

## Agency for Change Podcast: Masami Sato, Founder and CEO, B1G1

Connect with Masami and B1G1 at:

- Website – <https://b1g1.com/>
- LinkedIn – <https://www.linkedin.com/in/masamisato/>

**Masami Sato:** 0:01

What if we could start making a real difference in the world by starting small?

**Announcer:** 0:10

Welcome to Agency for Change, a podcast from KidGlov that brings you the stories of changemakers who are actively working to improve our communities. In every episode, we'll meet with people who are making a lasting impact in the places we call home.

**Lyn Wineman:** 0:33

Hey everyone, this is Lyn Wineman, president and Chief Strategist of KidGlov. Welcome back to another episode of the Agency for Change podcast. Today's guest is living proof that small changes, when multiplied, can create a massive impact. Masami Soto, who we're talking to, is the founder of B1G1. It's a global giving movement that helps businesses embed purpose into their everyday operations. So she went from being a teacher to a farmer, to a food chef, to an entrepreneur, to an author, to a TEDx speaker, and now she's running B1G1. Masami truly brings a very unique perspective to doing good in the world, and she got started before the doing good in the world. Let's dive into her inspiring journey. Masami, welcome to the podcast.

**Masami Sato:** 1:35

Thank you, Lyn, for having me today.

**Lyn Wineman:** 1:38

I am so excited to hear about your work. I'd love to just start by having you tell us more about B1G1.

**Masami Sato:** 1:48

Well, b1g1 sounds a little odd sounding name, but let me just explain this in a very simple way. So if you imagine a world where everything businesses do makes a positive difference in the world.

**Masami Sato:** 2:08

It's the world we imagined in 2007. We imagined that, instead of trying to do big thing and try to change the world, what if every business could become a force for good in a tangible way? So if you imagine a coffee shop, you're going to coffee shop and have a cup of coffee and, as a result of it, if a child received

access to life-saving water which he or she didn't have. Or imagine if every time you read a book and you got inspired and you learned something great for you and, at the same time, a tree got planted or a child received education. So if you imagine the world where all kinds of businesses doing different things because they are passionate about different issues or different opportunities, if they could all become part of creating a better world. So that's the B1G1 initiative, and it used to be known as buy one, give one. That's why B1G1.

**Lyn Wineman:** 3:13

Got it. Buy one, give one. I like it.

**Masami Sato:** 3:17

But over the years we worked on creating the systems, the platform and also business community so that the businesses can join forces and become part of B1G1. And then, when they have access to their B1G1 account, then they can find many carefully selected, high-impact projects from around the world, broken down into micro acts of impact and kindness, and they can integrate that to their everyday regular business activities and the achievements that they have.

**Lyn Wineman:** 3:51

That's amazing. So, Masami, I understand the idea behind it. Can you talk a little bit more specifically about how it works? So let's say, KidG would join as a small business member. You know what would that look like, like and what would be involved in that?

**Masami Sato:** 4:09

Yeah, so, for example, Lyn, you were talking about this very special book you just published, right?

So imagine every book that somebody download or purchase from Amazon Web bookstore or if that can link to something meaningful and tangible. And we have an ability to create these links between business actions, transactions and activities with the selected, chosen impact. So you might choose like you resonate with woman's empowerment or human rights issues or environmental project, whatever that is. We have a project starting from just a few cents per impact and some impacts are, of course, more expensive because that's actually cost more to deliver those impacts. But depending on the business actions and activities, businesses can flexibly choose what they want to achieve.

And the B1G1 initiative when businesses have the membership account, then basically they can actually find those projects and make an impact and they can see the breakdown of their impact statistics or they can embed the live impact counter on their website or communicate the change that they are creating with their team or customers using different templates. So what happens is B1G1 is a membership, so businesses actually just subscribe to the platform and the membership. But then what happens is that helps us to fund the entire development of the platform and initiative. Also helps us to run the charity program, so charity organizations from around the world can apply for the program free of charge, and we also do not take any percentage or anything from the contributions businesses make, ensuring that all of the funding toward the impact gets passed on to the nominated causes, except just

minor direct bank charges. So that's how B121 model works. And then over the last 18 years, the small to medium-sized businesses we've worked with have together created 274 million impacts.

