

FINAL LOB EPS421 Sarah Trop

[Liz Theresa]

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I'm your host, Liz Teresa, and I help you launch, build online businesses you love. This podcast is all about entrepreneurship, and I hope you like it. Hey, everybody, and welcome to another episode of Liz on Biz.

Here with me today is Sarah Traup from Fun Cycled. Welcome to the show, Sarah.

[Sarah Trop]

Thank you, Liz. It's so exciting to be with you, another East Coast girl. So I know it took a little bit more.

[Liz Theresa]

Very East Coast-y around. I think many or most of our listeners are East Coast people. Like, I think we might have, let's see, I have clients all over.

So, like, I think I have people in funny places, but they might not know they're in funny places, but now they do.

[Sarah Trop]

I was on a podcast the other day and I didn't know where they were based. I mean, they were China. I was like, oh.

Oh, wow. I'm at all the night right now.

[Liz Theresa]

They're like, yeah. I was like, oh boy. I have a client in China and she, like, expats.

So they were in America. Actually, I haven't heard from them in a while. But then they, like, moved to China.

But they're like, they talk about money stuff. So they give, like, money advice. Oh, that's cool.

But I don't know if they have a show. Actually, maybe I don't know them very well. But they, they have, they have a website in fact.

Oh, okay. It may have a show component.

[Sarah Trop]

I feel like they used to. Anytime someone comes to mind, it's like a good natural way to be like, thinking of you. Oh, yeah.

It's life in China.

[Liz Theresa]

You know, right? That's kind of, maybe I'll be like, you know, whenever I talk about people, they always reach out. So yeah, like, we'll hear from them.

Yeah. Like, I'm big on, like, invoking people. Like, because I could be like, oh, remember so-and-so.

And then, like, it will be years. And then I'll just see them at Macy's. But see, I don't go to the store anymore.

So that doesn't happen.

[Sarah Trop]

How are we going to see people if we never go out?

[Liz Theresa]

Do you go? I don't, I don't go. I could barely, I dropped my son off at camp today to take the bus to go to the Museum of Science in Boston, which is very fun.

Oh, fun. Yeah. And then I'm like, but I was like, God, I could stop for Dunkin'.

And I was like, I don't want to. I just don't want to do anything. Like, I just was, I think I'm no fun.

And like, people make me fun. Like, people, like, invite me to go out and then I go. But like, I think

I'm turning into, like, a Scrooge.

[Sarah Trop]

Well, it's funny you say that. A good friend of mine the other day, she had met one of our mutual friends. And I was like, oh, I feel like you two would get along well.

And she goes, no, I really need you. And I was like, what does that mean? She goes, I'm an introvert.

I can't be friends with introverts. I would just stay in my shell all the time. I need extroverts to pull me out and make me go out.

I'm like, that's fair. I'm always like, where's the next thing? What are we doing?

How are we going there?

[Liz Theresa]

So I seem very nice. Like, right? Like, I'm all like, and I am, right?

And I have, but, but I'm also, I'm a extroverted introvert. So like, I'm very extroverted. Like when I meet you and I'm like, oh, I want to know everything about you.

And that's truly what I'm like. But like the idea of going to go meet somebody is awful. Like, I don't like, I also hate traveling and I'm a Sagittarius.

And this is interesting because every meme about Sagittarius or Sagittarii, all the Sagittariuses, right? It's always like, oh, Sagittarius loves to travel. So every like joke about Sagittarius is like how you like to travel.

I've seen a lot. I have, I'm very well traveled. So it's, it's a good description of me.

But do I love that? Just so-so? What do you mean?

Great. Like, I love a vacation, but I mean, I don't love the going on vacation.

[Sarah Trop]

Okay. I do. I love all the things.

You like packing? You love to juggle in on the plane. And you love the plane?

Yeah. See, I get sick. I'm no fun.

I have like the hoodie that has the built-in.

[Liz Theresa]

Oh, that's very- Eye cover. I just snuggle in. I don't need to wear that.

I get too hot because of the nausea. So I don't wear all that. But I do take, now I've been taking drugs on the plane.

I do so much better.

[Sarah Trop]

Don't do drugs, kids.

[Liz Theresa]

No, I'm just kidding. No, I won't. But like be properly medicated by your doctor if you're very bad at air travel.

Like, cause I, I do so much better if they give me something because of this. I get so sick. Well, I feel like saying it.

You both- Introvert. You said you were on a jet ski deal. Like you have like this big life, like with jet skis and you splash around.

You have a big like exciting- I splash around, yeah. You're more adventurous and I love that. But it's like, I've never, I've never done that.

I mean, I do do a lot of things. It's true.

[Sarah Trop]

If you jet ski, is that where you're, do you drive it? Girl, I'm not riding a jet ski. I'm driving that thing.

And I'm trying to get it to full throttle, which these, because it was like a rental, they would only go 47 as the fastest. What's, what's a nor, what's a normal jet ski? Does it go- I mean, I've gone as fast as 65 on a jet ski.

