

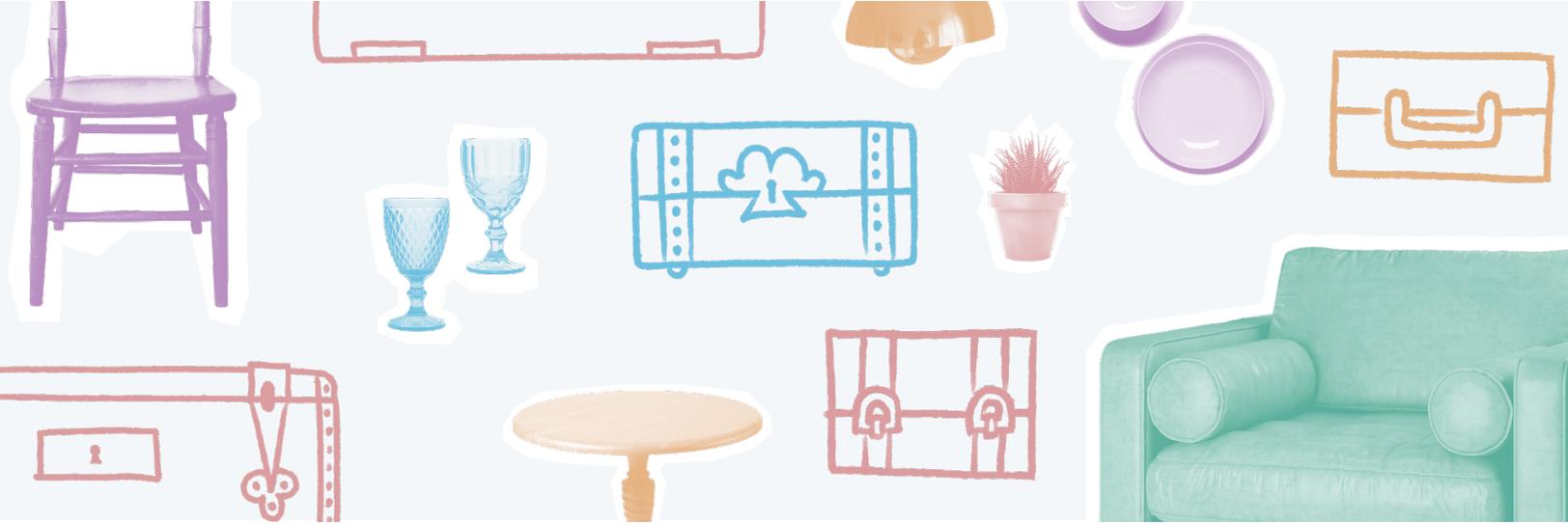
The
**TRUNK
SHOW**

With RW ELEPHANT

SEASON 2 EPISODE 5



**CARVING YOUR OWN NICHE WITH
LITTLE CELEBRATIONS**



CeCe Champion is the founder of Little Celebrations, a specialty rentals business in Boston that focuses on the kiddos. Hear how she found her unique passion and place in the industry. Plus, we discuss all things miniature and adorable from tables to sofas to chiavari chairs!



What's in this episode:

- How mentorship helped grow Little Celebrations
- CeCe's business strategy for surviving the pandemic
- How embracing the power and freedom of delegation has helped CeCe grow
- Behind the scenes of one of Boston's biggest collections of little furniture



QUOTES

“When kids go to events, they're sitting at these adult tables. It's not as fun for them or parents are telling them to stop touching the silverware... **So why not create a space... for them?**”

- CeCe Champion

“It seems like **that kind of thirst for knowledge also goes hand-in-hand with some humility**– the ability to acknowledge that you don't know everything yet but also coupled with the confidence to say, ‘I can do this.’”

-Allison Howell

“And, you know, **starting this business has allowed me to really build a backbone** to like say no, creating boundaries, respecting, or protecting my own peace.”

- CeCe Champion

“**I learned early on that delegation is key.** I am not the control freak. [...] For me initially, it was very important for me to invest in a bookkeeper and make sure I had all my numbers together so I could understand the growth of my business.”

