



We could add Transforming Diabetes Care with a click of a button

Ashley Hanger could not have predicted her latest career move. When the former journalist moved in with her former partner, and saw first-hand the daily struggles he experienced living with diabetes, she became so committed to making life easier for him and others, that she took a giant leap of faith and started her first business, Stripped Supply.

Australia's first diabetes subscription box automatically delivering medical supplies straight to people's home, Stripped Supply also provides diabetes education making top-tier healthcare accessible to all. We spoke with Ash about her journey as a businesswoman and why she has become such a staunch advocate for people living with diabetes.

Announcer

This is a podcast by Lumina, the perfect space to innovate, collaborate, and grow in health, science and tech.

Rebecca Griffin - Host Ashley Hanger, welcome to HealthTech Talks.

Ashley Hanger - Guest Thank you. Great to be here.

Rebecca Griffin - Host Ashley, you are a journalist turned businesswoman who is using your skills in storytelling and content creation to make living with diabetes simpler. Your company is called Stripped Supply. And along with being Australia's first diabetes subscription box, automatically delivering medical supplies straight to people's homes, you've also created a diabetes education platform that's making top tier healthcare accessible to it all. Ash, let's start with Stripped Supply. What does Stripped Supply do? So

Ashley Hanger - Guest So our biggest vision in life is to make diabetes management as simple as possible, and we do that in two ways. So we have a diabetes subscription box, which is actually Australia's first diabetes subscription box where we automatically deliver medical supplies to people at home. So it's a set and forget subscription, so they will never run out of their supplies. And we've just launched our Learn platform, which is tiny bite sized education modules so people can get their answers to their diabetes questions anywhere, anytime.

Rebecca Griffin - Host So you founded the company in early 2020. How did the idea come about?

Ashley Hanger - Guest So I was living with my partner at the time, and he had had type 1 diabetes since he was 11 months old, so a very long time. But life gets in the way. He still would forget to order his diabetes supply, so his insulin sets, insulin pump, infusion sets. He worked full time, he had a really busy social life and he really



wanted to think about diabetes as little as possible. And so that's where this idea came from, is me trying to find a way to better support him in his life. I just didn't understand why he needed to go to the pharmacy to order his medical supplies when I was getting my prescription medication delivered to our home for years.

Rebecca Griffin - Host So had you had much experience with diabetes before then?

Ashley Hanger - Guest No. So he was really the first person that I met. I always knew that I had diabetes in my family, but that was type 2 and it's quite different, but I'd never seen type 1 diabetes quite as up close and personal as that until I met him. I really appreciated how open and honest he was with his diabetes because oftentimes when you meet someone with type 1, they don't talk about it very much and they don't talk about how hard it is because it is exhausting and it's frustrating and it's so overwhelming. And I had felt so ignorant up until that point about what type 1 diabetes looks like.

Rebecca Griffin - Host Does your business cater for both type 1 and type 2?

Ashley Hanger - Guest Yep. So right now we offer any product on the NDSS Register, and we'll be going into prescription medications later this year to better suit a type 2 market.

Rebecca Griffin - Host How did you determine that there was a need for such a business?

Ashley Hanger - Guest Yeah, so my partner obviously sparked the idea seeing that he would run out of his infusion sets. But when I first met him, to better understand diabetes, I joined a whole bunch of Facebook groups that were all centered around type 1 diabetes support all around Australia and in Brisbane where we're from. There was recurring themes. People often asking, "Hey guys, I'm in the Brisbane area, I've run out of reservoirs. Does anyone have any? My pharmacy can't get any in stock until next week." And I was just seeing that this wasn't just a problem in our household, but in households all across Australia. Particularly people who have families and parents who have way too much on their plate already, this was a problem that was being experienced by so many people. Or just one of the problems, I should say.

Rebecca Griffin - Host The name Stripped Supply, I really love it. What does it mean?

Ashley Hanger - Guest Yeah, so originally I really wanted to call the business Stripped, but unfortunately that's trademarked in quite a few different industries. So we landed on Stripped Supply. So Stripped comes from, we sell test strips predominantly. I loved this idea of taking diabetes and stripping back this stigma and back to basics, taking as much away from someone living with diabetes as



we can. So that's where the name Stripped Supply comes from. We are trying to strip back the stigma, strip back all the crap that comes with diabetes and just getting back to basics and supplying what people need.