Yeah, but that was a private owned. I'm not sure that's even allowed. I don't know what the speed limit is.

[Liz Theresa]

I have no idea. I don't know jet ski laws. I know that when you have a boat, you need a driver's license to drive a boat.

[Sarah Trop]

I know that in Massachusetts. Same with jet skis here. But when you're with a guided tour, you don't have to.

Oh, interesting.

[Liz Theresa]

But I don't, cause I don't have a boat license and- Oh no, but you need a driver's license to do a boat license. So that's all I meant, but you don't, I don't know if you need a, I don't know if you need a boat license to jet ski. Well, I know in New York, do you?

You do? You know, you know, what's funny, the blizzard of 78, jet skis make me think of snowmobiles. So I'm telling you this, but oh, instead of 78, my dad snowmobiled around to get things.

Like, like you would snowmobile, like, cause they talk, that's what everybody talks about that's older here is, oh, the blizzard of 78, which is like old people's stuff. But like they used to, like, cause there were no roads. So my dad would take his, his snowmobile to go to the grocery store.

That's crazy. I know. Isn't that crazy?

Yeah.

[Sarah Trop]

I mean, it's like we're Alaska, but we're not. But I have a term for what I think people should call introverts that are outgoing. I think it should be outgoing introverts, not extroverts, because they're not extroverts.

They get trained by humans. Outgoing. I'm an outgoing introvert.

Yeah. Some of all, just about all my closest friends are outgoing introverts. Like they can present and have a great conversation and be involved.

Yeah. Have a fun time. But they're also like, I need to go home and now.

[Liz Theresa]

Yeah. And then you go to, then you go home and then you're just like, like my favorite place in the world is on the couch with my dog and my baby. Who's now seven.

Who's not a baby, but he's still sweet. But I'm like, as long as I just have my people. Right.

That's like my favorite place in the world. But like, I, but see, I'm also very ambitious. Like you're

adventurous, but like, I'm ambitious.

But see, we're going to get to business. Right. But like in my business.

Wow. Here goes our jet ski. I love it.

They probably don't make that sound, but something like that. I don't know why they're trying to make it now, but. Serena jet ski.

[Sarah Trop]

Sounded full. Like, I don't know. Although my husband slipped his jet ski with my daughter on it.

They went, oh my gosh, she bashed her face open. I'm like. She okay?

Yeah. I mean, thankfully. Yeah.

One of the other couples on the ride was, one was a doctor. And so she like right away was there. She was the first one to her.

So I'm like, oh my gosh. But yeah.

[Liz Theresa]

Do you have to get stitches for something like that? Like if you hurt your head. It was mostly by her lip.

[Sarah Trop]

Yeah. You can't really stitch the lip easily. I don't know.

Is that just, I don't know. But yeah. Is that probably.

Adventure. I love this year alone. I've been to Bahamas on a cruise.

I've been to all throughout. Love the Bahamas. London.

Me too. Wow. Bahamas.

I had a weird experience in Bahamas.

[Liz Theresa]

Well, it can be a little, I mean, it can. So I went to, we went for my husband who did poker. And all these at the Atlantis, which is very.

Oh, I've heard that's beautiful. And that was cool. But like, we did have some experiences that

were less than desirable.

[Sarah Trop]

Yeah. We went on a cruise and then did like an excursion and excursion was so weird. I was like, come to this chocolate factory.

And it was literally just like this really broken down kitchen. And it was just so, it was so many people. And I was like, why did we do this?

What are we doing? How did that happen? I don't know.

And then there's like signs everywhere. People want you to swim with the pigs. Like, I don't even want to.

I want to swim with a pig. I don't even want to swim with toddlers. They poop and pee in the water.

[Liz Theresa]

And like, man, I swim with a dolphin.

[Sarah Trop]

How did you get on? You're on like the dark side of the Bahamas. Yeah.

Everywhere you walk, there's signs. Some of the pigs come this way. I'm like, doesn't draw me in.

[Liz Theresa]

I don't know. Although I've seen some like when my dog gets really dirty, I always am like, I've seen cleaner pigs. It's like she's kind of piggy because she's a bulldog.

So she's always like, oh, I love bulldog. She's funny. I wish I pointed at her, but like the camera will not show her because of my fancy background.

But if you just like hold her up, she's too heavy. She's 55 pounds and she's asleep. So I hate to move her.

But you know what? Off. So off recording for the benefit of not no one else, but you, I will show you Elyse.

Her name is Elyse. We call her. She is a woman of many names or a dog woman of many names.

We call her at least the beast, at least the police. We simply says a good ring to it. I love at least

the police, at least the feast, at least, at least the tribal beef.

[Sarah Trop]

She's a lot of names. I'm sorry. She's not waking up with all these names sayings.

She's used to my nonsense.

[Liz Theresa]

She's like, she, I think we give anything like, you know, her ears haven't even pointed up. No, she's not.

[Sarah Trop]

She's not interested. Right. I mean, she's tired at 9 20 in the morning.

She's really got a nap.

