

One Question Changed This Entrepreneur's Life – Now She's Leading a Movement for Women in Music

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Heather Lowery was working as VP of Talent and Touring at Live Nation Urban when a single question altered the course of her life.

"I was doing a panel, and someone asked what I was doing to support women in live music – and I didn't have an answer," Lowery recalls. "That question haunted me for months."

Determined to make a difference, Lowery founded Femme It Forward, a female-led music and entertainment company focused on celebrating, educating and empowering women, while providing them with a platform to share their voices both on and off stage.

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Femme It Forward's debut was a "multi-format series" of all-female concerts and events, featuring A-list headliners like Brandy, Monica, Teyana Taylor and Cardi B.

"I quickly realized this was more than just a series," Lowery says. "It was the start of a movement."

Femme It Forward quickly evolved from a series to a full-fledged business, but everything changed when the pandemic hit. The nationwide lockdown spelled disaster for any live events company. But for Lowery, it was a blessing in disguise.

“Now I can do everything I’ve always wanted to but never had time for,” she says.

First on her agenda was joining the wildly popular Verzuz series, created by Timbaland and Swizz Beatz. Verzuz, a virtual showdown between major hip-hop artists, became a defining moment of early COVID-19 culture.

Lowery, a fan of the battles, noticed a glaring gap: “They weren’t doing any women’s battles.”

Determined to change that, she reached out to Swizz’s manager and eventually got on a call with the music mogul himself.

His response? “Show me what you got.”

Lowery quickly secured a Verzuz battle between Jill Scott and Erykah Badu. Soon after, fans were treated to iconic face-offs like Brandy vs. Monica and Keyshia Cole vs. Ashanti – some of the most-watched episodes of the series.

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Turn setbacks into springboards

While Verzuz was a success, Femme It Forward faced the challenge of a halted live programming industry. Adaptation became essential for survival.

“I was thinking, what can I do right now, when we can’t do live events?” Lowery shares.

She launched the Next Gem Femme Mentorship program, pairing industry leaders with aspiring talent focused on the business side of the music industry. Later, she introduced the MUSE mentorship program, supporting the creative community, from songwriters to producers to artists.

“I started Next Gem Femme because I wished I had a mentor when

I was coming up,” Lowery says. “As women rise in the industry, it’s important to lift up those following behind us.”

Femme It Forward is built on three core pillars: mentorship, education and empowerment. These values are reflected in initiatives like Next Gem Femme and MUSE, the Give Her FlowHERS awards gala, and the Femme It Forward Femmeland at Sea Cruise.

Image credit: Femme It Forward

As if that weren’t enough, FIF produces music albums, manages live events, and is dipping their toes into short-form documentaries and podcasts.

Despite the many initiatives, Lowery explains how each part of

Femme It Forward is interconnected, supporting one another to embody those core principles. The Give Her FlowHERS awards gala, for example, serves as a platform to showcase emerging artists like Doechii, connects women in the industry, and raises funds for initiatives like mentorship programs.

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Be the change you want to see

Femme It Forward's latest initiative, the Femmeland at Sea Cruise, is one of its most ambitious projects. Curated for women, the cruise offers live performances along with industry panels, wine tastings, and salon trips.

Though the scale might seem daunting, Lowery had a clear vision from the start.

"I knew what I wanted to see on the cruise already," she says, describing her process as inverted – starting with the final concept and working backward. "The easiest part for me is visualizing, strategizing, creating, and executing," she explains. "I often see it all before it exists, then work to bring that vision to life."

Lowery is still early in her journey with Femme It Forward, but the positive feedback from her community is overwhelming.

"Because I give so much and support women in so many ways, I'm now seeing that love return to me," she says. "It feels amazing."

Despite the early success, Lowery stays grounded, focusing on her ultimate goal: building a strong, supportive community for women in the music industry. "The best advice I give myself is an affirmation I repeat often," she shares. "Remember who you are and why you started."

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