**DMC’s Urban Evolution Podcast – Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk**

Bill Von Bank:

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Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

At the end of the day, you want the consumers to have the best products, right? This trend is only going to grow, especially after this pandemic, not just for immunity products, but for everything. People are going to look for preventative measures more than treatment.

Bill Von Bank:

Welcome to Urban Evolution, a podcast about harnessing creativity and innovation to transform communities. I'm your host Bill Von Bank. Food as medicine is a popular buzz phrase, but what does it mean? A Rochester, Minnesota startup company is helping to shape and define it. Canomiks is a big data company bringing scientific rigor and a whole new standard to the natural remedies marketplace, that doesn't currently exist, with an end goal to help consumers make better choices. Today I'm joined by the co-founder and CEO of Canomiks, Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk, who will share details about her company and its new innovative technologies. And as someone who has recently moved from the big city of Boston to Rochester, Minnesota, she'll also provide perspective on why Rochester should be a top choice as a work from anywhere city. Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk, welcome to the Urban Evolution podcast.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Thank you so much, Bill. Really honored to be part of this podcast series. Looking forward to our conversation.

Bill Von Bank:

Leena, share with us your career journey and what brought you to Rochester, Minnesota from Boston.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Sure. So I got my PhD from Tulane University in pharmacology. I came to Boston as a faculty member at Harvard Medical School around 2005, right after Hurricane Katrina. I was in Boston up until 2019, August. And then in 2019 August, I moved to Rochester. I am what you call a trailing spouse of a male physician, faculty physician. So yeah, that's initially what brought us to Rochester.

Bill Von Bank:

Rochester, Minnesota, Boston, Massachusetts, different size cities. Give us some perspective on both.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

I grew up in big city, in Mumbai. My husband grew up in Berlin. We have always lived in big cities, and we were looking to move to a place where we are able to raise our seven year old little boy, and a city that offers both of us careers at the same time. So my husband being a physician, I being from life sciences background, Rochester made complete sense career-wise, raising a family.

Bill Von Bank:

You grew up in Mumbai, India. You just mentioned that. What brought you to the United States?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

I got into my PhD program in pharmacology at Tulane and, yeah, for grad school. That's what brought me to the U.S.

Bill Von Bank:

Tell us about your new life sciences company you started in 2016 called Canomiks.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

At Canomiks, we have built a genomics and AI based platform to help companies in the functional beverage, functional food, dietary supplement, skincare industry develop safe and efficacious products. And what we are trying to do at Canomiks is to bring a lot of scientific rigor to the natural product industry. What I mean by that is, we've worked with other companies in the space, and we help them with product development. For example, if you want to develop a formulation to target anxiety, or depression, or inflammation, so what kind of ingredients you should use for that product, and we validate with genomics based science. And then let's say you have a product now, on an ongoing basis we can help you source the right ingredients so that from one batch to the other, your product still remains consistent, and still has efficacy, and is still safe. So we help with product development and then we help companies on an ongoing continuous manner monitor the ingredients that get used in those products.

Bill Von Bank:

Why did you form the company?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

My background is in pharmacology. My co-founders, Manoj Bhasin and Frank LoGerfo, are also scientists. Around that time, 2016, 2017, we started seeing a lot of interest in natural therapies. And again, Manoj and I, we grew up in India where we are used to using these products. And then all of a sudden, we started seeing in the Western world, people were getting interested in these products, but not much science was being used behind their development. And we knew that these products work. I mean, we've used these for centuries.

Bill Von Bank:

Such as ginger, turmeric.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Exactly, ginger, turmeric. But when we look at those products, there are few things going on. There's a lot of interest from the consumer side, but then there's also a lot of distrust. Should I use this? When you talk to people, and nowadays a lot of people ask me, "Hey, what brand should I use? Where should I get my product from?" And up until now, the way people have made decisions about those products is just word of mouth, somebody telling someone, some influencer talking about it, but there is not much of systematic research behind these ingredients. Because think about it, these are natural ingredients and they vary quite a bit from region to region, from farm to farm, from batch to batch. And so how do you know that from one brand versus the other it's still the same consistent product?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

And so that was the idea as to how we can make the products safe, efficacious, help consumers in the end have the best quality. And in the process, help the companies, because when they use our service, they get a differentiated product. They mitigate their compliances, they mitigate their brand risk. So we thought the market was ready, and we started selling services first to some of the big nutrition companies, and now slowly we are productizing some of our services as well.