[Liz Theresa]

Just she didn't even get up until we started talking. She was still asleep. And I had already put her food out.

She's just, she gives no, she's nothing. She's a lot. What?

No, at fun cycled. Aside from jet skiing. That's right.

So like you have this beautiful business. Tell, tell everybody a little bit about fun cycled. Because aside from the name being awesome, what do you guys, what do you do?

[Sarah Trop]

So do you want from the beginning or what we do right now? Because I don't actually give me a big pile of information. Yeah.

Okay. So in 2012, I was working in the IT industry, actually, and for a computer training company. And I had had kids.

They were two, almost two and three. And I really just felt like I want to be with them more. And so I thought I would start my own company.

And I started fun cycled and I named it that because I want to have fun upcycling. And I did furniture repurposing. So I really would just grab things for free or next to free on the side of the road, on Facebook marketplace.

Well, actually it's Craigslist back then. But those were the days. Those are the days.

Yeah. Is anybody still there? I don't know.

I think some people are there probably. Yeah. Yeah.

I think some are. Yeah. And then I would redo things, share about it on my blog, like how I redid it.

And then I would sell it. So then people started seeing it and saying, hey, can you do pieces for us? Redo what we already have.

And then I ended up having about a six month wait for me by April. So January 1st, I officially started the company. By April, I was making the same as my job.

So I quit my job. And then by the next July, I had a six month wait for all the projects. So I decided, well, I didn't decide.

My husband wanted to join us, join me full time. And that was scary. But we said, yeah, I said yes to that.

And then we expanded into kitchen cabinet painting as well and custom built furniture. So he'd build like barn doors and tables and things like that. Coffee tables.

So he's like you, so he knows how to do stuff. Yeah, he did a lot of, yeah, his background is culinary. But he did a lot of, yeah, construction through college to pay for his college.

And so he's very handy and he's grown so much since we started. I mean, now he's amazing. But basically, right after that, right after he joined us, we were on HGTV Flea Market Flip.

And then we won that show and we took the money because we do not come from money at all, either one of us. We had hardly anything in savings when we started the company. I don't even know if we had anything in savings.

If anything, it was like under probably a thousand dollars. Like we had, we were paycheck to paycheck kind of people. And then we won that show and we won it, which I didn't think about before going on it.

You can't lose when it's your livelihood. Like if you're just going with your bestie and having fun. I felt like so much pressure on this all day.

I was like, I have to win. I can't look like I lost this when it's my profession. And my brother called me on my way to New York City for the Saturday of Flea Market Flip.

And he was like, listen, you're just going to tell the stories. You're a storyteller and the stories will tell themselves. So talk about the pieces, the history of why you wanted to reuse them.

And it worked. And so we took that money and got a storefront because when it airs is about a year after it's recorded. So we had time to like get a storefront, get it loaded up.

And then all the publicity could go to kind of that brick and mortar versus just being wasted is what we thought. And as people came into that store, they would say, oh, I love your design style. Why don't you do interior design for us?

And I always said no. And we'd be delivering furniture. And as we're delivering like a hutch, people would say, Sarah, what color should I paint that wall that the hutch is going on?

Or how should I? I would answer, but then they'd want me to be their designer. I'd say no.

And then finally, one lady named Ann Dillon came in and said, why do you keep saying no to me? I've been asking you to be my designer. I want you to design my home.

And I said, as long as you know I have no background, I'll do it. And the first time I went to a design consultant for her house, I said, why would you pick me when there's people who, you know, do this full time and yeah, have their degree in it, you know? And she said, I think most of them will rip out and put everything new in.

And you respect the history of things and repurpose what you can. And I care a lot about that. And so I said, oh, that is kind of what sets me apart.

I think in a world of design, it's not like you have to gut a whole kitchen. You can repurpose some of the cabinets. So you can paint things versus pull everything out.

And as the years have gone by, we've flipped multiple houses that we've lived in and that we haven't lived in. So I've learned a lot along the way as far as, you know, the process of working with contractors and the process of getting quotes and getting them to be accurate and all of those things. So now when people ask what I do, I'm like, well, that's how we started.

But I primarily do design right now, commercial and residential. I'm leading a huge renovation of a convention center, a \$55 million project right now. And I have multiple residencies happening.

And then we also have an arm of the company where we do kitchen cabinet painting and furniture still. Do you still have the store? Through COVID we shut it down.

We actually bought a commercial building the week that COVID went close down the world. We took the summer to redo the whole building. And we had our store there for a couple of years.

But the market was just so good that we decided most everything is going through our design now anyway. And I was always just meeting clients at their home. I'm like, I don't really need it.

[Liz Theresa]

You're not there to be at the store to do store stuff.

[Sarah Trop]

Right, right.

[Liz Theresa]

So when you kept saying no, were you saying no because you were like, oh, I'm not really an interior designer. So like you can be like, no, I don't do that. No, I don't do that.

But like, did you have this small little voice that was like, but it might be fun.

[Sarah Trop]

Like, you're like, well, how did you like, which is good, but yeah, I would love to because I love designing my house. I love designing my storefront. I loved helping friends.