Rebecca Griffin - Host Now, as you said, the idea for the business came after you moved in with your partner at the time and you got a true, really good understanding of the challenges people with living with diabetes faced and diabetes burnout. Can you explain what diabetes is and also the term diabetes burnout?

Ashley Hanger - Guest Yeah, sure. So diabetes in all forms, it essentially means that the pancreas is either not producing enough insulin to keep up with the body, or in the case of someone living with type 1 diabetes, the pancreas essentially stops working entirely. So people with type 1 diabetes can't manage their own blood sugar levels, their body can't manage their own blood sugar levels. So that means that someone has to do that manually, and they do that in a number of different ways. You might see people pricking their finger and testing their blood sugars. You might see these days, it's really common for people to wear a continuous glucose monitor, which is a little plastic patch that sits on their skin and is always monitoring someone's blood sugar levels. But they're trying to keep their blood sugar levels in a very small target range that usually you and my bodies do automatically because when their blood sugars aren't in that tight range, their body starts to break down.

So the brain can't work or function properly without perfect blood sugar levels. So when people are having what's called a hypo, which is when blood sugar levels go low, they start to become very confused, very angry maybe, or just unable to hold a conversation. And then when someone has a hyper, which is when blood sugar levels go high, that also causes a lot of long-term side effects, which you might hear about people losing their vision or losing feeling in their feet. Or in very extreme circumstances, people needing to get limbs amputated because circulation becomes so poor. So that's what diabetes is.

Diabetes burnout, it's essentially the mixture of emotions and behaviors that just means that people are so mentally and physically tired all the time from this condition that they're living with because you don't get to have a break from diabetes. You and I get to go home from work at the end of the day and switch off. Unfortunately, even when someone with diabetes goes on a holiday, you're still having to constantly think about this condition. And someone with diabetes is making hundreds of extra decisions every single day, whether it's calculating carbs in what they're eating, trying to calculate, "Oh, I'm feeling a little bit off today. Is it because my blood sugar levels are off?" There are over 40 different factors that influence someone's blood sugar levels. So it's not just food, it's also



hormones, it's temperature, it's exercise, it's mood and stress. So it really is such a mental burden for people and it's this idea that you just can't take a break.

So when we chat to our members around what is the most difficult part about living with diabetes, we've never heard someone say that the needles are the most difficult part. We've never heard someone say that anything physical is the most difficult part. It's always this mental burden, it's always being switched on, just never being able to take a break. And that's what diabetes burnout is.

Rebecca Griffin - Host Is it common?

Ashley Hanger - Guest Unfortunately, it's very common. So someone with diabetes is at twice as much risk of experiencing depression and is twice as likely to attempt to take their own life as well. So that just kind of shows the gravity of how serious this condition is. And unfortunately, I've never met someone who hasn't experienced diabetes burnout in their journey so far.

Rebecca Griffin - Host So how does your business support people experiencing diabetes burnout?

Ashley Hanger - Guest Yeah. So I mean, we try as best we can. And how I hope that we really help with diabetes burnout is just taking something off of this plate that's so full. So I don't think that someone with diabetes needs to be going to the pharmacy as often as they do right now. I don't think that they need to be the person who remembers to order their medication in advance of when they need it. What we're trying to do is just take one little thing off of that mental load and just lighten that mental burden a little bit.

Rebecca Griffin - Host What's been the biggest support in the growth of your business and its expansion?

Ashley Hanger - Guest Oh, definitely the people I've met. So I know that you know this, but I do not have a background in healthcare. This was all completely new to me. So I would not be where I am today without the support that I've received, the networks I've created. I have been so, so lucky. People I've met through programs and accelerators like the LuminaX Accelerator, people have been so generous in helping me and I would not be where I am today without their support.

Rebecca Griffin - Host How did you find out about the LuminaX Accelerator?

Ashley Hanger - Guest Oh, I think that Dren reached out to me on LinkedIn. I definitely found it on LinkedIn and I thought it was so cool because it was the first health specific accelerator that I've done. So I had done accelerators before, but they were very general. The businesses that we were in a cohort with were all so, so

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different. I think in the last accelerator I did before LuminaX, I was the only healthcare business. Seeing that on LinkedIn, I was like, "Oh, this is something I so have to be a part of." Because the network and all of the mentors that we were partnered with, everyone knew healthcare so specific. And it's such an interesting industry, health, because it's so, so important and so adverse to change. So a startup in healthcare, it really needs a tailored approach.