Bill Von Bank:

So you're bringing sciences, modern sciences into the space to really improve natural remedies.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Exactly.

Bill Von Bank:

Where did the name Canomiks come from?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

So, omics is a field of science. When people talk about genomics, proteomics, metabolomics, transcriptomics, that's where the omiks part comes from. And everything that we do, all of the science that we use on our platform is omics-based science. So that is omiks, but then Canomiks in science and biology, there are proteins and molecules that function through... they have these pathways that are the most important pathways how they function and they're called canonical pathways. And so that's where the can part came from. So focusing on canonical pathways of these ingredients, for example, focusing on canonical pathways of a given chronic condition. So that's where the can part came from and the omiks part came from, the omics sciences that we're using.

Bill Von Bank:

It's a great mashup.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

And the domain was available. We couldn't use O-M-I-C-S, everything that ends with O-M-I-C-S, which is actually the omics the word, most of the domains were taken up. So we ran with O-M-I-K-S.

Bill Von Bank:

It works. Are we really talking about food as medicine if we can drill this down?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Yes. Great question. Food as medicine has become a buzz phrase, everyone is using it and everyone wants to say that food is medicine, but it's really hard to drill it down as to what do we mean by food as medicine, right? And so what we are doing at Canomiks is looking at the very fundamentals of food and very basic or fundamentals of human life, right? So for food, if you think about food, we talk about ingredients, right? So let's say you have a recipe. Recipe that has been passed on to you from your family, from generations, right? And now you want to make that food. And the first thing you look for are ingredients, right? And you can use really high end ingredients, or you can use not so high end ingredients. And your final product is only going to be as good as the ingredients that you use.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Okay. So you have to start with the best ingredients to make that food recipe. But then the other thing is these ingredients, they do have effect on our body, right? And when you think about the human body at the very basic level, we talk about genes and the DNA, right? So that's sort of the fundamental of us, of a person. And so what we are trying to do at Canomiks is to really understand how those ingredients that we're talking about, how do they affect human genes, right? And so we are trying to make the connection between these really basic fundamental building blocks. On food side, it's the ingredient on the human side, it's the genes and once we start really understanding that relationship, then now we can start talking about food as medicine, right? But we really have to do all that homework, all that basic work before we really start building on that information.

Bill Von Bank:

Help us to understand Canomiks Gene Tune technology, understanding that it's proprietaries, not sure how much you can share, but I'd just love to learn a little bit more about it.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

What we're doing at Canomiks is we are building our databases of ingredients and how ingredients affect human genes. And we have databases that we are developing around chronic conditions and what genes are affected in what chronic conditions. And on top of those databases, we have built algorithms and trying to understand, let's say gene XYZ, in a given chronic condition, it's supposed to be a good gene, it's supposed to be a helpful gene, is sort of turned off or what we call downregulated. Okay so which of these ingredients can then upregulate it or turn it back on and to what magnitude, right? So what we can do with Gene Tune is design recipes for formulations that will sort of counter regulate that chronic condition gene signature. So a gene is turned off in a chronic condition, and it's a good gene, which ingredient or combinations of ingredient can turn it back on. So that's what Gene Tune can really do.

Bill Von Bank:

How is your client base segmented?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

So we are working mostly with suppliers and some nutrition companies, CPG companies, suppliers of functional ingredients. And the way we look at this is, first of all, we want to democratize the science that we are building, the platform that we are building. And right now, most of our customers are in the big tier, revenue tier about five to $50 billion market size. But we are trying to create products out of our service so that everybody else, even the smaller companies would be able to use our service. And for that, what we're trying to do is create benchmarks for ingredients. So let's say the first one that we are going to launch is CBD. Everybody's taking CBD, but we don't understand much about it. There is science behind it now-

Bill Von Bank:

A lot of marketing behind it.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