But there's always that imposter syndrome. And that even creeps in now doing it over a decade later, where, you know, sometimes it's helpful to go around other professionals because last year I really focused on getting to different interior design conferences for the first time ever. And I was like, oh no, I actually, I'm really good at what I do.

Because I can talk to all of these people in a way that is at the same level, you know, and I would look at their work. And I'm like, yeah, I would say our work is similar. So it was very encouraging to go to those design conferences.

And we each have strengths, like they might have more strength in procurement and I might have more with technology. And, you know, so I felt like in the conference world, we really complemented each other. And I love conferences for that.

It doesn't feel competitive. It feels collaborative. And so I just, that's great.

[Liz Theresa]

So you probably made friends with other interior designers. And then some of you too were like, I mean, I don't know. I feel like, because I have clients that are in interior design.

So I'm like speaking from what I've observed in them. But like, they also, there's like interior design, like Boston networking. And then like, they all like have a group chat.

There's like, oh, really chat. Yeah. Like they're like, like a lot of them are friends with each other, but they're all very, and I think it's also like, cause their visions are so different.

Like their styles are very different. Like among my clients, their styles are very different.

[Sarah Trop]

Yeah. I would say definitely styles are different. And also personalities are different.

And when it comes to design, like I was talking to, there's a building that's going up near us. That's going to be all new senior living. And they wanted me to be the designer to help the seniors pick out their units, figure out what can work from their old house into the new.

Oh, that's really nice. Yeah. And they, and they, I said, hey, listen, are you bringing other designers into this?

And they're like, I don't know. We're not sure yet. And I said, look, it's no offense to me because some people's personalities will align with mine and love working with me.

And some will want a more direct personality or more like, you know, just very different. I think there's beauty in differences with personalities. And so I think there's more room at the table than I think scarcity mindset wants us to believe.

[Liz Theresa]

Well, and I mean, did you feel like the second that you decided, oh, I'm going to do this now? Did the doors really open? Because you had already kind of created a following through the flipping, you know?

And then, you know, after doing that, people were probably like, oh my God, I want to do that.

[Sarah Trop]

Well, no, it wasn't fast for me because I didn't really talk about the fact that I did it. Because of that imposter syndrome, you know, I just kind of did it and then I did one and then I did another, like I would do, the word would spread, but I wasn't promoting on social media that I did it or talking about it much at all. I don't think we really heavily pushed design, even from a social media standpoint, until maybe three years ago.

Yeah, two and a half to three years ago. And since then, yeah, I mean, it's been a heavy focus. I've been on like 40 podcasts and all sorts of magazines like Martha Stewart Living and House.

Yeah, yeah. So now it's kind of really, the momentum is there out loud. I wouldn't say it was out loud before that.

[Liz Theresa]

Oh man, that's such a good euphemism to describe the way that we think about our own talents. Like, are you having it out loud or are you like keeping it to yourself, you know? Yeah.

I feel like we're all, everybody has this thing that, I mean, I even feel like what's weird for me. So I work with clients and I help them, like I help clients with visibility. So I'll like, I write like social media posts and like I do designs and I do like flyers and brochures and websites, of course, and all of that stuff.

And like, what's weird is that I spend so much less time on my visibility stuff. Like we have the show and thank goodness because it forces me to be here doing that. But if I didn't have that, it's like I would be more glib about it and like less loud, less out loud.

[Sarah Trop]

And I have a question for you about this then. What do you normally tell people as far as like posts? Because I'm in a, I typically do two posts a day, one on stories, one on the main social media platform, on Instagram, Facebook, whatever.

But I'm in this cohort for designers and they just recently said, really, you don't need that. Like maybe two to three posts a week. Oh, that is where I'm- Are you on that camp?

[Liz Theresa]

Yeah, I'm in that camp. I'm like, can I have that off? Because I'm like quality weight, quality over quantity every time.

Except I would say with stories, if you're enjoying like documenting things and doing story, yeah. So like, I'm like, if you enjoy stories, I would say you could do stories all the time. But like for the feed, like, cause like if you post something once, it really lasts, they have a longer lifespan than they used to now.

Like things that like you post to your main grid, they live a little bit longer. So then if they live longer, I'm like a few times a week, you know? Because it's sliced thrice.

[Sarah Trop]

And their thought was like, it's more of a portfolio than it is of a concept. It's going to show up all the time for people. It's more like, if someone hears about you, they're going to pop on there and see your work.

So you don't need to oversaturate it.

[Liz Theresa]

Yeah, that's definitely part of it. Is that, but yeah, I just think it's that they live, they last so much longer. Okay.

That makes sense. You say something. I know.

See, it's like, look, you made me look smart. That's so nice. You are smart.

You know, I can tell. I love when people ask good questions. No, and so I'm thinking about like how your business has grown, right?

So you hired your husband, which is really, that's really cool. At what point did you guys, was it kind of when you skewed into design? Was that when you started hiring people to help more?

Because you must have a team now that does the kitchen and the cabinets and the execution of the projects, maybe even with you.