- CeCe Champion

“When I look around at the industry, the people who are continuing to do [their own] deliveries, and especially late night pick-ups, **are the ones that burn out the fastest.**”

- Allison Howell

“The **opportunity for scale** in a business like yours is really different than a business that really requires the main principal to be the one doing the hands-on work on the day of the event.”

- Allison Howell

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

Allison Howell Hey, there. I'm Allison Howell, and this is The Trunk Show, where I talk with leaders in the event rental industry about their rental adventures. The show is brought to you by RW Elephant, Mighty Inventory Management Software designed to help you conquer the chaos in your event rental business and reclaim your creativity. Because the world needs more of the beautiful events and environments you create. In this episode, I talk with Cece Champion, Owner and Founder of Little Celebrations, a furniture rental business that makes sure the kids have a place to sit, designed just for them.

Cece Champion My name is Cece Champion, and I own an event rental business supporting children event rentals, kid-size children event furniture. And I started my business October 2016, so I actually just highlighted yesterday five years in this industry.

Allison Howell Congratulations.

Cece Champion Thank you so much. Yeah, so really just started, you know, in my house, just figuring out what pieces to get. So it's a blessing to see how far I've come just now having an actual brick and mortar.

Allison Howell Yeah, and you're in the Boston area, right?

Cece Champion Yes. In Boston, Massachusetts.

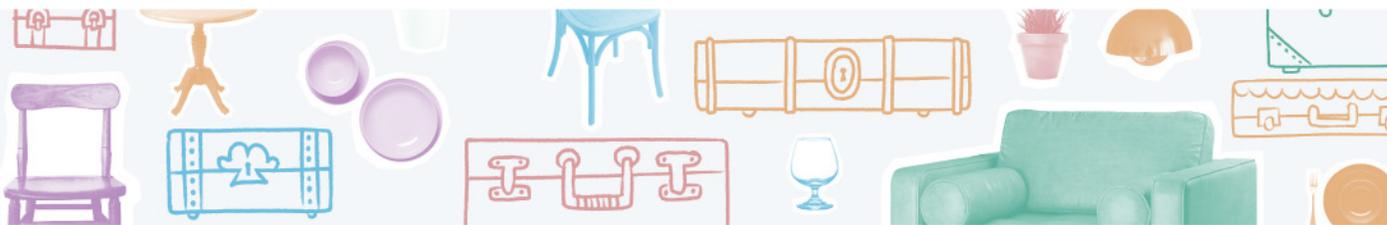
Allison Howell What regions do you serve?

Cece Champion I serve Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Allison Howell Well, tell us about your early career.

Cece Champion So, it's so interesting I'm doing this, I'm in this industry, because when I was in college, I majored in public relations. So, you know, my dream was to work in entertainment. I interned at a PR firm and a lot of the events we would do was hospitality.

Allison Howell Okay.



Allison Howell Yeah, well, that's really, I think, a special perspective because it seems like having kids at an event can feel like an afterthought.

Cece Champion Yes. Yes, exactly.

Allison Howell So, you have this idea, you were planning your friend's baby shower, you had done the Community Baby Shower. You saw that there was a need in your market. What happened next?

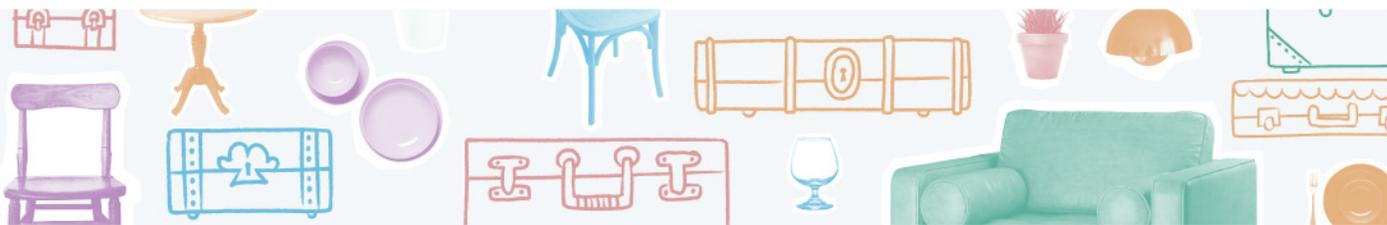
Cece Champion So after that, I just, you know, reached out to two women that I saw running the same business model, which is Petite Seats. And I heard she changed her name. Her name was Little Seaters, but now she's Party Vibes Houston.

