

TRANSCRIPT

On Your Terms



Driven by Goals.
Guided by Strategy.
Powered by Intention.

Episode 212:

HOW A PODCAST CAN GROW YOUR ONLINE BUSINESS (FT. PODCAST EXPERT, MICHELLE RUBINSTEIN)

Sam Vander Wielen:

I feel like a podcast in particular is very nurturing because of the way that you're probably consuming this content right now, right where you're listening, I'm in your ears or I'm in your kitchen while you're food prepping or whatever. So you're on a walk or something like this. And it gives people a lot of time with you and a lot of different ways to get to know you in a deeper way.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Hey, hey. Welcome back to On Your Terms. If you're wondering who this voice is, hi there, I'm Michelle. I'm on team Sam Vander Wielen and I'm super excited today for our special guest. Hey, Sam, welcome to your podcast.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Welcome to my own show. Thanks, Michelle, for having me at my own show. I'm so glad to be here.

Michelle Rubinstein:

I'm so excited we're doing this. I was thinking about this, Sam, how, like, obviously you're the voice of Sam Vander Wielen LLC and On Your Terms, but I'm like the AI version. So like you know how Apple has Siri and it's like, "Hey Siri", you could be like, "Hey, On Your Terms. How do I pay myself? We have an episode for that."

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah, we actually do. I know, I feel like every time somebody sends us a DM or something asking us about some topic, I'm like, we have an episode about that. Like, I have all seminal episodes, people. I have all of them. I've created them for you.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Check out episode 58.

Sam Vander Wielen:

I know. If only I could memorize the episode numbers. If I could like have a superpower right now, it would be to remember what the name, the title, or like the number of a podcast episode because I know like when people, I always am telling you like, hey, Michelle, this person's asking for this. I know I did an episode on it. I don't know what year or like when, but I know I did it.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. Yeah. But I'm really excited today. We're going to talk about podcasting and how On Your Terms and how it works with your business. And I thought we could open up with last month, you did a whole series on your launch process. From start to finish and how it was the biggest launch yet, which was so exciting to experience that. How did the podcast affect the launch?

Sam Vander Wielen:

Oh, man. So the podcast has impacted launches for ever since I started the podcast, honestly. But I guess, as it goes on and on, the podcast has been around longer, it's built up a bigger audience, all of these kinds of things. And so I saw the podcast, I have continued to see the podcast be like the biggest nurturing factor. What I would consider to be the nurturing factor in converting people from being a member of our audience, our listeners, whether that's on the podcast or on our email list or whatever, to being a customer.

And I think that the podcast has been such an interesting, like nurturing thing in the business that I have never seen before. Like I have never seen this kind of nurturing and converting people like this since I've started the podcast. That's for sure.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Can you talk more about the nurturing process using the podcast for that?

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. So this is something I'm like learning as I'm writing the book. I'm like, I use a lot of lingo, that I'm like, oh yeah, I got to unpack that. So when I say nurturing, I mean that when somebody discovers you, because they might, let's say they have a problem or something that they'd like to resolve, something they'd like to make better in their life or in their business or whatever, and then they find you and they're like, oh, this person, like let's use me as an example. Like, okay, I want to start a business. I don't know how to form it. Oh, there's this girl is a lawyer and she can like help me learn how to set my business up properly, how to protect myself online.

When from that moment where they maybe discover me and they understand that they have a problem and they understand that they want to be, let's say in this case, legally protected or more confident and secure in their business so that they can go out and grow it, well, there's a lot of work that needs to be done between that moment and the moment that the person is ready to buy from you. And we like often don't think about nurturing people I think enough in this industry, because we're often just focused on the sales.

And up until I started On Your Terms in July of 2021, I had a very robust and like active email list, I was active on social media, but a podcast was actually the first like long form nurturing, like piece of content, form of content that I created consistently now for almost three years. And I think that it has done a really good job in helping people get from that moment when they discover me, or they discover they have a problem to feeling more comfortable to buy.