And a lot of marketing. What we are trying to tell companies is use the science as your marketing tool, right? So if you use science, if you do the right thing, that will help you with your marketing process itself. But what we're trying to do is, and CBD is the first ingredient we'll be adding many more, as we benchmark the ingredient for its biological effects. So what I mean by that, and again, the biological effect is how does a given ingredient affect human genes and thereby human wellness? So let's say if you have a pure grade CBD or pure grade turmeric, what are the genes it would affect or it should affect? And what is the relevance of those genes to health and wellness? Okay so that's the benchmark, it's sort of a biomarker diagnostic panel. So let's say if you have a company or you're looking to form a company where you're going to use CBD or turmeric or ginger or whatever, any of those functional ingredients, you can send that sample to us and we will test it in our lab and then compare it to the benchmark that we have developed.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

And then give you a report back. How did your CBD compare with the benchmark that we have developed and what what's the relevance of the genes? And what this helps you do is two things. First of all, you know the quality of your ingredient, but also from one batch to the other. Because remember I started off in saying how these ingredients can vary from one batch and that's a big problem. So if you have a consistent ingredient and let's say if you have a supplier and all of a sudden, your supplier says, "Hey, I can't fulfill your order this time you may have to go to another supplier." So now what do you do, right? How do you know that the next supplier is equally good? And so that's what our technology can help you to actually look at the functional effect of a given ingredient.

Bill Von Bank:

And over time consistency.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Exactly.

Bill Von Bank:

On the consumer side, we, as consumers are label readers. What should we be finding in supplemental ingredients or in the products labeling that gives us an indication of efficacy?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

So efficacy it's an interesting attribute. So what's interesting is let's say dietary supplements, the FDA doesn't control the pre market, or doesn't ask the companies to do pre-market evaluation because these ingredients are generally regarded as safe. But once you make a product and put it on the shelf, that's when the FDA comes and monitors. And what they look for really is a lot of safety. They are always concerned about the safety aspects of these products. The efficacy, a lot of companies that have the resources, the money, they will go ahead and do a clinical trial. You're not required to do, but they could do it, right? The challenge here is if you think about big pharma and how much money they spend in clinical trials, right? But they can recoup it at the other end, right?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

They can charge whatever price they want for their product, for their therapeutic. That is not possible with dietary supplements or on these natural remedies. So you have to think about the cost benefit aspect of it. Should companies be looking into efficacy? Absolutely. That's what we are trying to bring to the industry, right? But it's not always possible to do clinical trials. So what we are proposing to these companies is that, okay, you don't have the resources to do the clinical trial, but at least do something about it, right? At least do a biological functional test for your ingredient and do it on a regular basis from one batch to the other. So you know that your product is safe and it may have the potential to have good efficacy. The other challenge is, again, going back to the supply chain these ingredients come from all over the world.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

A lot of them do come from East Asia because obviously the plants don't grow here. So how do you even control that? Even if you want to have efficacy, what are the processes that need to be put in place? So the FDA is getting more and more vigilant about these issues, but at this point, a lot of it is driven by the end consumer. If the end consumer starts demanding of the companies, then the companies will do it. And so that is also one of the things that we are pushing for, is to demand good quality products. And when I say good quality, efficacy, safety, all of that.

Bill Von Bank:

A recent wall street journal article covered the topic of the pandemic acting as a wake-up call for consumers looking at and prioritizing their health by boosting immunity through supplements. Can you comment on that observation?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

If you look at any of these publications that come up with latest trends in the space, you'll see that immunity inflammation, in fact, even mental health products, people are really looking for those. And again, the more science we bring to the industry, the more credibility the companies will get and also good products at the end of the day, you want the consumers to have the best products, right? This trend is only going to grow, especially after this pandemic, not just for immunity products, but for everything.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

People are going to look for preventative measures more than treatment, right? And so, although these products are not supposed to treat, cure, diagnose, we know that they're there and we know that people are going to be using them and they should be treated as supplements. This is not something that you should be taking if you have some really bad chronic condition. This is something that you should use for supplementing to helping, right? And that trend is just going to grow. But I think companies like us, we really hope that we can change how those products are made and not just for immunity inflammation, but some of the other conditions as well.

