

The Huffington Post dubbed [Traction Conference](#) as “Best in Class for a Single Day Event” and numerous other press outlets screamed from the rooftops that people should attend. (Such as Freshgigs.ca ’s article on [5 reasons why to attend](#)) Retargeting adverts (I now know what these are) on Facebook and other social media sites, repeatedly put Traction in front of us as *THE* event to attend for startups in Vancouver. So we did, and we learned A LOT.

WHAT DID WE THINK?

We loved it. My Co Founder and COO, Danielle and I decided to invest in two tickets for ourselves and one for our business partner Tricia. (For us, this was a big investment both financially and in time!) We discussed what we wanted to achieve from it and what success looked like from the conference.

Danielle and I are 15 months into building what is growing into a highly successful consulting business. [BLANKSLATE Partners](#) is an outsourced HR company, that primarily focuses on supporting small to medium sized businesses, startups, and companies in hypergrowth. We are blessed to work with companies that want to build themselves into being employers of choice. They see themselves as the next Facebook, Netflix, Twitch, Uber or Airbnb and they are hustling to get there (hopefully with a little bit of our help.) It made sense to go. The attendees are our tribe, they are our community. In short, they are our bread and butter. But in reality, this wasn’t the reason we primarily wanted to go.

WE ARE A START UP.

Just like the majority of the attendees, we are building our business and developing our own sales and marketing plan. Or as Danielle and I now like to say, having wholeheartedly embraced the term, we are building our [#SMarketing](#) plan.

In an interview with the [Vancouver Observer](#) Lloyd Lobo, partner at Boast Capital and Traction Conference co-founder, said “Our vision for this was to teach people the tactics of how to get, keep and grow customers. Not fundraising, not [mergers and acquisitions], not exit stories, not inspiring founder stories, just how to get traction.” And honestly, this is what we learned.

SO WHAT WERE THE BIG HIGHLIGHTS FOR #BSP?

DANIELLE LEARNED AND LOVED:

- [Des Traynor's \(Co founder of Intercom\)](#) talk on continually putting yourself through your customer's journey to use your services.

“Once a company starts to grow, the founders and early hires tend to believe they have some magic power, that they can build anything and it'll be successful. So they start adding lots more features to the product, as that's what they believe they're the best at. The thing is, even if they're right, they're wrong. When you have a growing product, don't make it bigger, make it better. Making it bigger makes everything harder and slower.

Making it better means focusing on exactly what your customers want and ensuring you are best in class at it.”

- “How many people from outside of Vancouver came to speak & participate in the conference. I was delighted by the broad reach”

As Freshgigs.ca put it: “If you are looking to grow your company to the next level, there is really no other conference that will offer you a full lineup of more than 30 c-suite executives and growth experts from some of the fastest growing companies. Learn from world-class leaders from unicorn companies like [Domo](#), [Hubspot](#), [Twitch](#), [MongoDB](#), [Hootsuite](#), [Intercom](#), Box, Atlassian, The Honest Company, App Direct, SendGrid and more.”

There were more than 30 speakers – and I would guess 80% were from outside of Canada. For us, this was really refreshing. Danielle and I attend a lot of local events to support the community (#wegivewherewegrow) and to learn. One of our core values is to ‘always be learning.’ and one of the things we find is that it’s often the same faces with the same messages on stage at most events. It was GREAT to hear from other companies and learn how they are doing it in different cities. And yes, Hootsuite were on the roster, but we felt like they had earned their spot there up with the big cheese and were actually really proud to see the homespun company kicking it with the other big kids!

- [Justin Kan’s \(Partner at Y Combinator – general big cheese, mover and shaker\)](#) talk on the genesis of Twitch, along with hearing about the creativity of the two founders who used SnapChat to find him & give him a ride to his hotel/while pitching their companies

His wise words and fun personality shone through in his chat – as did his sense of humour! (Huge props to the founders that basically hijacked him at the airport in order to pitch to him! Way to think outside the box!)

IZZIE (ME!) LEARNED AND LOVED:

- [Hana Abaza's \(VP Marketing @uberflip\)](#), speaking on the first day about “How to Build Your Revenue Engine for Seed, Series A & Series B.”

She really dug into understanding your own company's marketing strategy, (People, Process, and Tools). We learned that “Optimizing for growth and optimizing for efficiency isn't necessarily the same thing!”

Hana's presentation was awesome. She was understandable, relatable, and real. On top of that, we love that she is a self proclaimed Podcast Junkie and the host of [Flip the Switch](#).

Why I liked this: I'm not a marketing major, nor is Danielle and we are trying to build the plan for our SMarketing team. Like many other early founders, we are the jack of all trades and the master of none. We need to continuously be curious and push our knowledge boundaries in order for us to grow our business. As simple as “People, Process, and Tools” might have been for those marketing whizzes in the crowd, for me it was a thought game-changer.

- I loved that there were almost 40% female presenters at the conference. In a world where diversity is getting A LOT of press, it was really great to see these smart,

powerful, thought leaders on stage, teaching us how to be #ladybosses and holding senior level roles in some of the fastest growing tech companies! I myself love to [tweet](#) stories I find online about diversity, and share them with the world regularly on my feed. What I loved specifically was that it wasn't a case of *"invite a girl to the panel/conference/fireside chat, cos we don't want it to be a ton of dudes up there."* Instead, as it should be, it was barely commented on at all. Instead, these smart, hardworking, arse-kicking women were just part of the incredible stories of success, owning the stage.

- [Mark Roberge \(CRO Hubspot\)](#) and Author of ["The Sales Acceleration Formula"](#)

This was probably my fav, and the one I mentioned when we were [interviewed](#) by Traction Conference social media maven Kendall from [Pixelated Pinto](#)

I found Mark's talk really informative for where we are in our stage of business. We are learning how to build our #Smarketing team and thanks to [Hana Abaza](#), we learned that we needed to look at People, Process, and Tools. But thanks to Mark, I got really clear on WHO our client is. I sat at the conference crunching all our data, anything I could possibly use to give fact to our fiction, and started to build a scalable and repeatable process that we could apply to our business. (It's going to take me a lot longer than one day at a conference, but we will share what we've built when we've put it to the test a little!)

Mark spoke my language. He spoke in terms of tangible, confirmable "methods of scaling sales utilizing the metrics-driven, process-oriented lens through which he was trained to see the world." (We learned the day before that there were the "Spocks" and "Oprahs" in

the room. Spocks love the data, analytics, and the quantitative approach. Oprahs love the conversation and qualitative approach. I'm for sure a Spock!)

KEY TAKE AWAY FOR @BLANKSLATEHR? TRACTION CONFERENCE WAS WORTH EVERY PENNY AND WE WILL 100% ATTEND AGAIN.

WE ALSO HAD A REALLY GOOD TIME AT THE PARTIES AND NETWORKING! THE FOOD, WINE AND ENTERTAINMENT WAS GREAT AND THE VOLUNTEERS RUNNING THE EVENT WERE CRAZY HELPFUL AND REALLY WELL PREPARED! ON A SIDE NOTE, I CRUSHED MY OVERWHELMING FEAR OF STANDING UP ON STAGE AND PITCHING SPONTANEOUSLY. DIDN'T WIN THE AIRCANADA TICKETS TO SFO, BUT I FOR SURE WON THE PERSONAL PRIZE OF KNOWING I CAN DO IT AND THE FLOOR WON'T OPEN UP AND SWALLOW ME WHOLE!