Allison Howell OK.

Cece Champion She, you know, wrote me back. She told me kind of the number of tears she started with. And she and I had, you know, coming into this business, I would say she's someone I admire. She's like my mentor, someone that I could bounce off ideas with. We made a point to go to High Point, the expo in North Carolina. Was like, Let's take this trip to source some pieces, you know, and me and her took this trip together, and it just feels amazing to have someone in the same industry and you're helping one another. You're not seeing each other as competition, and she's the kind of person where she loves to just give information.

Cece Champion And so I can say it's more than just having an event rental space. It's also finding your tribe of the people that can actually help you bring your business to the next level. And that's personally, honestly, why I joined RW Elephant, too, because I see how much you pour into event rental, the event rental industry. You give so much information on things that we just wouldn't know, like where to start. And so that's why I invest in my business to go to conferences. You know, I take the classes I need to take so I could just learn more.

Allison Howell Yeah, it seems like that kind of thirst for knowledge also goes hand-in-hand with some humility, right? Like the ability to acknowledge that you don't know everything yet.



- Allison Howell** So it sounds like you've had a lot of confidence in your journey. Have there been any parts that have been scary?
- Cece Champion** Oh, yes. Last year, the pandemic.
- Allison Howell** That wasn't expected for you? Huh. Well, tell us more about that.
- Cece Champion** So. I would say, I was, you know, obviously it's that fear of like, I don't know this industry, I don't know really what to expect, but I'm just going to go with it and roll with the punches.
- Allison Howell** Hmm.
- Cece Champion** And personally, for me, anyone that owns event rentals, you understand that you're putting a lot of investment to buy the pieces.
- Allison Howell** Right.
- Cece Champion** So when the pandemic came, I really had long conversations of like, you know, where is this going? The first year, I probably made \$10,000 in sales just operating from my house. And so I started to see the growth each year where it was like doubling. My sales were double. And I said, Well, 2020 is going to be my year.
- Allison Howell** Yeah.
- Cece Champion** And then, you know, 2020 started off very strong and then March comes. And in Massachusetts, we were told you have to be completely shut down for events. You know, there's absolutely no events. And I just was like, Wow, like if everything that I invested in this business is going to go away now, like what is going to happen? How am I going to pay my rents? The overhead? I just moved into a warehouse.
- Cece Champion** And so I was just like in this mode of trying to figure it out. But then by me, really starting my business with all the ducks in the row, having everything in place, it allowed me to be able to apply for all the grants that became available to COVID relief. And I was able to show, you know, the government that I am a legit business. This is the income I was bringing in.



Cece Champion And through that experience, I was able to have a tribe of other women that are in event rentals and tell them, Hey, you know, you need to apply for these grants. You know, and a lot of times, you know, some people are skeptical, like, Oh, I don't know. But then when they started seeing me get grants at twenty five thousand, fifteen thousand, I probably got over sixty thousand dollars worth of grants in the pandemic.

Allison Howell Well, that's fantastic. And I know one of the grants you received was the Comcast RISE Grant. Is that right?