Bill Von Bank:

And just getting back to our early conversation, it just seems like the safety piece is only going to become a bigger topic for consumers.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Again, from the perspective of FDA, that is what they're always worried about. The safety piece. Like I said, a lot of these ingredients do come from foreign supply chains and these are natural. So a lot of times, so for example, turmeric, it's a root, right? It comes from the soil and you can't process them. You cannot have a synthetic turmeric and so there are always remnants of the soil that stay in the product and how do you control for that? Sometimes there is outright fraud and that's just criminal behavior, but a lot of times these are natural ingredients. And not just that, it is also, you will be surprised how much the micro environment affects the end product. So turmeric harvested, this is true for any of these natural ingredients, depending on the time of the harvest, the region, the weather conditions, the soil microbiome that will, all of those factors will affect the end ingredient and there by the end product.

Bill Von Bank:

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your business? Have you had to change or pivot in any way?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Not really. Our business strategy didn't have to pivot. Again, we are one of those companies fortunately in the space where only more attention and more resources are being spent by the consumers also by the other companies. However, it has affected us in other ways, like we can get to see each other. We do have couple of people working for Canomiks in the Minnesota, in the Minneapolis Rochester area. So we are all, what we call distributed teams. Just like everybody else, that's been the hardest challenge for us, it's to not get to see each other and not have that in-person interaction. Because as a startup, as a small company, the more energy you have, the more enthusiasm you have, it always helps, so.

Bill Von Bank:

Well, I have to imagine, because as a startup, you have to wear so many hats and I'm guessing that the collaborative process and seeing each other and chatting, and you've probably used plenty of markers and whiteboards as a team. Not being able to do that, it must be a challenge.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Yes, absolutely. And the staring at the Zoom screen, it's quite a challenge. Your eyes just get... Sometimes I wonder, where does the energy go? Because you feel physically you're in one spot, but you're still exhausted, right? And part of that exhaustion comes from that focus on that screen and the eyes, whatnot. However, technology has helped quite a bit. We have seen in the last year, I mean, I didn't use Zoom as much and now all of a sudden Zoom and all these other virtual technologies, they have been helpful there, yeah. I think that piece has helped quite a bit, the technology. How do you collaborate virtually? A lot of the companies, a lot of the industries have done that very well in the past. Everybody else now has to adapt to that sort of environment.

Bill Von Bank:

Since 2016, can you speak to the growth of your company in any fashion?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

We are a startup and we did not raise a whole lot of money, but we got clients. And so that has been wonderful. We were able to bootstrap and grow our company to the point where it is now. It's a startup, so there have been ups and downs and whatnot, but we are now ready to launch one of our first products on our platform. So we are excited about that. We have successfully onboarded, big companies as our clients. And so, yeah, it's been slow, but it's been steady, steady growth.

Bill Von Bank:

And you mentioned some team members, how big of a team do you have?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Yeah, so we are three co-founders and we have three other people working with us mostly bio-informaticians. We have a phenomenal marketing operations manager, Ashley, shout out to her.

Bill Von Bank:

In terms of competition, is there a lot of competition for Canomiks?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

We think about us as a big data company. Yes. We are helping other companies with their product development. We are helping other companies with their ingredient, quality assurance. But if you look at us at the end of the day, we are creating more information around a lot of information around these ingredients and how they affect human genes, et cetera. So on that and off it, there are a couple of companies that we consider as our competition, actually look at them as companies that would be complimentary. In fact, we could provide services to them. A lot of times investors will try to box us, "Oh, are you a testing company? What kind of company are you? Are you a product company?" So we, again going back to the point that I just made, we are a big data company gathering information around ingredients, gathering insights around ingredients so that we can better create good recipes, probably in the future, even personalized nutrition, traceability solutions, et cetera.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

I have to make a point that this question comes up all the time. Is that, are we replacing any kind of technology? Is this a new technology? So this is a new technology. The existing technology, which has been there for decades now, where it's analytical technology, where you can test the presence or the purity of a given ingredient it's done by using a couple of different methodologies. The common one is HPLC and that's great, that will tell you if, a given ingredient or given product has certain ingredients or certain molecules in it or not. What it doesn't tell you is that now does that ingredient, or does that molecule have any effect? So that's where we think that again, we are complimentary to the existing technology. We are creating a whole new standard that doesn't exist. So in that sense, we are the first ones to do it.