And I know you and I have talked about this a lot, Michelle, I feel like a podcast in particular is very nurturing because of the way that you're probably consuming this content right now where you're listening, I'm in your ears or I'm in your kitchen while you're food prepping or whatever. So you're on a walk or something like this. And it gives people a lot of time with you and a lot of different ways to get to know you in a deeper way. And so I've seen that the podcast really changed that relationship and be the thing that customers ultimately cite as like, that's why I wanted to buy from you because I was like binging your podcast, and then that's what caused me to buy.

Michelle Rubinstein:

In 2021, when you decided to start your podcast, was this the goal to do this, to create a nurturing place for a potential customer and your current community?

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. So I had like, I would say maybe a silly, like selfish reason of wanting to start this and then more of like a business oriented. So I was kind of coming off of doing a lot of video and trying my hand at YouTube and like all of this stuff was going on in my life. My dad was still alive at the time. He was sick and I was taking care of him. And so I was like running back and forth to Philly and coming back to New York and always in hospitals and things like this.

Let's just say I wasn't always camera ready, nor was I camera desiring. I was not wanting to be on camera all the time. And like, if you've dabbled in YouTube, then you know it's a whole different beast, a whole different animal. But as a hoodie loving woman, I was like, I love the idea that there's this medium in which I can give still really good information, but I can like be wherever, it could be in a hotel room in Philly. So there was like a little bit of a practical side for me that I felt like this would be fit my lifestyle, fit my business.

And then I thought, okay, how could -- I actually thought about it more from, I wasn't actually thinking about the nurturing and like converting customers' journey. I was actually thinking of it more from a leads' perspective at the time. So I was thinking like, oh, I'm going to use this as a tool to be discovered. Right. So like make my show very like search worthy, the title search worthy, and then we're going to pull in new people. I hadn't even thought about at the time that it would like, I don't know, people would binge it and then be wanting to buy from us.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Wow. How long do you feel it took to see some sort of success from starting the podcast and the goal you set out for it to do?

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. So I feel, like I'm always very honest about this, that I had an audience already, which definitely helped, right. So like having a big email list at the time. I mean maybe it was like 15,000 people or something at that time on the email list, having a decent size social following at that time. Like I had other things to tap into. So I feel like I had a little bit of a head start in that respect.

Although I would say to give us credit, Michelle and I were just talking about this yesterday, actually. Like I kind of overestimated on the other hand, how much like, oh, I already have an audience. Like I can just pop out a podcast and it's going to be instantly successful. What we have learned over the years too, is that like the audience that you currently have might not all be podcast listeners, right? Like they might not want that. And you have to work on actually developing like a podcast audience separately. So I feel like I had a nice foundation from the start from those people, but it was also less than I probably presumed because I thought like everyone was just going to pop over and start listening to podcasts.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. So from then and now, how has the marketing changed for you because it's changed just from the start of podcasting. I feel like we talk about this all the time, every couple of months, it's like, try this, try that, try that,

Sam Vander Wielen:

I would say the biggest transformation in my like thinking about podcast about marketing the podcast was that I came to that realization of I'm going back to the same well of people. I'm being like, listen to the podcast, listen to the podcast. And like, I think it's helpful to bring awareness to your audience. Like, hey, I have a new episode this week. This is the topic. This is why you should listen. This is why it's helpful to you.

At the same time, I think what I'm learning over time between July 2021 and now is marketing more to people who like podcasts, like who is listening to podcasts, who also is listening to like another show that's complimentary to this show and they need what I have. And maybe they're listening to like

Natasha's podcast on social media and marketing and video marketing. Those kinds of people also need to learn how to legally protect their business while they're building out a video strategy.

So like thinking about it more from that perspective versus just constantly posting like we completely stopped, for example, posting like static images on Instagram being like new episode, that just literally didn't work. And it was just time and money and effort that it just was not worth it. So yeah, I would say I'm kind of in that process of thinking about it from a different perspective.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. Yeah. To go back to listener behavior and consuming long form content versus short form. And podcasting can be both, right, depending on what kind of show. How do you feel from your audience, the feedback you've gotten to them, if they enjoy consuming the long form content that way? And I also want to hear your personal point of view at that and how you enjoy it.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. So I think they like both. What we've seen in surveys has been that people enjoy both. Like, I think it depends. I think like what I've learned from podcasting, especially like experts like yourself as well, is that like the show should be as long as it needs to be. So if there's something like, let's say I'm doing an episode with a tip in it and it can be an episode with a five minute tip, that should be it. I don't need to stretch it to 45 minutes to make it what it is.