**Masami Sato:** 6:31

It's actually 374 million impacts.

**Lyn Wineman:** 6:41

Oh, 300, even bigger. I was impressed with 274. \$374 million in impact in 18 years.

**Masami Sato:** 6:44

Actually, it's not in terms of monetary value in millions of dollars, but it's the countable impact. So, for example, one tree given to be planted is counted as one impact. One day of education could be one impact.

**Lyn Wineman:** 7:01

Got it.

**Masami Sato:** 7:02

Yeah, 370 million acts of impact.

**Lyn Wineman:** 7:07

Yeah, okay, all right. 374 million acts of impact that's still pretty amazing, and I you think about the ripple effect of that too. Right, because once you positively impact someone or something, they then can impact others.

**Masami Sato:** 7:26

Yes. There are multi-dimensional impacts because you know, as you said, the life being uplifted with a small act of kindness, that person would end up doing more for others. But then another ripple impact is when businesses create their impacts and basically demonstrating what businesses actually can do rather than simply purely focused on, you know, making proceed and sales and profit for themselves. They are actually sharing this acts of generosity and, as a result of that ripple impact, more businesses actually get inspired. So that ripple works in multi-dimension.

**Lyn Wineman:** 8:05

I love it. So, thinking about ripple, you know, as I was reading about you, Masami, and your background, and watching your TED Talk in preparation for today, I have heard several times you talk about the power of small. Can you share with us, kind of, how is that a cornerstone of your work?

**Masami Sato:** 8:27

I think when we look around and look at the big challenges in the world, it's undeniable that we often feel too small to make much of a difference. And also when we focus so much on succeeding big time or making a lot of money before we could do something, we might never actually start taking actions. So the power of small is because when we break down the positive change we want to make into small unit of actionable item, then we actually can take action today and we don't need to wait for the big moment. But when we do it regularly, those small things can accumulate far more and over a long period of time, those small actions will create a more sustainable change than doing just one big thing one time.

**Lyn Wineman: 9:19**

Yeah, yeah, you know, Masami. I've talked to so many inspiring leaders on this podcast and that seems to be a recurring theme Don't wait until you're perfect, don't wait until you feel like you're completely ready, like there's something you can do today. And it makes me think of a famous tennis player, Arthur Ashe, has this quote that I had on my screensaver on my computer for a long time, but it was basically start where you are, use what you have, do what you can. And that feels so much like what you're doing at B1G1 as well - the power of small. I love that. Everyone can make a difference right now. So, 18 years, what inspired you to start this in 2007? I mean, this is a big undertaking and most people and you kind of seem like the kind of person that probably had plenty to do at the time.

**Masami Sato: 10:16**

Well, actually it started as me leaving Japan when I was young, so I was lucky to have a few years of traveling around the world as a young backpacker. I guess I was looking for a meaning or a reason for being, or, you know, like just a soul searching.

So anyway, and at that time I didn't even speak English and I was a small young woman- traveling alone and I didn't have a lot of money, but during that time, I experienced the most amazing kindness of people wherever I went, and also during that time when I started to really experience the magic of this world and the kindness that world actually demonstrated to me, I also started to see big challenges that I didn't really see in my own hometown, which was you know, like kids, young kids not going to school and working or begging on the street or sleeping on the street, or mothers not being able to even feed their children enough food, and those are the reality of so many people, which I didn't really realize until I actually started to go out of my own space and comfort zone.

