long time; don't get me wrong – but you're seven years old and I'd start thinking of what does the future look like and the growth? So, what's going really well for you right now?

Nellie Akalp: Right now I would say we are on fire in social media. The content that I'm putting out there and then the response that I'm getting from publishing that content and the requests and all the interview requests that I'm getting is just that we're on fire. We're all over social and that to me is just another validation and acknowledgement that I'm doing exactly what I need to be doing. In fact today we had a full-page feature on us on the local newspaper here out in Thousand Oaks by the Acorn that featured me because I won this year as the National Woman Business Owner of the year in 2016.

Jaime Tardy: Congratulations!

Nellie Akalp: It was a huge honor to be featured in our local county newspaper, but in answer to your question I think that just our social media engagement out there and the content we're putting out there and all the tools and resources and the free tools that we're putting out there that are continuing to streamline and help making the business owner's life much more seamless is just making us take our company to the next level and creating this real, real, hype about CorpNet out there.

Jaime Tardy: So, tell me do you know what the ROI is, because a lot of the times people will put out social and they'll be like; oh, I got re-tweeted and I'm excited, but is it actually turned into ROI? Are you tracking all of those measurements? I'm sure you probably are so you know they're working, but how do you track that?

Nellie Akalp: Well, as you know with social media – and this is one thing that I've actually written a book about it and it's published on Amazon – but the one thing that business owners need to know about social media is that there's a ramp-up process to it. You're not going to see immediate sales from it. In answer to your question, absolutely we as a company are seeing a huge return on our investment because we've been doing it consistently for six-and-a-half plus

years.

So as a result of all of the publications and all the content and all the engagement that we're doing out there we're obviously seeing a huge return by the number of traffic that we're seeing coming through to CorpNet and again opportunities that are closing into sales. So, in answer to your question yes, there's a huge return on investment for us and in fact there's such a huge return on investment for us that we decided to shut off all of our paid online advertising and focus solely on our social media engagement and really, really focus on not only going through the social media route to get new clients, but also focusing on engaging with our current client base as well.

Jaime Tardy: So what tactics are you using right now on the social side that's working? Because that's the thing, too: there are 1,000 social platforms that we could be using in general. What's working for you?

Nellie Akalp: Seriously it's about just putting yourself out there without being self-promotional. I do not tweet; hey, come to CorpNet. We incorporate businesses or form LLCs online. It's about really, really catering to your market and to people who need your services and putting relevant content out there that's applicable to your target market: hey, did you know that if you're starting a business you need X, Y, and Z to make sure your business is legal, for example.

So, those are the types of tactics that we use in starting conversations with new people out there on the social mediums and just being consistent out there in all the platforms and sticking to it. We may not be across 10 million platforms or 10 different platforms. We pick a few, but the few that we pick such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and Google Plus we're very consistent with.

Jaime Tardy: Okay, plus with the six year behind you I'm sure it adds up to quite a bit.

Nellie Akalp: Correct.

Jaime Tardy: I'm going to change focus for just a second because you said you have an amazing network of millionaire moms, right? Entrepreneurial moms, and so can you talk about whether you built that yourself? I'm constantly on the lookout for trying to expand

my network of fantastic, amazing people. Hopefully you'll introduce me to some, but in general how did you do that? How did you start putting that together, because I really feel like especially – don't get me wrong – men need really successful guy friends too but so do moms specifically.

Nellie Akalp: You know one of the things that I think is really important to me as an entrepreneur is constantly networking with people. No matter where I am I'm always either to know what people are doing I'm striking up a conversation. A lot of my friends that have also become successful moms and mommypreneurs are as a result of meeting that at school functions or through my children's school or at an event. So it's not something that has happened intentionally for me, it's just that one of my core values is that I always try to surround myself with people that are going to lift me up and that I'm going to be able to learn from.

Being part of the mompreneur group or Women's Entrepreneur Group really helps because you get to align yourself with other successful women entrepreneurs that you really see you have a lot of commonality with. In addition in example for me just an outside hobby I belong to a book club and that book club that I belong to is comprised of five other very successful woman entrepreneurs. So it's not something that I kind of set myself out to do but it's just happened over the years.

Jaime Tardy: What does that look like? Like when I'm at a school function and I've chatted with a bunch of the moms they think I'm crazy, right? Like, I have a book and I interview millionaires and they're like; okay. Because they're not entrepreneurs they think it's weird, right so did you just collect people over a long period of time? Did you go to networking events – like you said the Women's Entrepreneurial Group – and try to fit that into your schedule? Because again, that's a separate thing trying to fit all of that stuff into your –

Nellie Akalp: Well I mean a lot of it was through the power of Facebook and connecting through Facebook with other successful entrepreneurs. That's one way and for example the few women entrepreneurs that I've known is through truly my kids' school and our kids being friends together. There's a domino effect. One person knows another and then they introduce you to someone else, so it's just happened over time and you know my kids are now 14 so it's been 14 years.

