

Kathryn: Podcasting from Fairfield Connecticut, you're listening to Compass, where we talk with location independent women about finding work and getting paid. I'm your host Kathryn Hunter and you're listening to episode 8 with Ikiah McGowan, community fundraising manager. Today we're talking about becoming a philanthropist beyond writing a check, reading the workplace when you're working offsite, and knowing your worth in negotiation. Ikiah, welcome to the show.

Ikiah: Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Kathryn: So I like to start out kind of with your early years to see how that influences you later on. What did you want to be when you were five?

Ikiah: I wanted to be everything. I wanted to be a ballerina, a doctor, an astronaut. I just had so many different interests. And I remember my mom having a year by year book that we fill out at the end of every year. And one of the questions was, what do you want to be when you grow up? And every year I kept writing off of the lines because there were so many things that I was interested in.

Kathryn: I love that. That's wonderful. How had that changed by the time you left high school?

Ikiah: Okay, so by high school I had narrowed it down a little bit. I'm, I was kind of infatuated with the business woman motif and I just like something about like that powerful woman who just like walked into the board room and everyone turned their heads and listened to everything she had to say. And then I also knew that I was really interested in music and I just loved making little mix CDs and sharing them with my friends. So I thought, okay, so I think my career is going to be something in the music industry. Like maybe I can work for Sean Puffy Combs or who knows who else. But I thought for sure I was going to do something in marketing around music and also wearing really fly suits along the way.

Kathryn: You've got to have your priorities.

Ikiah: That's right.

Kathryn: So did you pursue college?

Ikiah: I did. I went to Howard University. It was an amazing time of my life. I'm so glad I chose to go there and I was a marketing major all four years of college, so I never changed.

Kathryn: Is there anything from that that you use now?

Ikiah: Oh yeah, for sure. So, you know, marketing is all about finding the psychological sweet spot where you can motivate people to take action towards something. In the traditional sense, you're asking people to take action towards buying a car or buying that cute shirt, but you can use it for anything, as you know, and as I've grown up, that's what I discovered too. So I think it's, to me it's been about influencing people to do the things that I want them to do.

Kathryn: And what was your first foray into being location independent?

Ikiah: It was pretty recently, actually. I have a role now at a nonprofit where I am, I'm based in a different location than the headquarters, so the headquarters is in New York, but they really needed someone to be located in Los Angeles as the representative here. And I already lived in Los Angeles and I was very with the type of work that they were interested in, in having someone do. So, about a year ago I joined on and to do that, it's actually a home based role. So while it's not 100% remote, I do have the freedom and flexibility of not going into an office every day.

Kathryn: So what does that mean for you?

Ikiah: Well, virtually I need to attend meetings pretty regularly. So I usually have at least one, maybe one to three meetings a day, and usually those are video calls. Sometimes I can convince them not to do video so I don't have to do my hair that day, which is nice. But besides that, I also plan a couple of conferences a year and so with that I have to be in a specific location. So I'll either plan the conference or I'll attend the conference as the representative for the organization. So with that I have to go to New York or most recently, Dallas.

Kathryn: And you said they were looking for someone in Los Angeles. Why, why do they need you there specifically?

Ikiah: Yeah. Okay. So, some with my work in the nonprofit world, I do community fundraising and that means I take my skill in relationship building to help everyday people help other people. Specifically, that means that if there is someone who wants to become a philanthropist in some way and they want to give back, but they don't know what exactly that means or they're not sure how to do that in ways besides writing a check, that's when I come in and I help them brainstorm really fun ways that we can make them into a change agent. So sometimes that means we can host a karaoke event and they invite all their friends and then you know, tell them about the organization and then convince their friends to donate for a wonderful cause. Sometimes that means that we do a documentary screening and in that way you're actually educating people about the cause that that person is so interested in.

Kathryn: Okay. So in addition to the work that you do at home, you also do events in Los Angeles?

Ikiah: Yes.

Kathryn: And how did you get started with community fundraising management?