Rebecca Griffin - Host Did you find that LuminaX Accelerator really did accelerate your business?

Ashley Hanger - Guest 100%. I think the accelerator went for three months of programs, but aside from that, I've had their support for years now. And the amount of growth that we experienced in the three months that I was here was far greater than what we'd experienced in I think the 18 months before that we'd been running.

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So it sounds like starting Stripped Supply has been a tremendous journey for you. I imagine it's not a journey that you could have predicted five [inaudible 00:09:29].

Ashley Hanger - Guest Absolutely not. No.

Rebecca Griffin - Host What advice would you give to others who may have an idea for a business in the MedTech industry but haven't been in business before much like yourself?

Ashley Hanger - Guest Just start, honestly. If you're not horrendously embarrassed by the first iteration of your product or service, then it means that you didn't start soon enough. I mean, when I think back to the first memberships that we sold with Stripped Supply, I sold memberships before I even knew how to deliver a box. And the first boxes that we shipped out, we were taking payments over the phone because I hadn't figured out how to do it online yet. So people thought we were spam. People contacted me and said, "Ashley, this guy's asked me for my credit card details over the phone." And I was like, "Yeah, it's just our pharmacist."

You're going to learn so much more by failing fast than you are going to be waiting in the wings waiting for something to be perfect. So definitely don't let perfect stand in the way of good enough. And talk to as many customers as possible. I think this has really been our superpower with our business, particularly not someone who's living with diabetes. So I could never understand what that's like. So every day we are talking to our customers. We've never stopped talking to our market. And that's where I see a lot of



founders kind of falter and lose their way because they stop delivering on what the customers want and need.

Rebecca Griffin - Host International Women's Day is held every year in March. What does International Women's Day mean to you? I know you've called it the best World Day of the year. So just reflecting on that, what does it mean to you, Ash?

Ashley Hanger - Guest This is the first business that I've started. I've met so many men and women, founders along the way, and men and women do business so differently. International Women's Day for me, it's a day where we bring women to the front and there are so many incredible women doing incredible things, and I love hearing their stories. But women are more humble than men are, so we don't tend to be as loud as the men sometimes. But on this one special day every year, we can be as loud as we like and we get to hear so many incredible female stories. So that's what I love about International Women's Day.

Rebecca Griffin - Host I love it. What's your advice to other women who want to start their own business or who have started their business, but maybe experiencing some tough times and kind of doubting where they're going?

Ashley Hanger - Guest Yes. I have had this conversation with so many women and I think that we just don't believe in ourselves enough, and I don't have a solution to that. I definitely have days where I wake up and I think, "What am I doing? I can't possibly do this. Who do I think I am?" So I think my advice to other women in the same situation is just act confident and no one will question you. You're not always going to have the confidence that need to do this. I know I certainly don't. So sometimes you have to manufacture that confidence. It's kind of like, I like to think of it as motivation to go to the gym. You're not always motivated to go to the gym. You can't rely on the motivation. You have to rely on the discipline.

And confidence in business is the same. Sometimes you might have to perform or be a different version of yourself, but please just continue to show up every day. Even when your mind is playing dirty little tricks and telling you you can't, just go through the actions, go through the motions, and hopefully the confidence will come.

Rebecca Griffin - Host So apart from LuminaX, and we did talk about this, that you've done some other accelerator programs, have there been other sources of support and inspiration during your business journey so far that you would recommend others tap into?

Ashley Hanger - Guest Yeah, definitely. I have really created a network on LinkedIn and followed and connected with so many other business owners that are in a similar stage to business as me. And I think LinkedIn is such a great resource in itself to be able



to find new opportunities and to find new contacts that could really help you with what you're doing.

One thing I wish someone had told me in the beginning as well is not being afraid to message people or reach out to people and ask for support and ask for advice, like asking someone really specific questions. Maybe someone is doing something similar to what you are doing in another industry or even in the same industry. There's nothing wrong with reaching out and saying, "Hey, I'm so inspired by what you do. Can I shout you a coffee? Can I pick your brain a little bit?" It's such a great time to build a business right now because there is so much support around. Government offers so much support, local councils offer so much support. I think a quick Google of your area would be a great place to start.