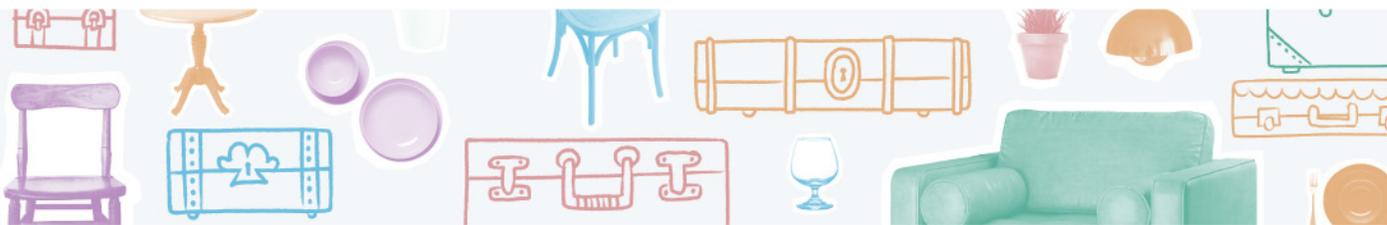
Cece Champion Yes, yes. At the time, they were just targeting towards African-American business owners. So I had applied and I wasn't, you know, I never really get anything, so I was actually shocked like, wow, I actually got approved for this. So they came in, they gave me free security, free internet. They gave me two iPads, two laptops, like anything I needed to equip my business to help me through this pandemic.

Allison Howell It seems like you had to provide a lot of information in order to qualify for the program. And so I'm just wondering, did you have all of that at your fingertips or did you have to do some digging? I know sometimes as entrepreneurs, especially creatives, in the event rental industry, you know, we're not always savvy with numbers or really interested in numbers.

Cece Champion Yes. So I learned early on that delegation is key, and I am not the control freak. I'm not the person that's like, I need to have my hands on everything. So for me, initially it was very important for me to invest in a bookkeeper and making sure I had all my numbers together so I can understand the growth of my business. So I did that, hiring a bookkeeper, which was great because then I was just able to print my profit and losses and stuff for these grants that were available.

Cece Champion Because one of my mentors, she's out here in Massachusetts. When I first started this business, she pulled me to the side and said, Hey, I noticed you do these kid rentals. You're the only one in this market. You need to increase your prices. Her name is Liz. She's from—her company's called Simplistic Charm.

Cece Champion And she also said, I noticed her doing deliveries. I noticed that you're doing cleaning and you're doing all these things. But I want to tell you that you need to hire people because you have to focus on growing the revenue of your



Allison Howell Mm-Hmm.

Cece Champion Also, I've always had this vision, especially when I first started a Little Celebrations, to franchise it. I want to create some type of directory of everyone that has this niche and be able to tell people, Oh, you're in Louisiana or you're in North Carolina. These people are here, you know, you're in New York. Call this...you know.

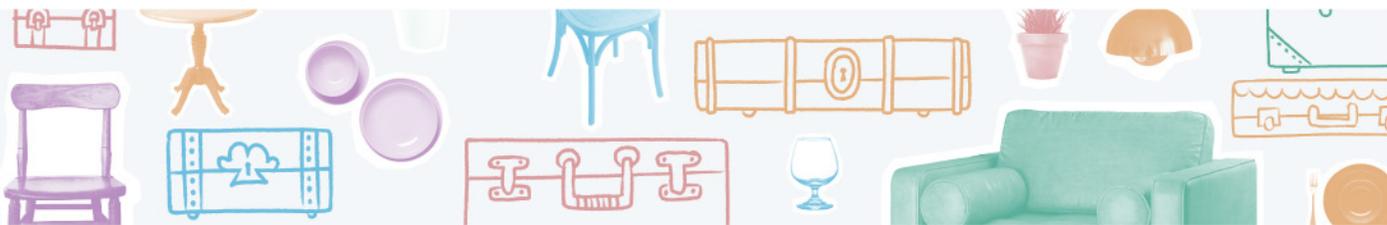
Cece Champion Because I always give I love to refer, you know, but I mean, I do have people that's like, Can you deliver to New York? You know, can you deliver...? I also have a lot of friends that were asking, like whether they can franchise it, as well, in where they reside and stuff. So just getting that paperwork together and what that direction will look like. You know, franchising it.

Allison Howell Well, that seems like a beautiful vision. I kind of like that you're dreaming big for Little Celebrations. What steps do you take to grow the revenue? If you feel like you want, you know, to grow by 20 percent next year, what are those steps? What are you spending your time on and investing in?