Ikiah: Yeah, good question. I, so like I said it in undergraduate, I knew I wanted to be a marketer in some sense of the word. And then as I started working in that, getting my, my role that would allow me to where the business casual and walk in the boardrooms and do all of that, I realized there was something missing. And I realized that that was a feeling of knowing that I was helping other people in my day to day work. So eventually I

ended up, getting a master's in social work from University of Southern California. And with that I studied the ways that corporations, that foundations, government, and really passionate people work together to create social change. And so, I discovered more about corporate social responsibility, community organizing, community engagement. And from there I decided to take all the skills that I had developed from my days in marketing and my educational background in social work and combined the two of them to create a career where I'm helping people using the skill sets that I have learned and developed over the years.

Kathryn: And taking a look at the path you followed, if you were able to start over again, what would you change or would you do it all the same?

Ikiah: Oh, that's a great question. I would, I think I would have gotten, if I could change anything, I think I would have not gotten hung up on the way things look outwardly. So I think I would have followed my gut a little sooner and pursued the things that were genuinely interesting to me and not worried about how much money I was going to earn or you know, as long as I was able to take care of myself, I think that was the most important thing.

Kathryn: And how did you find this job?

Ikiah: Yes. Oh, I'm so excited to tell you about this because I hope that I can give really practical advice to other people who are in the nonprofit world and also once you become promotes in some way. So, the tool that I use is called [idealst.org](https://www.idealst.org). It's a really great website. It's been around for a long time and it allows you to search for community service opportunities, organizations, and also jobs. And within the job portal you can look for remote jobs.

Kathryn: Okay. So you can filter specifically for remote.

Ikiah: Exactly, yeah.

Kathryn: Okay. And we will include a link in the show notes. And what would you say your first major struggle was?

Ikiah: My first major struggle was climbing the learning curve without having all of my senses available to me. And by that I mean usually when you start a new job, you have the water cooler talk, you can assess the vibe of the atmosphere, you kind of get the, you get information from the nontraditional ways of communicating and I didn't have that. So it took me a little bit longer to get up to speed with just understanding the nuances of the workplace, of my new workplace without actually being there physically.

Kathryn: Is there any advice that you would have for someone in that same situation?

Ikiah: Yes, I would say if you can visit a couple of times to the office just to, if nothing else, just to get a sense of who your allies might be. And then, once you have found someone who you think is really trustworthy, then you can develop a, like an off the record

relationship with them. So you can say, hey, you know, I saw something strange happen or like, is this normal at this place? And they will give you their honest feedback. But just a matter of developing that somehow, some way.

Kathryn: And what would you say your first major success was?

Ikiah: Well, let's see. A month into starting this position, I planned a conference with 20 high school students who fund raised on their own all over the country and we brought them out to New York to the headquarters and taught them all about the organization. We did community building activities. They learned about different ways so they can continue to fund raise within their home towns. We explored the Big Apple. We did so many fun, cool things. But like I said, it was my first month into the job, so I had a lot to learn and a lot to do very quickly. But in the end it ended up being amazing. Everyone had a good time. I got so much praise for that. So it was a really great way to say, okay, like I think I'm supposed to be here. I feel like I'm making a difference and met some incredible people along the way and I'm really proud of myself.

Kathryn: Yeah, it's really great when you have that physical feeling of, this is where I need to be.

Ikiah: Yes. It's kind of like being in the flow.

Kathryn: Yeah. So what's a sample workday like for you?

Ikiah: Okay. I would love to tell you that I wake up and I do yoga by the side of my bed and then I make my breakfast and then I turn on the laptop. But that is not really how it happens for me. Typically I wake up and I get myself together. I turn on my laptop and I turn on some music and then I begin looking at emails to figure out what's happened since I've been sleeping. Like I said, the headquarters is in New York, so that means that they've had about four hours of working before I've signed on. And then I take a good amount of time going through my email requests and making sure everything is kosher there. I also do a lot of work making sure that our website is up to date and edited appropriately for the programs that I manage. And then I usually do like program planning or conference planning for whatever big project is on my plate for that time of year.

Kathryn: And do you keep a pretty standard nine to five day or do you have a little more flexibility as far as that goes?