Jaime Tardy: Valid point too, right? Like you were talking about the time thing between starting this business seven years ago – having kids this long ago I think we forget the value of time in growing anything. We all want it right this second in this day and age, right? Oh, I'm impatient; I'm an entrepreneur and I want it all right now. I started five weeks ago. Can you talk about that a little bit, the impatience?

Nellie Akalp: As an entrepreneur and especially I'm just speaking for myself – I'm the most impatient person that you'll ever get, but that is one of the ingredients to my success. I think impatience for entrepreneurs is a huge positive and that's what makes us great at what we do. We're impatient; we make decisions on the fly and we want to see the results. When we don't see the results then we're very, very quick to want to pivot so I think as an entrepreneur impatience is great and it's a great thing to have but within limits. I mean be quick to make a decision; be slow to change your mind is always what I remind myself.

Jaime Tardy: I love that. So tell me about this, because how do you mitigate being a mom, like I started working less when my kids – or tried to, right – within a certain period of time: 20 hours a week, 30 hours a week at the most so I could be with them more. But then I felt like I had to be more patient in business. Do you know what I mean? I felt like it was this teeter-totter where I'm going; oh, I can't do more of that because I need to do more of this. So, how do you mitigate that, especially if you're the most impatient person –?

Nellie Akalp: I'm so happy that you asked that question. That actually is something that I really, really struggled with a couple of years ago because my business was on this kind of flat-line level where it wasn't really going anywhere and it just flat-lined. I thought; oh, I have these four children and back then my four-year-old was only two and okay; I need to put extra hours into the business. I learned the hard way because I got myself so sick that I became really ill. As I learned and started rebuilding myself the one big lesson that I learned from all of this is quality over quantity.

Quality over quantity and pick those few tasks that you know are going to give you the results you want and put your heart and soul in it and delegate. Only pick a few tasks and within those few tasks delegate some of them and have a follow-up process but forget about this whole quantity thing because quantity is not going to get you anywhere. It's the quality of work that you put into whatever it is that you want to get out.

Jaime Tardy: That's the same thing with your kids too, right? You want to be there and present, but not on the phone and sitting next to your kids or anything like that.

Nellie Akalp: Excellent point, because you see this is what happens is that as entrepreneurs we think like; okay, I'm going to go home and I'm going to be with my kids but yet I'm on my cell phone and I'm on that iPad or I'm on that iPhone. You've got to be present with your children, so one rule that I have is that when I leave here at 5:00 p.m. or 3:00 p.m. or whenever time it is and I become a mommy I'm a mommy. I'm full-time present with my kids until they go to bed and then when they go to bed I'll normally put out about an hour aside to check emails or respond to something that I need to. Then I put the phone aside and then I get up one hour in the morning before the kids wake up and do the same: get the kids to school, go to the gym, and then start my workday.

Jaime Tardy: Go you – I'm impressed. I know we have to start wrapping up in just a second, so what's one action – I know we went over a whole bunch of stuff – but what's one action listeners can take this week to help move them forward towards their goal of \$1 million?

Nellie Akalp: The key is to show up and the key is to be consistent in whatever you're doing for this week. Just keep it consistent, so whatever you're going to do make sure you show up for it on a daily basis and make sure you're consistent at it.

Jaime Tardy: I love that. Thank you so much for coming on today. Tell me more about how we can find your site and where we can follow you on Facebook or Instagram or all that stuff, social stuff we were talking about so everyone can keep up.

Nellie Akalp: You can visit us online at www.CorpNet.com. You can always send us an email to info@CorpNet.com. You can follow me on Twitter at CorpNetNellie or the company at CorpNet. I'm on Facebook as well under NellieAkalp and if you don't want to do any of this just feel free to pick up the phone and dial 1-888-449-2638.

Jaime Tardy: Oh, that's amazing. Nobody ever gives out their phone numbers with their companies anymore, right? Like no; just stick this email – thank you so much for coming on the show today. I'm going to go follow you on Twitter, too for sure. I really appreciate you taking the time.

Nellie Akalp: Thank you so much for having me, Jaime. It's been a blast.

Jaime Tardy: Awesome. Thanks.

Nellie Akalp: Thank you.

Duration: 35 minutes