So I wondered why we are all doing this. I saw my parents working so hard in the economic boom in Japan and they were making so much sacrifice to try to get more and we started to become eventually more, you know, well-to-do compared to when I was growing up as a young child. But having more didn't lead to fulfillment necessarily. We had less connection because they were just so busy and stressed right. So for me, seeing the people who seems to be more joyful and sharing, even though they had very little and then, but they were facing some more extraordinary challenges and I thought why is it that we are letting this reality take place when young children can't even get primary education or enough food to eat? So for me, when I became a mom, accidentally a few years later, I realized that I was just so lucky, even though we didn't have a lot in my own family, but I was willing to do everything I could for my own daughter and I at the same time thought that if everyone in the world said, oh, we are so small, we can't solve all these big challenges, so we're not going to do anything, then what happened to my daughter if she happened to be born in a different circumstance?

So that was when I was moved to start my own business and I started a food company because I was passionate about food. During the traveling time, like food was my way to communicate and connect with people.

So for me, like being in the food industry was a natural kind of like a progression. So I started the food company, worked very, very hard to try to grow my food business and I eventually, after years of struggle and hard work, our company started to develop and we started to have more retail businesses selling our wholesale frozen meal product. And at one point of time this thought came to me because I actually realized that five years into my entrepreneurship journey running this food business, I kept saying to myself one day, when we are more successful, one day we have more profit, we want to donate all the profit to build a soup kitchen, but then that goal wasn't coming closer to me, no matter how much harder we worked. Then, one day, this simple idea came to me and I thought you know what if, instead of trying to do big thing one day in the future, what if we did something small and did it every day?

**Lyn Wineman:** 14:18

That is so beautiful. I love that so much.

**Masami Sato:** 14:22

So at that time, for my food company it was to give a meal for every meal we sold. And when we did it through the experienced NGO, you know charity organizations that are providing midday meal free meal to kids in India, so the kids get encouraged to come to school to complete the education. So not only that they have a meal, but they actually complete the education. So I thought that was just so simple and the resonant idea that made the act of creating impacts and showing the kindness and also sharing that joy of giving with our customers as well as team members. I realized this profound power in this very, very simple idea and several months later I had another realization that, instead of doing this alone, just my company giving, what if we had a process and the systems to actually enable all kinds of businesses to do this in their own way. So that's when I decided to sell my own business that was back then in Australia and took 3 young kids to move to Singapore to start B1G1 as a social initiative to create this model of allowing businesses to join us.

**Lyn Wineman:** 15:52

I love it so much. I love that you applied an entrepreneurial spirit, an innovative idea towards doing good and I love to see that when people happen, I also have to mention so far, you've mentioned Japan, you've mentioned Australia, you've mentioned Singapore. I know I'm talking to you today. I'm in the Midwest, in the States, you're in London today. I mean, are you able to run B1G1 and impact the globe versus just one particular country or region?

**Masami Sato:** 16:30

We are everywhere actually, so the businesses that we work with in more than around 50 countries, and same as the project countries as well. We have a project more than 450 carefully selected projects in more than 50 countries today. But you know, today is just an amazing time, even though it's some of the most challenging times.

**Lyn Wineman:** 16:56

Yes, there are some challenging things happening, although I'm a believer, Masami, that there's always going to be challenging things happening. Right, we're humans. Somehow we just seem to manufacture challenging things.

**Masami Sato:** 17:08

So actually today we are seeing the greatest opportunity ever as well at the same time, because if we think about the available technology, if we think about the connectivity around the world, actually all the big problems that we think is too big to fix, actually it's not a problem like because we have the resources, we have the knowledge, experience, technology and the connection to solve these challenges, but what's perhaps sometimes missing is the way for us to actually come together in meaningful ways.

**Lyn Wineman:** 17:44

And you provide that then with B1G1, the vehicle that brings the businesses and the impact causes together. I love that so much, so you also mentioned, you mentioned your food business, you mentioned backpacking. I believe were you a teacher and a chef and an entrepreneur. How do all of those experiences come together to help you with B1G1?