At the same time, I think what people like is that when there is a larger topic, you can, like in this medium, you can dive into it a little bit deeper. The way that I know that I thought about it, and then I'll share my personal perspective, but I guess from more of like a strategic perspective, I thought, okay, if we're going to be talking about this, like really deep topic, like, let's say one of our most popular episodes is, I think it's number 65, but it's like how to build an email list. Right. And so that's a robust topic. There are a lot of different ways we can go on that topic.

Like I thought about maybe people wouldn't want to sit and watch an hour-long YouTube video, for example, but maybe they would pop in their headphones and take a walk. And like, you could take two 30-minute walks and learn how to build your email list. Like that's kind of how I was thinking about it. It was like, I'm always thinking about how are people consuming this? I think about who my audience is and like what they've got going on in their life. They're busy. They have families. They have maybe other jobs. They're trying to start a business. Like you don't have 16 hours to sit down and do this. So I really think about like, how can I get them the maximum amount of value in this episode, whether that means it's a 5-minute or 55-minute show.

I would say though, from the personal perspective. I think what part of what inspired me to start On Your Terms was that I was a little bit sick of social media in terms of like feeling the pressure to cram something in like a really high value conversation or a topic or a tip into like a seven second clip. At that time, it was like a lot of the kind of like mimicking, like mouthing the lyrics of things kind of reels. And I was just like, I can't teach you -- I'm sorry. Like, I just can't teach you how to legally protect your business in seven seconds. I can kind of like get you to some other place and like we can be fun and funny and entertaining, but that's about it.

And I also started to get to this place in my life where I wanted to have deeper, more full conversations about things that I often find on social media are presented like very black and white. Matter of fact, too simplistic where I find actually in business, just like in life, there's a lot more nuance. And I love that podcasting, just like YouTube I guess, but podcasting gives you the opportunity to go into that. Like to have a fuller conversation.

Like we are now, not just being like, here's what two ways that I grew my podcast. Like that's not really giving you the full conversation. Would I have been able to mention that I also had an audience at the time? Like that's the kind of thing I'm talking about. You'll see reels on Instagram, like I grew my podcast X times in three months. It's like that's not the full story. We need to have a fuller conversation about it. And also like,

did you enjoy it? Is it helping your business? What kind of email list did you have? That's exactly what this allows us to do.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. It's so layered.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Absolutely.

Michelle Rubinstein:

So layered. Yeah. Do you remember the first podcast you ever listened to?

Sam Vander Wielen:

First podcast I ever listened to? Oh, like, I bet that I listened to some sort of business podcast when I started, although I'm kind of funny about this. Like I know you and I've talked about this. I kind of blocked myself out from listening to a lot of the more like the strategic stuff, because I can get shiny squirrel syndrome real easily, so I have to be careful. Because I'm like, oh, I should be on Pinterest. Like now I should be on TikTok. Everyone's saying I have to be running Google ads. Like I can just, it's a little too much for me.

So I think I started by listening to that. And then I started listening to stuff that just was like, probably bringing me a little bit out of my business. It's very easy for me to just like be in my business at all time. So I started listening to like Smart Lists. I remember during the pandemic like that, I got really into some cooking podcasts, like Keep Calm and Cook On with Julia Tertian. So I started listening to like stuff that got me out of this space. Yeah, more so.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. I love that. I love asking that question because I'm always curious of like how people get into podcasting, what inspired them. And usually the number one answer I've come across is Serial.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Oh yeah, that's true. That's true. Okay. So that was true.

Michelle Rubinstein:

That was a phenomenon. That was like, everyone was like, oh my God, have you listened? And it's like, yeah, podcast. Hello?

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah, that's true. You're right. I did listen to that. So I guess that probably was the first like kind of series that I listened to. Ryan and I drove I think maybe to Wisconsin to see his family. I remember we binged it on the way. I tend to avoid legal stuff. It's so funny. People always assume that I like watch shows and like listen to legal podcasts. I'm like, no, I cannot. But that one was good that I remember.