[Sarah Trop]

Yeah, it's morphed a lot over the years. So what forced me into hiring was actually getting the storefront. Because if you're an extrovert, you cannot own a storefront and work in it.

That's just like, because you won't get no work done. So I was like, friends would pop by or customers who became friends. And I love them.

And I want to just, like, I don't want to work. I want to just be like, how are the kids? How's everything?

Where's your heart? Tell me more, you know? Yeah.

And so I said to my husband, I cannot run this store. Like, I just can't do it anymore. Because I'm working every night and this is why I started a business to never see the kids because all I'm doing is working.

[Liz Theresa]

Because you're not working at the store, you're working at night because everybody at the store distracted you the entire day. Exactly.

[Sarah Trop]

It was such a pain. But that was such a cool story because I literally was just shopping at Hobby Lobby. Do you have Hobby Lobby's out there?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And I befriended this lady who was a cashier just from saying hi every time that I went through, right? And for probably a year, we would say, oh, we should get together.

We should get together. And one of the days I had stopped by, she said, why don't we just get a coffee on the schedule? We keep saying we're going to get together.

And I was like, let's do it. So we'll put a lunch on the schedule with her. And that morning, I wasn't

thinking about her at all for a job.

That morning, I said to my husband, I need to hire a store manager. I go to lunch with her, we're chatting. And it just had this overwhelming, like, you need to hire her to run your store.

But I didn't say anything because I don't, I actually don't love change or risk, even though everyone thinks I do because I force myself into that. I basically waited weeks and I talked to everyone I respect in business. And they all said the same thing, like, put it out there.

This is gross. It feels scary, but you got to do it. And one friend was like, stop thinking about it.

She could still say no. Like, I don't know why you're wasting so much energy on the thought. Just do it.

And I think there's a good point in that. And I could expound onto that and how it's affected my life and so many of her ways by not overthinking anymore, moving ahead and letting God work out the details. But basically, I texted her.

I said, hey, Pam, would you want to run my retail store instead of working at Hobby Lobby? And she texted me right away and said, I'll take the job. And I said, well, do you want to know how much it pays?

She's like, oh, we can talk about that. When do you want to meet? We go to meet.

My car breaks down. Like, this is such a small business or anything. I can't even meet her.

She has to come to my house to meet, have a meeting there. She pulls in with a red BMW convertible. I'm like, I will never be able to afford this girl.

Like, I can barely afford to fix my car. And she comes in and she goes, whatever, I just want to rest your mind. Like right now, whatever the pay is, whatever the job is, when I was with you, I went home to my husband, he said, how was lunch?

And he goes, she's like, I just know God wants me to work for that girl. So if she offers me a job, I'm supposed to say yes. Whatever it is.

Literally, I paid her less than Hobby Lobby because that's what I could do. And gave her the hour. She worked for me for seven years and was just the reason why I could do Fun Cycled.

She was just such a gift in my life. Oh, so what happened? Did you move on?

Yeah, she had five kids. All of her kids graduated. And then she wanted like, you know, a more executive kind of job.

Part-time, you know, fun job. This was more of a creative, fun experience.

[Liz Theresa]

That's cool. What an amazing thing. I mean, like to be the kind of person that makes friends with a cashier, though, that says so much about you, like in a lovely way.

Like, that's really cool.

[Sarah Trop]

She's so sweet too, though. I mean, it's the two of us. Yeah.

[Liz Theresa]

So let me ask you that. So that was your first big hire, though. That was like your first bold move.

[Sarah Trop]

Yeah. And then we had to obviously get people on the build side. But now I'm actually shifting a bit.

I have a full-time assistant. That was another scary hire. My first full-timer because Pam was part-time.

And she's next level game changer. She's strong in all the ways I'm weak. I would say it took us a year and a half to get a good groove because we're so opposite.

And we did a lot of coaching with a business coach for me to understand how she thinks and her to understand how I think. And so, well, not a lot, but a few sessions with one. Yeah, yeah.

And that was super helpful. Game changer. I recommend to businesses, if you are going to have somebody you're basically seeing more than your spouse, spend some time on business coaching to understand each other or doing personality tests and things like that.

[Liz Theresa]

Yeah, that's what get important. Well, rather than, because I don't think, I mean, I see a lot of people will hire people and they turn and burn a lot of people because they'll be like, they don't get me. They're dead to me.

And I'm just like, couldn't it be that you could try to work on it?

[Sarah Trop]

You know, like my last job, my spouse was very much like that. If somebody left, she was like, they're dead to her. Yeah.

Like even me, I worked for her nine years. Yeah. And I never talked to her after I left.

And I like picked her kids up from school and like was there and I vowed, like hard things can teach you lessons. That's what I tell my kids all the time. Like, if you have a bad experience with someone, just learn what you don't want to do to someone based on that.

That's the only thing you can like pull from it. And so I was like, I refuse to have it be if someone leaves my company that there's bad blood. Like if I get the sense that somebody is not happy, I go right to them and say, hey, if you're not loving this position, maybe there's a different position or maybe you need to go elsewhere and I'll help you find that.