**Masami Sato:** 18:12

So for me, everything went in the soul-searching order. I didn't have a clear plan starting out. You, when I left Japan for the first time and that's 30 years ago, so initial few years was just exploring the world and understanding how similar we were, how connected we were. You know how amazing humanity was around the world. And then the second part. Next part was when I, after I, saw all these challenges in the world, I had a very simplistic idea to go oh, actually, these problems are perhaps caused by businesses being too greedy and trying to maximize the profit and driving consumerism and making people buy more without actually feeling fulfilled. So that was kind of like my initial thought. And then I thought, oh, what if I could just stop buying things, so at least I don't create any harm.

**Lyn Wineman:** 19:08

I have thought that before and it's hard to do. It's hard to just stop buying things. I mean, that's one thing. Right now it's so easy to buy things. Sometimes you can buy things without even realizing you're buying things.

**Masami Sato:** 19:22

But then, interestingly so, when I had that thought and I thought, okay, I'm going to let go of possessions and go to countryside and find a way to become self-sufficient. So I became a farmer and lived among the farming community.

So then I spent two years in countryside of Japan, trying to create sustainable living through farming and making things and exchanging things, and at the end of that two years I learned so much from farmers in

Japan, what I discovered or what I realized was that I was wrong to judge what was happening in the world, and trying to do things to justify myself and not to do bad things, and as a result of it, I was saying something was actually bad, but when I accepted that actually the business activities can be very joyful and bring so much meaning and benefit to all of us, then I realized that perhaps that the businesses are like farming, that farmers nurtured their soil to have abundance year after year, and they worked with the environment, took care of the environment as they did what they did. Where in business world there is so much potential for us to cultivate this fertile ground by contributing to the ecosystem of business exchange, and the businesses can create more work opportunities, more potential, more prosperity and enjoyment to everybody's life. But in the recent years, because businesses became so good at extracting profit, so good business meant maximizing profit. But if all the businesses started to do that without actually thinking about the consequence of just extracting their profit without actually taking care of the soil, of course, we would start to see the sustainability challenges.

So that's where we are at today, but at the same time, we are facing some of the biggest opportunities because, when we can have more and more businesses finding ways to actually make a difference and contribute to the greater world through what they are doing, and if doing good became the ways that those businesses also get rewarded in terms of sense of mission or great team members they attract or customers who support their business, not just because they provide the cheapest price, but also that they actually care about this world and invite their customers and stakeholders to be part of that bigger mission. So if we create this kind of world where business for good becomes the rewarding system, we can drive so much financial resources, so much actions and so much positive innovation toward solving these bigger challenges and create a much more sustainable world where all of us can be rewarded much more meaningfully, including young generations, who may feel quite concerned right now about the future of this world, but they need to be brought into this conversation so that we can develop the new world of business.

**Lyn Wineman:** 22:49

I love your perspective. It is so filled with abundance and purpose and positivity and positivity. And I do think sometimes it's hard for me because I am an optimist, and when you are in a challenging time and you're around people who just see and observe the challenges, it's sometimes just it's hard to kind of get your mind in the right place. But creativity comes from a place of presence and abundance and gratitude and the seeing of positivity. So I really appreciate that about your viewpoint and what you're doing, Masami. And I guess one thing I'd love to know is what, what advice do you have for people and businesses who want to make a difference, but maybe they don't know how to get that small start going?

**Masami Sato:** 23:50

Well, I think first thing is that we don't need to worry about getting it perfectly right when we start. Because if we actually have an opportunity, think about the opportunities we have today, right? And initially it might start out like just being a little bit more caring, yeah, and supportive to the positive ideas or give kind words or smiles or express gratitude, because those kind of things will give us a little bit of uplift, go into the positive mindset about what, what more we could do, and. But then, once we get there, then opportunities will arise such as well, actually, in our business we are already doing these things. So what if we could incorporate something more positive into what we are doing every day? So it's really like starting small and not worry about the bigger perfection. But when we start taking that action, we will start to see more and more opportunities ahead of us.