Michelle Rubinstein:

And it's funny you said that because usually when people will say that's the first one, first series, they had hooked it. They're like, I remember exactly where I was, what I was doing. It was like such a pivotal moment in a lot of people's listening journey to podcasting. Interesting.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Well, what a good like marketing lesson looking back on it too, that now that you're saying this, I'm thinking like right now, as we're recording this, like series are really popular, for example, both on podcasts and on social media and stuff like this. And like, what's the point of a series that it's got like a story, right, in chapters and you keep it hooked. And how did the end of every single episode of Serial end with like a, oh my God, I got to listen to the next one because I got to know what does she say? What does she see?

Like, so yeah, it's interesting to think about how could we apply that kind of binge ability and like the little like hooks kind of going from series to series episode. I'm really big into series right now. I'm enjoying doing it.

Michelle Rubinstein:

So on that, we've introduced series on, On Your Terms. How far in advance do you start thinking about that? You talked a little bit about that during the launch series last month, but in terms of just like the podcasting and planning along, planning that, I'd be curious to hear more about that.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. So starting back in October, when we had our annual like planning meeting for all of 2024, I had decided that I wanted to do one series per quarter. That was my goal. And I knew that I wanted the first series because the first series was going to be in January. And there's kind of that new year, new like start up a business energy that I was like you know it's a good time for us to just do one that's kind of like how to start a business or like how to ramp up your business. So that's what the business series we did back in January.

I then knew I was going to do one series for the rest of the year. And I have a couple of ideas of different series. Like I would love to do one on email list building, since that's been a popular topic. But after we had this launch in February, it went not only so well, but like, I think what I was really excited about is that we tested out a lot of new things that I saw work really well.

And I know as somebody whose business runs pretty much off of one major funnel that works really well and has worked really well since 2019, I feel often frustrated that I don't know where to go to, to like get new information about how launches are going or funnels are going and like that kind of stuff. Like I don't see anybody doing it quite like we're doing it. And so I was like, why don't we just bring that information? Like, why don't we share how we do this and help other people? Because everybody has to start somewhere and my launches certainly didn't use to look like this. That's for sure.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. Yeah. The question that we see a lot, and we have talked about this off mic, but so many people want to know, do I have to form a separate business for my podcast? Or can it be under one umbrella? And you have touched upon it, but I would like you to talk more in depth about that.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah, this always makes me want to scream from the podcast rooftops because I'm like, no, your podcast is such -- like it's a part of your business. So first and foremost, I think everybody should understand that when you have

a business, you're going to have different marketing channels for that business. So maybe you have a podcast, maybe you'll start a YouTube channel, maybe you're on Tik TOK or Instagram, Facebook, whatever like your thing du jour, I guess some people are on X, other people like Threads. So those are all marketing channels for your business. They're not like entities in and of themselves.

Now, somebody like Michelle, for example, who has a podcasting network that that is her business, right, that is a thing, but also the network is the business. And then you guys have like all different shows that kind of fit under that. So that's maybe a separate example where that would make a little bit more sense in that case.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yes. Yeah.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. Whereas like if somebody was an online coach, for example, or a creator of some sort, like your podcast is probably doing the work of bringing in clients, building an audience, building your email list for some other thing, like for some other purpose. So when the podcast itself is not the focus, it's just kind of a vehicle for like attracting and then moving people into another place, that's when you know it's just a marketing channel.

And I think what I feel really passionately about too is this making sure that people then like strategically make sure that the podcast becomes the marketing vehicle. Like, are you actually attracting people the right way? Like, so are you producing episodes that people would want to listen to who would also want to become your customer? And then in those episodes themselves, are you moving the listener any closer to becoming a customer?

For me, that can be as simple as getting a listener to get on my email list, because then I have them in another place where I can contact them and kind of invite them into our orbit, or it could be to directly buy our products. So like sometimes the episode content lends itself to me talking about a product that we have, and the next best step might be them actually purchasing. So I hope that people not only think of this as part of their

business, but then also like how are you setting this up to actually support your business.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. I mean that's a really good point. And at this, from what you know, and what you've gone through, do you think it's a good idea for a business owner to start a podcast? There's a lot of thought that goes into it.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah, there's so much --

Michelle Rubinstein:

What would you give out? Like just some tips from doing it?

