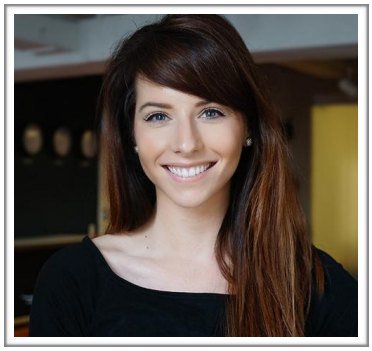

KELLY BEHREND

The University of Richmond '10

Social Impact Strategist

Finding Empowerment through Sustainability and Spirituality

Kelly Behrend, a once fiery activist who resisted working for the private sector, now finds her own role in creating the good within it. By working for herself, Kelly is able to create her own path and choose projects with which her goals and morals align.

The Path of Social Justice

After graduating from the University of Richmond as a Bonner Scholar, Kelly Behrend found herself working for the Bonner Foundation. While at the Foundation, Kelly forged a partnership with Peacework, a non-profit organization offering international service trips. Kelly transitioned into the private sector as Director of Corporate Responsibility, where she helped large companies like Pricewaterhouse Coopers create international volunteer trips for their employees. This allowed her to explore a central question of "how can the private sector be involved in social justice?" She pursued a Master's in Sustainable Development during her tenure.

After presenting at a conference, Kelly found herself being offered a job working for a technology start-up called Ride.com, a ride -sharing service. With a passion for social justice, Kelly entered the field of technology.

"I realized that with social justice change you need to meet people where they are and right now everyone is on their cellphones."

> ***We create our own reality***

Creating Her Own Path

After working for multiple start-ups focusing on sustainability and social action, Kelly chose to take a risk and leave her typical office job. She did not want to fall into the trap of what society expected of her but instead wanted to create her own reality.

"In NYC, everything was so fast paced, and it was not working for me. I wanted to have more flexibility to do what I wanted. I also realized that the nine to five workday did not work for me and that [through choices] we create our own reality."

In an effort to create her "own reality," Kelly started her own consulting firm and online spiritual practice. Her firm, Metta LLC, helps businesses achieve their sustainability goals.

Discovering Spirituality

The spiritual element of Kelly's work, as well as its integral role in pursuing justice and equity, is what makes her perspective and service so unique. However, if you ask Kelly, she would emphasize that this connection between activism and spirituality doesn't just apply to sustainability.

"Activists need healing work because they are dealing with the hardest and darkest situations." Kelly's online spiritual practice, *Awaken Your Chakras*, is focused on teaching and allowing people to become their own healers so they can pursue the work that speaks to them.

Words of Wisdom

Since Kelly has had experience in many different sectors such as sustainability and technology, she has so much knowledge to share with students who are starting their first job or just looking for a change. One important piece of advice she has for students is that they should not only pursue careers in the non-profit sector, but they should also explore the private sector and government.

Providing some sage advice, she recommends that when students or young professionals enter a new job, always negotiate! This includes for salary and benefits. More specifically, Kelly encourages students to advocate for other learning opportunities. She suggests asking about attendance at conferences or being able to enroll in interesting online classes. In her words, "advocate to get out of your cubicle."

Written by Aleah Qureshi
Bonner Alumna at Wofford College '18

Check out some of Kelly's Favorite Books:

- *Development as Freedom* by: Amartya Sen
- *Return to Love* by: Marianne Williamson