Like, there's no reason to work here. This is America. You can work anywhere you want, do whatever you want and I'll help you.

So I try to make it so every person who's worked leaves in a way that we could still have grab coffee and it's not weird, you know?

[Liz Theresa]

Yeah. And then, cause you want, I don't know, you want the best for people and you're right. It's like, why work and be miserable?

And I mean, it's easier for us cause we made this up, but sometimes there are business owners that get kind of miserable. And I'm like, you made it up. Like you decided that.

What are you doing? Right. Yes.

Change, change or change it.

[Sarah Trop]

I mean, you work with a lot of business owners too, but what I see at least in my little sphere of business owners is, it's this constant inner work of remembering why or realizing a new why. Like maybe the reason why I started it isn't the reason anymore. Like my kids are almost grown.

One's going to college and it's about to go to college. And so they don't leave me around as much. Like they're definitely like working in full lives and that's great.

I want that. I wanted to raise leaders, right? But understanding what our why is and fighting for it because I do see a trap of like not designers, but business owners basically getting miserable because they're like betraying themselves.

And then the core reason of why they decided to do this and it's discipline. It is a disciplined thing, but you're happier in the end when you say no. Like I'm constantly going, I didn't start this to not see the kids.

So if the kids are free to say no to that consult, even if it loses me \$400, you know what I mean? And, but I'm not money driven. I'm people driven.

So I know I'm wired a little different, but no, I feel that way.

[Liz Theresa]

Well, I mean, I, well, my son's little, right? And so I'm, I'm always trying, but I'm also the breadwinner, but it's, so it's tricky. So I'm always trying to intentionally be like, if he wants me and is here and he really wants to play with me, I will stop.

I will often stop what I'm doing because otherwise what is the point of having a flexible arrangement if I'm constantly like, no work is important, you know, just because I love work, I'm competitive in what I do. Like I get really, like I was talking to my bookkeeper the other day and she does that CFO stuff where they tell you like, yeah, oh, you're, you know how you're doing and da, da, da, da, da. She was saying some stuff and she's like, oh, have you ever had a budget like before this?

And I was like, no. And she's like, so wait, like, she's like, you do so well. And I was like, I just like winning.

Like, I was like, I love sales. I consider it like, yeah, I love that moment. I love, I love relationships.

I love all of that. And I was like, I just like knowing I do, like knowing I can do this and I do it every month, but like, I don't like have benchmarks or KPIs. Like I don't do that.

And, and then some people think that's crazy because some people like live and die by those things, but I'm a much more intuitive, people-y personality.

[Sarah Trop]

Do you find though that it's hard? I used to be a budgeter and then I got a business. I'm like, it's almost impossible.

Like, you just don't know. It's feasting your appetite. You don't know.

You're guessing. Yeah, it's literally like, I, I mean, I pull out taxes every month and I like, I do all of those types of things. Oh, you do, really?

Do you do that or do you have people that do that? Because I don't do that. Well, I do bookkeepers who balance everything.

And then I just pull the report. Well, they pull what you didn't actually. I just do the transfer because I want my hands on the actual bank account because I've seen that go wrong for people.

So they're just so unaware of their finance. Like I have a friend right now who is in an industry, not, not local, but in, she's an architect and they hired someone to do it. It was so bad.

They didn't even have enough for payroll. And they didn't, oh, she just didn't tell him how things were going or. Yeah.

She just kept using a line of credit or whatever to pay the bills and to pay the payroll until everything was maxed. And then she quit. And then they went in to look at everything and they're like, we are screwed.

Like the owner had to pull out of her personal savings because they could. And I was like, this is why I always think an owner has to have some hands. Oh, I have some.

In the financial. And that, yeah, yeah.

[Liz Theresa]

No, that's a really good point. That's like a nightmare though. But I have enough because I know, like, I take my own draws.

I do things like I take an owner draw and I at least know. Yeah, me too. And like, yeah, yeah.

Yeah. And so I do that stuff. But I, yeah, no, that was, that's like my nightmare.

But she's, she's also, because she's like a bookkeeper, CFO person, I think that's why she checks in with me so much. Yeah. So she tells me when I'm not even thinking about stuff, like how things are going.

Cause I'll be like, I'm in the middle of a project. And then she'll like, tell me how things are going. And I'm like, oh, that's good.

Thank you. Yeah. I am glad.

She told me I am the second healthiest cashflow business that she has as a client. And I was like, oh, that's so nice. Yeah.

Yeah. My bookkeeper when she's, oh, go ahead.

[Sarah Trop]

No, no, no, no. You go, you go. Oh, my bookkeeper.

When she started, uh, back in December, I think. Yeah. My current bookkeeper started.

She was so good. Cause I always beat myself up. I'm like, maybe I don't have this done right.

She's like, you're one of the most, or you probably are the most organized in the construction world that I've ever seen. I was like, oh, I feel so much better. Cause I'm always like, there's so much to track.

There's so much to do.