Allison Howell I spend more time on being intentional with my Instagram posts because when I first started, a lot of my business just came from Instagram. Like I remember when I first started my account, I'm like, Oh wow, I have two followers and now I'm looking, I'm like, Oh, I'm almost 5000 followers, you know? And there are other people in the industry that have the same niche as me. They have, like twenty thousand followers. So I said, you know, if I'm more intentional with how I post, sharing, you know, more people will see it, which it has like. Every time I post, I get new people and new inquiries and...

Allison Howell Great.

Cece Champion I made sure to get a van and brand my van. So when my driver is out, he's getting a lot of questions like, Can we get cards? You know, I see you have this company and stuff. So that's like a billboard in itself driving down the highway, which is great. And then also talking to the people I know that have those venue relationships to figure out, like, how can I get stronger in my venue relationships, but also the larger event rental businesses that don't have what I have in kids.



Allison Howell Tell me what challenges you're currently facing at Little Celebrations, and what resources are you utilizing to overcome those?

Cece Champion Challenge was staffing, and I can't say staffing is like perfect right now, but it's exactly kind of where I need it to be. So I ended up hiring my aunt. She does my invoicing. She answers the phones for me. And since she started, all of the customers are like, She's amazing. They love her, and she works remotely. RW Elephant allows you to work remote, which I love. You just log into the site and do the invoicing as she gets the phone calls and stuff. You know, because I have, I use Google Voice.

Allison Howell Mhmm. Great. Well, when you look back at the five years now that you've been in business, what are some of the moments that you're most proud of?

Cece Champion I'm most proud of not giving up, learning, always being a sponge. You know, always being a student.

Allison Howell Yeah.

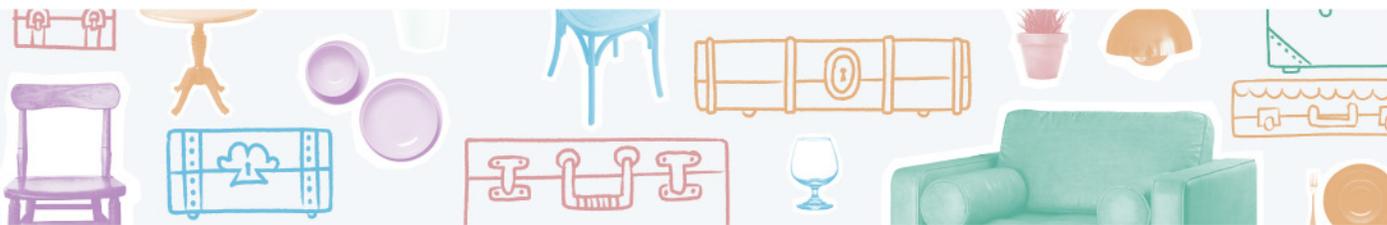
Cece Champion Figuring out ways, how I can get better, just character growth, you know? Yeah, I would just say like the relationships built as well, you know, just being able to have those genuine relationships and being able to help one another.

Allison Howell Sure, sure. You have a really refreshing perspective, Cece. You're really a delight to speak with.

Cece Champion Thank you.

Allison Howell Yeah, no, I I really appreciate the the ways that you are very self-aware and that you are seeing sort of how to spend your intentions and what to focus on in order to live the way you want to live, even if not all the circumstances around you are exactly how you want them to be, it seems like you're really finding a lot of joy.

Cece Champion Thank you.



Allison Howell Yeah, yeah. And that's really special. Thank you so much for spending this time with me. I really loved getting to know you more.

Cece Champion Oh, thank you so much for having me.

Allison Howell Thank you, Cece! And thank you for listening to The Trunk Show brought to you by RW Elephant. I'm your host, Allison Howell. Happy renting!



RESOURCES:

[How Successful People Lead by John Maxwell](#)

[The Lend & Gather Conference](#)

The [RW Elephant mailing list](#) features more event industry resources and happenings—including announcements about new Trunk Show episodes!

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RW Elephant: Mighty inventory management software designed to help you conquer chaos and reclaim your creativity!

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AND OUR GUEST:

CeCe Champion of Little Celebrations

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