**Lyn Wineman:** 24:52

I like that. I like that. So, Masami, what's on the horizon for B1G1?

**Masami Sato:** 24:56

So it's a very interesting time because when we started 18 years ago, actually there was no trend or no demand for business, for good social impact.

**Lyn Wineman:** 25:07

Right. It seems like that's come up in the last maybe four or five years since maybe the early pandemic. It kind of became very popular.

**Masami Sato:** 25:17

But I think what we can be mindful is sometimes like when bigger trend comes, you know, and then if we became about the trend that everybody's doing it, so you should do it because you know, without really understanding why, then there is sometimes like a negative effect that comes with that too. So what we could do now is really doing this in the human, genuine way, rather than it's a ESG or CSR or trending right. If we really reflect why we want to give, why we want to be kind, then it's a human spirit and essence of who we are. So why we started our businesses in the first place, like the people who are listening, and if you were actually business owners, I know that you started your business because there was something you cared about, not just because you wanted to make money.

**Lyn Wineman:** 26:14

No, almost every entrepreneur I know or talk to, they have some challenge they wanted to solve, some impact they wanted to make in the world or some passion they want to follow. It was not just about the money, because it's a lot of work.

**Masami Sato:** 26:30

When you actually turn, tap into and tune into that feeling of care and then start actually finding a way for you to make an impact that, like creating that one additional smile you know like or one little thing, actually add so much more.

And then also when you actually express like a feel that and express it in a genuine, more personal manner, then people actually resonate with those ideas better. But when you are kind of like coming from really the oh, we have to do this because it's ESG and how do we do it right and not do bad things because we don't want to be criticized. So if it comes from the head space, often it becomes too complicated and then often you might not act but then you might not resonate with what you are doing. But on the other hand, when you do it in a heart-centered way and then start with small things and be grateful, express gratitude, acknowledge people, customers, team and invite them to be part of it, be creative, have fun, and then imagine how that is leading to positive change on so many lives, then suddenly those little things will give so much value back into your business.

**Lyn Wineman:** 27:49

That's amazing. So, Masami, tell me this I know we have a lot of business owners and entrepreneurs that listen to the Agency for Change podcast. If they're listening and they want to check out the B1G1 model, they want to find out more information, look at what it takes to join. What's the best way for them to connect with you?

**Masami Sato:** 28:09

Yeah, so definitely, please visit [B1G1.com](http://B1G1.com). And also we now have this new thing to help business owners simulate the potential impact that they can have. If you are thinking like, oh, what if? And not sure how to get started where it's going, then here's a way to actually create this simulation of impacts and that could actually inspire you and how you can also articulate that and stuff like that. So I highly recommend that you try that out, which you can find on our website. And another thing you can do if you like this podcast and if you're happy to follow me on LinkedIn. I love sharing all sorts of different insight and newsletter on LinkedIn as well.

**Lyn Wineman:** 28:57

Masami, we will get the website and Masami's LinkedIn into the show notes on the KidGlov website, so you can link from there too. Now I do have to say, [B1G1.com](http://B1G1.com) is probably one of the easiest URLs to remember ever, and it's what I love about that, as your brand is, it's easy to understand, it's easy to communicate. Because I love branding. My passion as an entrepreneur is branding for purpose-driven organization. I love to hear how did you come about shaping that brand and what role does that play in building trust and connection with your organization?

**Masami Sato:** 29:42

That is a very interesting question because we had a lot of dilemma with our brand for a long time. Because initially, when we started, we used to call ourselves Buy One, Give One so that it was easy for people to remember. But then we actually stuck with the B1G1 as the branding, rather than Buy One, Give One. And the reason why was that when our members, the businesses, actually make a difference, it didn't always express in terms of buy one give one. People didn't need to buy something because they could download the eBook from a company or go on the newsletter and then create impacts too. So we wanted to like, keep a like, a healthy, reasonable distance from the idea of buy one give one. So when we shorten it or just to use the B1G1 in our logo and everything, we initially thought that that is a little bit difficult branding because people might not be able to say it or remember yeah, so now, like B1G1 is perfect on its own because it's short.