Bill Von Bank:

Is that a technology that you can patent?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Yes. So we will be patenting the biomarker panels that help us understand given ingredients effect on human genes.

Bill Von Bank:

Canomiks is the first Minnesota company in just one of 10 global companies accepted into PepsiCo's greenhouse accelerator program. Can you speak to that program?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Yeah. So the greenhouse accelerator is PepsiCo's accelerator where they bring in the top global companies. This year, they have focused on health and wellness and technology, which is phenomenal. A company like PepsiCo, thinking about health and wellness is really wonderful. They matched us with our subject matter experts as our mentors. So we have two mentors again, I mean, they have been so helpful. We just started the program about a month ago and we've already had so many touch points, not just with our mentors, but they are helping us with resources within PepsiCo. If we need help with a certain topic or a certain subject, they will connect us to them. And they're really engaged. I mean, sometimes I almost feel like we are creating more work for them. They love it. We love it.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

And yeah, we'll see. It's a six month program. What we are trying to learn is, company like PepsiCo has so many resources, they have so many insights. What is that the consumer is looking for? I mean, as a startup, we are, like I said, we are five people company and PepsiCo is this huge company and how do they think about scaling up? Because that's always on our radar, right? How do we scale this up? And that's what our mentors are helping us think things through.

Bill Von Bank:

So you're involved in the accelerator, you are CEO of the startup company doing fascinating work. And you also teach at Harvard Medical School. Can you share a little bit about that experience?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

I was full-time at Harvard, almost full-time at Harvard until I moved. For the last couple of years I have been part-time because of my position as CEO. But yeah, I've been in the Harvard system since 2005. Most of my academic work is very different than what I do for Canomiks. My research has been focused on vascular bypass graft failures, diabetic wound healing, bio-materials, working with bio engineers and I'm also, co-director on couple of different NIH funded training grants. I have had my own R01, owner 21 grants. So now I'm really very little effort I have at Harvard and what I love about that job is to get to work again with students and postdocs and keep my scientific creative side alive.

Bill Von Bank:

At the start of this conversation, you mentioned you moved to Rochester, Minnesota for your husband's job with Mayo clinic. You've called Rochester, the hidden secret of the Midwest. Give us some examples. That's a really nice phrase for Rochester.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

And you talked about, the comparison between moving from a big city to a small city. So what I love about Rochester is... And anytime I talk to my friends, especially in the last couple of weeks, they talk about, "Oh my God, but it's so cold." So here is an example. So I lived in Boston for many years. Most of the years I took public transport, right? So if it's 20 degrees Fahrenheit outside, and if you're waiting for your bus, you're exposed for 15 minutes to that cold weather.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

On the other end here, if it's minus 10 Fahrenheit outside, but I'm still sitting in my car in my garage then I go somewhere, I park my car and go to wherever I need to go to. So you're not really exposed to that cold. So quality of life is very different here. Traffic, schools are great, and then of course there's Mayo clinic. And so you're next to the... I literally live like two miles from the best clinic in the world. So you have good schools, you have great food and you have the best healthcare. So what else do you need?

Bill Von Bank:

Exactly. There's been a lot of conversation about work from anywhere recently. Urbanist and national thought leader, Richard Florida noted that communities will be competing for remote workers, not just businesses and people will be moving to cities for amenities, not just jobs. How might Rochester capitalize on the work from anywhere lifestyle?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Yeah, that's a great question. And again, this past year opened up our eyes or probably we knew, but we just ignored that fact, right? So I'm sitting, although I have an office here in downtown Rochester, I work mostly from home. And I mean, again, going back to that same point to, I cannot imagine my family and I living in COVID times in a small apartment, in a city like Boston, right? We have a backyard. Our son goes outside and plays, gets outside time. That would not have been possible in a big city.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

So that definitely coming back to quality of life. I mean, you have everything, all the amenities here. And like I said, the technology is so advanced now. We can collaborate remotely. We have consultants outside of the U.S. We have clients outside of the U.S. How have we managed to do that? It's of course, it's remote, right? And so, again, coming back to the point, quality of life here is amazing. And so if people don't want to live in big cities, move to other cities, I don't necessarily say smaller cities, but other cities, Rochester would should be really high on people's priority list.