[Liz Theresa]

There is so much, but you sound like you are, but see, I'm more on top of things that I give myself credit for. I think too.

[Sarah Trop]

I would relate to that for sure.

[Liz Theresa]

But I, it's, it's cause it's become like unconscious. Like, I'm just like, I'm aware of how we're doing kind of all the time. Kind of.

And sometimes if I think like we're doing really bad, sometimes I log in and I'm like, oh, we're actually doing really well. And I just worry. So I just worry a lot still because, you know, I don't know.

You always have to have a little bit of worry. Maybe I, yeah. Something to fire the hustle, you know, keep me like going and be like, no, we got to eat.

We got to eat. But then eventually like, you don't want to, you can't take on too many projects. Although I, what's weird is like, we've had, I've had a problem this year more than ever.

We're like, we'll do, we'll take on these clients. And then I've had two clients just like ghost. Like I did their whole project.

They were nice. Everything was fine. And then they just don't go live.

They just like ghost and they don't answer. Yeah. And I was like, you spent thousands of dollars.

Like we got all the way here. It's weird. It's happened twice this year.

And I'm like, that's something that used to happen like once in a blue moon as I progressed. But yeah, I'm like, I don't know if like, maybe I attracted some people that were only halfway into it. Right.

One time I launched somebody's business or like it was time to go live. And then she was like, no, I don't want to, I don't want to be a health coach anymore. And I was like, oh, she was like,

no, I'm just going to be a mom.

I want to have kids and not do any of this. And I was like, oh, wow. Way different.

I think I was like, you had like a freebie, a funnel, beautiful website, just gone. We had a really interesting lady. She had like a, she was like, I think she was like, she thinks she worked in government and she had like a big job and she like wanted to have a, like a coaching business on the side or something.

And so her website was also one of the most beautiful websites we've, we had designed at that point. Like I loved this. It was really gorgeous website.

Her name was Alex or Alexis or something. I don't even remember her name. Something like Alex.

And then like, like she, like she paid so much money. She got extra coaching with me. Like we did all this work.

And then she truly, like she truly disappeared off the planet. And I was like, and I messaged her. I finally found her on like LinkedIn one day.

And I was like, are you okay? Like you're alive, right? Like no response.

Wow. I'm just like, that's so weird.

[Sarah Trop]

Did she have like profile activity? Yeah. Is she alive?

Think so. Okay. No, I'm not sure.

I mean, sometimes I find like when there's ghosting, like they either, you know, it's a financial thing or a light change thing. I had that happen where a customer was ghosting me over the last like month. The job came out great.

Like we redesigned and remodeled this kitchen. It was beautiful. And there's a competition for design and I wanted to photograph it to submit it.

That's how much I liked it. Yeah. And we asked her to come back for photographs.

She did not respond. And she was so great the whole time I worked with her. So I was like, that's so weird.

That's weird. Finally reached out and said, Hey, I'm just trying to like understand it. Here's what I do.

Something wrong. Like, yeah. And scathing email back.

And it was because, and I don't even know this because I hired a social media person. So I'm not even doing a lot of the social media. Like I try to see it, but I can't do everything.

You know, I'm hanging with clients all day and whatever. And she did a before and after video of her kitchen. And the before was messy.

And she, the client was so embarrassed, so mortified that we're so unprofessional. I didn't even notice that. Like, to me, I'm like, I don't know.

I'm not seeing every social media. I don't even approve it. So my assistant, you know, so she said we can never photograph it.

We were so unprofessional because we posted before. Wow. Interesting.

She was like embarrassed. Yeah. She was so embarrassed.

So I just apologized, owned it and I can't use it. But it was like such a bummer because I didn't even pick it. You know, I didn't, I didn't even know that was being used.

And it was just one of these like... That's one of those things that you'll be hyper aware of now. Exactly.

Totally.

[Liz Theresa]

Do you have before's? Because I'm like, well, are they okay with that? Like, and they would be really weird about it.

[Sarah Trop]

And half the time, the before's are just like me at their house grabbing them because I need them for as I'm designing. It's not really like...

[Liz Theresa]

It's not as thoughtful like we're going to use before. Yeah.

[Sarah Trop]

But the social media person had a link to their folder so they could see.

[Liz Theresa]

Oh, so they were like, oh, what a good idea. Like we should... Oh my gosh.

And that's so innocent. So I get that.

[Sarah Trop]

And normally I'm hyper aware. Like the week before we had a blog post and a before and after. And I said, just clean up the befores, like use AI to pull the clutter out of the befores.

Because that was on your mind. And then the week before. And a different one.

And I made him change it. It was just, I didn't notice that one.

[Liz Theresa]

So like... It's almost like my universe was like being like, hey, like be careful or I don't know. It's like, it was like warning you.

And then, oh my goodness. Okay. So it's time for me to ask you your last questions.

Believe it or not, it's time. It's just what happened. Time went fast.

Time went very fast. So for our last question, what I would love to hear is what do you think is next for you? So like, do you have a really cool like project you're working on or ways that you're thinking of expanding your company that you want to share?