Ikiah: Typically... I do have flexibility. The idea is to get the work done in any way that that means. But also my, my workplace is really strict about wanting you to have a work life balance. So typically the hours are nine to five, but if I feel like I'm kind of falling behind in some area or would like to just get ahead, then I'll go ahead and work later or I'll work on the weekends, whatever it takes to make sure that the job is done. And that's to me, one of the best parts about being remote as well. It's because you have the freedom to work around your doctor's appointments or some, you know, some days you have really productive days and other days not so much. And that's okay. You can make up for it by just turning on your computer.

Kathryn: Yeah. It's nice to have the ability to kind of move the pieces around when you need to.

Ikiah: Exactly, yeah. But that's also kind of dangerous too, because you need to know when you're overworking yourself, you have to be very honest about, you know, I'd really been burning the midnight oil. I think I need to take, truly take a full weekend and just enjoying myself and forget that I have my little workspace in my home.

Kathryn: It's super easy to, I'm just going to check one email very first thing in the morning and then it's, you know, 4:30 in the afternoon and you're still in your pajamas and you've eaten potato chips for lunch.

Ikiah: Exactly.

Kathryn: You have to, you have to have a lot more attention to how you take care of yourself or it just slides so quickly.

Ikiah: It's true, and actually that's something I need to be better at is taking a lunch or just eating a proper lunch. I'm a big snacker. I can snack all day, every day, but if I want to make sure that I'm healthy and my brain is operating and functioning properly, I really do need to get that salad in or give the actual food into my system at some point. And waiting to do that until six o'clock is not really the best method.

Kathryn: Yeah. I've actually, I have taken to setting timers for food because I'm good with breakfast and I'm good with supper, but lunch often slides into the two and three o'clock range, which is, you know, somewhat problematic.

Ikiah: That's what it, yeah, that's a good idea.

Kathryn: Do you keep up with any kind of continuing education?

Ikiah: I don't, not in a formal traditional sense. But I do, there are a couple of newsletters that I keep my eye out on. For instance, there's one called Trendwatching. There's another one from Every Action. So I really like those. I have podcasts that I listen to all of the time. My favorite podcast right now is Nomadtopia learning about different ways other nomads live and work and kind of dreaming about what that's like for them and how that compares to my experience. And then I try to keep an eye on social media sites. So for instance, there's so many groups within Facebook and Reddit that have been really helpful to me. For instance, Remote Nonprofits. So for other people like me who worked remotely and also work in the social good sector. There's also Remote Like Me and Remote and Travel, Jobs and Life.

Kathryn: Okay. And we will get all of that in the show notes. That is an amazing list and I love that you mentioned Nomadtopia I talked to Amy... Three days ago.

Ikiah: Get out of here. Yeah, yeah, she is amazing. Oh Wow. That's wonderful.

Kathryn: So yeah, that will definitely be out by the time this airs and I'll link that up too. But yeah. All right, so now we're going to get into some numbers. What would you say the salary range is for what you do and how long have you been doing the work?

Ikiah: So I've been doing the work over seven years and the salary range for someone in my level, which is like a manager level is between \$55,000 to \$75,000 really depending on the size of the organization.

Kathryn: What would you say the beginning salary range is?

Ikiah: About \$40,000 a year.

Kathryn: Okay. And where does it top out?

Ikiah: Okay. So here's another resource for anyone who's interested in researching nonprofits. You can always go to a nonprofit's 990 form and check to see what their highest paid employees get paid and that that can actually help you in negotiations when you are interviewing for a job or looking to become a consultant with a particular organization. So I would say, you know, the CEOs and the presidents make anywhere from \$200,000 to like upper \$400,000.

Kathryn: And are you on a track to end up in that position?

Ikiah: Wow. I am, possibly, I'm actually a little bit more interested in continuing in the remote only space. So I think becoming a consultant is more the track that I'm on, than becoming a traditional CEO, but who knows, maybe those two will overlap one day.

Kathryn: And with being a consultant, where would that top out?

Ikiah: I think that that depends on you and your ability and your bandwidth.