Rebecca Griffin - Host What do you think are the biggest challenges that women in particular face in business?

Ashley Hanger - Guest Big question. I think we don't dream big enough. This is definitely something that I've noticed with women and something I notice in myself. I've raised capital recently and to the feedback that I'd always get is, "We totally get that you can deliver everything that you're talking about on your screens and on your pitch deck, but why aren't you dreaming bigger? Why aren't you going to build this into a multi-billion dollar business?" And I think as women, we really do stop ourselves at the point of what we know realistically we can achieve. But that's not what men do. They have these great sweeping ideas. They may not know how they're going to achieve them, but they have that faith that I don't think that women have in themselves.

Rebecca Griffin - Host We tend to put limitations on ourselves, on our dreams, don't we?

Ashley Hanger - Guest We do. We do. I think so. And I think it's because as women, we are so empathetic. What I do love about most female businesses that I've come in contact with, they're always coming from a place of love and they're trying to support people in their lives who they've seen a problem and they're trying to build a solution. I do love that about female founders.

Rebecca Griffin - Host So you mentioned there about you don't dream big enough or we stop our dreams. What is your dream for Stripped Supply?

Ashley Hanger - Guest My dream is that obviously I would love for there to be a day where we have a cure for diabetes and it's no longer a challenge that it is. But unfortunately, I don't think that's going to happen in my lifetime. So the dream that I have for Stripped Supply is that we take this mental burden off of people living with



diabetes and we support them in ways that make diabetes not a death sentence and make it something that's not so difficult to live with. So that when you are diagnosed, it isn't this awful feeling like you're losing something, it's just going to be something else that you have to live with. That's my hope for Stripped Supply, is that we just make diabetes easier to live

Rebecca Griffin - Host With. Now you are also a TEDx speaker. What have you spoken on and what's been your biggest stage?

Ashley Hanger - Guest Yes. So that was a really surreal experience doing a TEDx talk at UQ a couple of years ago now. My TEDx talk was entitled, Don't Be a Prick: things You Should Never Say to Someone Living With Diabetes. And so I really kind of used it as a way to speak to my peers, so people who aren't living with diabetes about educating them and bringing awareness to things that we might say in society that make living with diabetes even harder. So saying things like, "Should you eat that?" Asking, "Oh, did you eat too much sugar? Is that why you got diabetes?" So I go through, I think... I can't even remember now. It's like five to 10 things that maybe you shouldn't say to someone who has diabetes. That was probably one of my biggest stages. I have been lucky enough to pitch on a few different stages as well to 300 or 400 people in a room, and that's always really scary.

Rebecca Griffin - Host With that TEDx talk that you mentioned, it's also trying to strip away the stigma.

Ashley Hanger - Guest That's right. Because I think the way that we talk about diabetes in society at the moment... I was actually at a diabetes event yesterday. We all went to Barefoot Bowls and there was this awesome crew of people living with type 1 there. And the Bowls Club, they brought pizza out for lunch. We're there for a few hours, we need to eat to fuel our bowling. And the guy who brought the pizza out, he saw the banners, "This was a diabetes event." And he made this comment like, "Oh, pizza's a bit of a weird thing to serve at a diabetes event." And I was like, "Not the place to make a comment like that."

And I think it's this stigma around the lack of education around what diabetes is. We're so critical of people who have diabetes. It's not their fault. They haven't asked for. It's just the way that their bodies are, that they have this disposition. And I think if we're just a lot kinder to people, not only would diabetes be easy to live with, but we're going to have better health outcomes because people aren't going to disconnect from diabetes as much. So yeah, that was definitely the purpose of the TEDx Talk, was just to create more education and awareness. And I couldn't believe out of all the TED Talks out on the internet, there was only one other person, whoever did a diabetes TED Talk. So I needed to add more numbers to that figure.

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Rebecca Griffin - Host Absolutely. And I'm sure you'll add more in the future. Ash, it's been wonderful talking with you. Thank you so much for your time.

Ashley Hanger - Guest All right, thanks for having me.

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