Bill Von Bank:

Let's talk about why Rochester, as it relates to competition with the coast for your type of business and other businesses.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

So from a business perspective, think about it. Now Google is going to have their first Minnesota office in Rochester and company like that, with everything, all the resources, and especially the relevance to my company, like I said, Canomiks is a big data company. So that's really attractive. It adds to that ecosystem of healthcare and data analytics and wellness, all of that piece, right? But in addition to the business part of it, one point I also want to make about Rochester is how diverse it is, right? So you live on the coast and, it's very diverse, especially a city like Boston or New York, anywhere, mostly on the East coast.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

You see a lot of diversity, but you don't think the same thing about the Midwest and what I was surprised to see, for example, my son's school, we have people from all places in the world, right? I think Mayo clinic especially brings in people from all around the world. And we have friends from a lot of different countries in Rochester. So that was kind of a big surprise to us. So that's another piece that we love about Rochester it's the diversity

Bill Von Bank:

No question. It takes a lot of grit to start a new business. Can you share some lessons learned along the way?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Yes. It's a roller coaster. People who haven't met a lot of founders or entrepreneurs, it's very glamorized, I would say. It's not, right? You need a lot of grit, but what has helped is my background being a scientist, right? And in science, it's always ups and downs. I always give this example to the postdocs and students in the lab, 99% of the times your experiments fail and then you go back, you do the root cause analysis. You go back and you repeat and you repeat. And that perseverance, that grit really helps when you're going through a startup. Startup is of course you don't have unlimited time. You have limited resources. And so you have to quickly experiment, move on to the next thing, quickly experiment, move onto the next thing.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

And it takes a lot of grit and just look at don't focus too much on the ups and downs that happen on a daily basis. But just reflect back maybe once a month and see have you made any progress and maybe there is a month that you haven't made much progress, so what can you do about it? And so I think that reflection and that perseverance is what gets you through this roller coaster of startups. And it's exciting. I can set up my own schedule if I want to wake up at three o'clock in the morning and start working I can do that. You are your own boss, but that also means that you have all the responsibility, especially as the CEO. So that was something that was fun. Actually it was fun for me to do, work on all different aspects of that problem that you're trying to solve, not just the science, right? Because my background has been in science, but the marketing, so I've learned so much about marketing, the financials I've... So yeah, it's been fun.

Bill Von Bank:

What advice would you give to entrepreneurs just getting started?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Yeah, I think there's a lot of times people will say, "Oh, I'm in the stealth mode. I don't want to talk about," unless it's, I don't know, if your idea is something that could be easily replicated, then it's probably not a good idea to begin with. I would say be open, talk to advisors, seek out advisors that absolutely is going to be my number one advice. Seek out advisors, talk to people and network, and don't be shy to ask questions. I think asking questions should be the number one thing that entrepreneurs should be doing and seeking out advisors, asking questions to the right advisors.

Bill Von Bank:

As you look ahead and maybe project out the next five years, what's next for Canomiks?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Going back to, who we are and where we want to go. Our ultimate vision, our long-term vision is always food as medicine. And as we slowly build our platform, as we slowly scale up and really start thinking about the different strategies, we want to be the science company in the alternative medicine, in the natural product industry. Solve all kinds of challenges, again, from coming up with the best products to personalization, to traceability, so that in five or six years, but right now we're focusing on one problem.

Bill Von Bank:

As you reflect on your journey with your company, a look back at last year, and a look ahead, what inspires you?

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

It's always amazing when I talk to people it's, "Oh, wow, this is how it's done. And this is how these products are made. And wow. You really want your solution now, like today. How can we help?" And so that's always inspires us, is that we are really making a difference and you're really trying to do the right thing. And so all stakeholders, the companies that we work with, they're eager to work with us because we are really solving the challenge for them. But the consumers who we don't directly work with, are also excited about the problem that we're solving. So yeah, absolutely, all those conversations really inspire us, makes me wake up in the morning and okay, let's solve this problem.

Bill Von Bank:

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk, thank you for being our guest on Urban Evolution.

Leena Pradhan-Nabzdyk:

Thank you so much. This was a fun conversation.

Bill Von Bank:

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