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. There's so many, so many thoughts. But I think, as you know, first of all, I think I would start more globally to say like, I really believe in picking whatever medium you want to go into, like whatever content, whatever form of content you want to focus on, making sure that it's something that you really enjoy. Like I just said to Michelle yesterday, I was like, if I could just podcast, like if the podcast was like the bulk of my marketing, I would do that because I really enjoy doing this.

And because I enjoy doing it, I am always thinking about it. I'm putting in a lot of effort to get better at it. I'm investing in it. I'm like putting myself out there. I'm thinking really deeply about like, what do we title and what should this strategy be? And so that all translates like if you like it. It's just like, as I always say with like movement, if you really like a form of movement, you're going to do it more often, therefore you see results. So I really believe in that, of like just liking.

So if this is something you like, then, and I guess you kind of only know that by trying to be honest, but if you like it and you feel like you can do it consistently and you can commit to it for a long period of time, like at least six months, I would say, in my opinion. And consistent, I guess people have different opinions on consistency, but like once a week is nice, but I've also heard people being like, if you can do every other week. Some people are doing like this once a month thing where they like

drop something that's like everybody's waiting for it. I sometimes feel like that though, is when you're like a little bit further along, I think when you're like trying to get your feet under you, in my opinion it's like more than anything, you actually just want reps. So you're like, you want practice. So like once a week would be great and making sure you're making the show actually be about your customers and like attracting the customers and building that community.

And so it's something that I'm always thinking about of like, am I veering too off track of like, is this not helpful to them? Is this attracting the right people? Is the episode itself structured in a way that is helpful to other people? So I would say it's like an evolving process, but those are the things I would consider.

Michelle Rubinstein:

And there's such a mind shift and mindset perspective that goes into that because you could do something, whatever you feel comfortable in terms of consistency, a time period that would work for you. And having that conversation with yourself and like you said, of checking in of, okay, do I feel like I'm failing? Should I keep going? Am I enjoying this? Should I try this? I haven't tried this. Yeah,

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah, it's a lot to consider.

Michelle Rubinstein:

It is everything.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah, absolutely. And this year has been the year of like, I'm somebody who comes up with a lot of ideas very easily. I'm never, never short on ideas. And I'm always thinking about business and always thinking about strategy, but this year was the year that I decided I'm not going to introduce something or start to like run with something unless I've thought it out and planned it out. Like, what is the strategy here? So how does this fit in?

So let's say you're listening to this episode and you're hearing me say like, this podcast has been bringing me in a lot of new customers. It's converting people because it's nurturing them. And so you start thinking, I want to start a podcast so that I can have more customers. Right. But what is the plan? Like, what is the show about? What's the hook of the show? How often can you record and how you're going to be consistent about that? How are you going to promote it? Right.

And in the show itself, how are you going to bring people from listening to it, to taking the next step to it because if we like zoom back and rewind the tape, if you just started out being like, I want to start a podcast because I want to grow my business too, because Sam's saying it gave her more customers, how is your show actually going to bring you more customers? So like current me is like not implementing anything unless I've thought that all the way through to be like, how am I, what am I going to be doing in these episodes? What's my plan to bring people from there to becoming customers? Because otherwise I'm not then meeting my goal of starting a podcast to bring me more customers. You know what I mean? Yeah.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah, absolutely. Because you love podcasting so much and you're enjoying it, is there a part of podcasting that you would love to explore more?

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah, I love the idea of doing more things like this of like, I've been loving doing more kind of conversational episodes and bringing on other people. So that's something I would like to do more of. I'm just curious about like, well, first of all, it would be so cool to do like a live podcast sometime. I think that would be cool. I know you do these a lot. But I'm like, but I still have that like very much eighth grade cafeteria fear in me that's like, I'm going to show up and literally no one will be there. It would be like me, you, Ryan and maybe Ann will come, but that's it.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Heidi will be there.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. So I'm like, no one will come to this. So I have my own like fears around that. But I think that would be really cool.

Michelle Rubinstein:

That would be so cool.