Kathryn: Do you have any tips for negotiating, especially with a position like this?

Ikiah: Oh yes, let's see. Number one, especially with women, I think it's so important to practice and to know your worth and to not flinch when you say, "I would like to earn x amount" in the negotiation phase of the interview process. I think the more seriously you take yourself more seriously, they'll take you and hopefully by that time you've done a really good job of expressing your expertise, your interest in the job and sharing the value that you can bring to the particular company. Like I said, I recommend practicing with a friend or even watching youtube videos. There's so many youtube videos out there that help you like write out a script and then you can actually look at yourself in the mirror and say the script out loud. Get used to hearing yourself say that number and, and not be afraid of it and not feel like, oh my gosh, am I, am I asking too much? Uh, no you're not because this is your livelihood and, and you bring a lot to the table. So you have to stand up in that. Yeah. I always think it's important to ask a little bit above what you want even so that if, and when they come back to you and say, Oh, you know, as an organization we really, we really can't do that, but we can offer _____.

Then you can say, okay, great, well maybe there's a way that we can meet in the middle because what I originally wanted was asked, you're offering, why is there something in the middle that we can work with? And um, sometimes they can, sometimes they can't. Sometimes they say, well, let's revisit this conversation in three months time after we had your, after we've seen your work. And, and that's okay too. That just gives you the chance to evaluate if that's a good atmosphere for you and for them to evaluate if you're good for them. And then if so, then you guys can continue the conversation.

Kathryn: And you said, come in a little above. What does that mean to you?

Ikiah: I would say \$5,000 above.

Kathryn: And what would be your number one tip for women looking to get started in the nonprofit sector?

Ikiah: My number one tip would be to decide exactly what area within nonprofits you're interested in, because they're so different. Someone who works in programs has a very different experience than someone who works in on the development side. So I think deciding what your track will be would be very helpful. And if you're really not sure, start to volunteer with an organization that you admire and then ask the people that you work with to talk to you more about their career track and what it's been like for them. And ask for a really honest conversation because you're looking to make a career change and you want to make sure that you're making the right change for you. And usually people will, we'll do that for you because they want to help.

Kathryn: And is there a difference in heading into nonprofit as compared to corporate?

Ikiah: Yes. Oh yes, definitely. I think, yeah, I think nonprofits slightly more relaxed, but there's some nonprofits like the one where I work at now where it's very goal oriented. So you know your, you know what your objectives are for the next 12 months and you have to do your best to hit it, but at the same time it's okay for you to go home at 5:30, at 6:00 and kind of shut off and then get back to it the next day. I find that some corporations expect you to be on, even when you're away from your computer or your desk. And so that, that doesn't really fit well with everyone. Some people can handle that, some people would prefer not. So there's definitely a difference in the work life balance.

Kathryn: And what are your next steps?

Ikiah: Yes. So, I love what I'm doing now. I have so much fun working with people and I say what I do is I help people help people. And that gives me so much joy to know that I'm making a difference in the world. And then I'm also empowering people to realize their strength and their power as a philanthropist. So I'm looking forward to continuing doing that. I'm hoping to do that through a consulting route as well. So helping different types of organizations, build programs, structure their volunteer programs and do similar things like that. And then I'm going to continue doing yoga cause that's cause I also love that on the side so.

Kathryn: It makes a difference.

Ikiah: It does, and even though I don't do yoga in the morning, I do get my yoga in throughout the day.

Kathryn: So where can listeners find you?

Ikiah: Yeah. Okay. So listeners can find me www.ikiah.com and I'll spell that for you. It's I K I A H dot com.

Kathryn: And that will be in the show notes. So nobody has to try and write anything down, while they're driving down the freeway.

Ikiah: Yes, be safe.

Kathryn: Ikea, thank you so much for joining us. This has been great.

Ikiah: Thank you so much. I had fun.

Kathryn: Thank you for listening to Compass. You'll find today's show notes at compasspod.com/008. If you enjoyed this show, please share it with a friend, by visiting compasspod.com/008 and clicking the share buttons at the top of the page. Next week we'll be talking to Laura Roeder , founder.