[Sarah Trop]

Oh, of course. I'm always thinking of how I'm going to expand things. And I'm not going to hold you to it.

You can just... Yeah. So I'll tell you some things I'm dreaming up.

I think I'm more and more going to be doing commercial design projects. I think this convention center remodel and the fact that it's so big and so different from anything I've ever done, it's opening the doors to a lot of other commercial projects that I would not have been privy to even meeting with someone on. So I have another huge one that I'm proposing on Monday.

And I have two already in the works. So I think commercial is going to expand even more. I'm hoping to really scale up.

I'm creating a lot of partnerships with different pipelines that could scale up the residential. And I'm working to bring multiple subcontracting. Oh, that's what I never answered.

So I'm actually going to come out of the hourly employees and do more subcontracting. So I'm partnering with a lot of contractors who I can pass jobs on. Because the only way you can scale

is if you have like a few different people that can take the projects.

Like I can't have it be all my employees. Like I don't want to manage a huge... You can't do every beat of it now.

Right. So I'm building referral partners that are really good that I know like, OK, they're going to do the kind of work I could do. And then I'm trying to bring on multiple subcontractor designers that can say, yes, we can scale up if we have 10 projects signed on one month and we can scale down a little bit if not.

They do it at their own pace. So they're subs. They don't have to be on payroll.

And so that's kind of the new structure. I'm trying to build things over this year with affiliate marketing as well, like a lot of social media content that's been going really well. Facebook just asked me to be a creator.

So that's something. And then 10 years down the line, I really hope we will open a restaurant. That's one of the things my husband has a culinary background.

My daughter's in college for culinary. We did this dreaming exercise. It's so interesting.

And I learned about it in EO, Entrepreneurial Organization. And it helps you dream about what you picture 10 years from now and then build back from that. And what I find is, especially in the teenage years, a lot of teenagers lack vision and wonder.

And so my daughter was kind of low one day. Well, first of all, let me say, I did this exercise. It's fascinating.

Everyone in the room was crying. It's just so beautiful, this experience. So I said to my daughter, she was kind of feeling low.

And I said, do you mind if I do this exercise with you? I think sometimes we get stuck in the now. We forget what life can be like just 10 years from now.

When you're 26 versus 16, what your world could look like. So I walked her through it. She starts crying as she's dreaming.

And I said, okay, part of the beginning is like, hey, what room are you in? She goes, I'm in a restaurant, mom. And I said, okay.

And what colors do you see on the wall? And she said, they're teal. It's a dark teal.

I said, okay. I said, who's in the room with you? And she's like, you're in the room with me.

You designed it. And I was like, oh, and, and I said, who else? And she's like, I have a baby.

He's in there with me too. And I was like, oh, like I'm getting teary, like hearing. I made her cry.

Yeah. So we walked through the whole exercise and then she goes, I said, you won't believe this. And I hadn't told anyone this, but when I did this exercise and I dreamed 10 years from now, I was in a restaurant.

The walls were teal. Harmony was there. And she had had a baby.

I didn't even tell her those things. I didn't do any of those details. So we both just sat in the car and cried.

And it makes me like cry. Yeah. It was so beautiful.

So I just believe that's probably going to be part of our stories, helping her start a cafe one day and live out her dreams.

[Liz Theresa]

And I think we all need more wonder though. I mean, like to pause and do an exercise like that. Like what is the floor?

What are the walls? And 10 years from now and all that. If we pause for wonder, I mean, like, and then that's, it's a beautiful way to kind of give yourself hope that things will go.

How you want them to, because you're taking the time to know what you want. Definitely. Because we don't ask the question, what do we want?

[Sarah Trop]

Right. And I'm also like on a personal, I know I'm rambling, but I'm a dreamer. Yeah.

On a personal note, I just started this thing last week that I developed called The Becoming Project. And it's all about helping women understand the tools of things that I wish I knew 20 years ago. So it's personality types, love languages, one week, it's going to be failure camp, like how to share failures and what you've learned from it.

And then the last week is dreaming through things. And I'm really hopeful that that becomes something that changes the world. And I hope it will, but it was epic.

Yeah.

[Liz Theresa]

Oh my God. So you have all these facets to you. I think you're awesome.

Oh, thanks. So Sarah, tell everybody how they can find you online.

[Sarah Trop]

Sure. So they can follow me on FunCycle. That's on Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, or go to funcycle.com.

I have a blog you can sign up for with free content. I do try to do a lot of different videos on YouTube with like my top sofas for under 5,000 or best college finds that you like, you know, just practical. Like we look through a lot of items to make sure we find good content for people at a good price.

So there's that. And then if they go to funcycle.com forward slash free, there's going to be podcast, like a free tutorial, some things that are topics of home decor items.

[Liz Theresa]

Awesome. You guys, all the links will be in the show notes. Sarah, thank you so much for recording with us today.

[Sarah Trop]

I loved it so much. It was really fun, Liz. I loved it.

Thank you for having me on.

[Liz Theresa]

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