That one and one is actually messaging is there, and the people still remember the origin story of B1G1, you know which was buy one, give one. So we love it so much and we love the fact that our branding is really like conveying. If you look at the logo, the little dots that connect joined together, which means all the impacts and all the businesses and the web of connections, and then the amazing project that we actually work with everywhere around the world is expressed in that tiny little logo. Yeah, so it took a while for us to really like embrace branding.

**Lyn Wineman:** 31:25

I love it. I love the way you speak to the purpose about the brand, the purpose behind the brand, the story behind the brand and how it evolved. And you know, most of our listeners know KidGlov just released a book and it's an Amazon bestseller, I'm proud to say called Untangling Spaghetti: A Branding Fable. But the reason we called it Untangling Spaghetti is much like your story. We find that organizations with strong brands kind of have to untangle their process and what's best about them, right?

And so I'm glad you told that story. I didn't even know it.

This podcast is launching in the summer of 2025. And I say that because we have people who will listen to this podcast I'm guessing into 2026 and 2027. But what we want to do at KidGlov is take all of the proceeds from our Untangling Spaghetti, a Branding Fable book for the month of August 2025 and donate them back to B1G1 and your 501c3. So this is how we would like to make an impact with the book and with our work and support you, because we appreciate you coming here and telling your story.

**Masami Sato:** 32:44

Amazing thank you, and it's been such a lovely conversation. I enjoyed talking with you so much.

**Lyn Wineman:** 32:52

I hope it's just the beginning of our conversations, Masami, too, that you and I are gonna talk many times into the future. So I am gonna ask you my favorite question next, and I've asked it on every podcast. I am inspired by motivational quotes and I'm wondering if you could give us a Masami Sato original quote for our listeners.

**Masami Sato:** 33:21

Masami Sato original quote. Actually, I can quote by myself to say what if we could start making a real difference in the world by starting small? So that would be my original quote.

**Lyn Wineman:** 33:39

I love it.

**Masami Sato:** 33:40

Yeah, I also love quotes by people like Mahatma Gandhi, who said be the change. And that's just so simple, be the change.

**Lyn Wineman:** 33:51

Absolutely Well. You and Mahatma Gandhi are very inspirational people. I've so loved this conversation. One last question as we wrap up today what is the most important thing you would like our listeners to remember about the work that you're doing, Masami?

**Masami Sato:** 34:10

I think what will be the most powerful thing for us to remember is that we have limited time on this planet and no matter how much we have or don't have or do or don't, we do have a limited time available for us. So if we have this one amazing, beautiful life that we get to live, then we might as well do things that's most meaningful.

**Lyn Wineman:** 34:37

Oh, that's so good. That's so good. Masami, I fully believe the world needs more people like you, more enterprises like B1G1. And I'm so glad we had the opportunity to talk today.

**Masami Sato:** 34:52

Thank you. Thank you, it's been a pleasure and, for those of you who are listening, thank you so much for the time you invested in tuning in, because I hope that we can together spread the acts of positive generosity and kindness around the world.

**Lyn Wineman:** 35:08

That's so beautiful. Thank you so much, Masami.

**Announcer:** 35:13

We hope you enjoyed today's Agency for Change podcast. To hear all our interviews with those who are making a positive change in our communities or to nominate a changemaker you'd love to hear from. Visit [kidglov.com](http://kidglov.com) at [K-I-D-G-L-O-V.com](http://K-I-D-G-L-O-V.com) to get in touch, as always. If you like what you've heard today, be sure to rate, review, subscribe and share. Thanks for listening and we'll see you next time.