Sam Vander Wielen:

I think so. And something we've been experimenting with a little bit more lately too, is that like every once in a while, it happens but there can be like "breaking news" in the online business world of like that kind of stuff. And that's been more fun, like to be maybe more of a go to resource to be like, hey, this like law just broke and or this thing came out, there's this new rule for you, doing things maybe a little bit more in real time too and like building up the trust of the community in that way as well.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Right. Like having structure is so important and being on a schedule, but to throw in those moments of, oh, hear this, oh, here's a bonus episode, you'll find this helpful, I think keeps the community also very excited and your listeners coming back for more.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. I like the idea of all of you listening, becoming like the go to person for whatever you do. And while that can be done with a weekly Monday episode on some great topic, it can also be like there's some splashy thing that you can take advantage of. And I think that can be like kind of a way to create more of that. Like you're their go to person. If you want to learn about how to grow a podcast, like this person's podcast is the one you always look to. And so you trust that, like, if there's something you need to know, they're going to tell you about it. And so like kind of building up that community in that way.

Michelle Rubinstein:

To go more into the marketing aspect, how does the podcast support the email list?

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. So --

Michelle Rubinstein:

And vice versa. And vice versa too.

Sam Vander Wielen:

That's true. Yeah. They do go both ways. Although I probably see it more one way than the other. We can talk about that.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Sure. Sure.

Sam Vander Wielen:

So you probably all know that I'm email list obsessed and I really strongly believe in email and the power of how well it does for your business. And so every single thing that I create in my business, I'm always thinking like, how does this support the email list? Like I'm always pausing and thinking about that. So with the show itself, it's been interesting because one of the things you have to think about when you choose like a platform that you want to create content on, like a podcaster, like YouTube is like, how do people consume that content? Right.

So I like to listen to podcasts. I don't always go and like check the show notes and click on links. Maybe other people do. Right. But maybe I follow that person on Instagram and then I also get their email or something like this from something else that I've done. So I think about that and be like, how do I get people into my email list from the podcast? So I talk about my weekly email on the podcast. We've also created like episode specific content upgrades, and that has been probably more successful than anything else. Like when we had a series, we had like a booklet that went along with it. And so that helped to build the email list.

And then from using like my current email list to talk about the show, I talk about it every week in the email. We don't see high click through rates from the email to the podcast link, which we always found was interesting, but the podcast has always grown. And so one of the things we've kind of like deduced, I guess, from is that maybe people see like the email, they see there's a new episode, they see the topic, and then you're

just like going over to wherever you listen to your podcast, like maybe you're going, you're popping open Spotify or Apple podcasts and you're just listening there, but maybe not necessarily clicking through the email.

So it's been a bit of an interesting, like I think process to learn how do we get people from here to there? But I think the content upgrades have been super helpful from the show and then having a weekly newsletter where there's specific content that I don't talk about on the show so that they want a little more, like you leave them wanting a little bit more.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. Has there been a topic that you've covered on the podcast that surprised you that got so much traction and then a topic that you thought would get a lot of traction and actually it didn't?

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. On the got more traction side, I would say that I was always surprised that episode number one which is about community over competition is BS, that that like -- I mean, maybe because it's the first episode, it's like always gotten a lot of listens, but I remember even when I was like a new podcaster, that was getting a lot of outreach, people were reaching out to us and sharing their thoughts about that episode. Maybe that was like a little, like hot take hot opinion kind of thing.

I would say on the legal, like financial side, I'm always surprised that our money, like money oriented or financial oriented episodes do better. And so anytime I talk about how to pay yourself taxes, anything like that, business expenses, those go really well. So that kind of surprised me just because like I know that lawyers can deal with like money stuff. I don't know that everybody else knows that. And so I was like, maybe it's just like a good topic.

In terms of what hasn't gone as well, I'm trying to think like, I would say, I feel like sometimes I've like titled episodes that I thought were going to be like, oh, this like title is going to kill it because I think it's funny. This is like the story of my life. I'm like, I think something's funny, nobody else thinks. So and then it's been more like

that, where I've been like, I thought that was going to do so well. And like, it just didn't, it didn't go as well.

Michelle Rubinstein:

It's so true. You have to battle like what you think is working for you versus what will work for the listener. And what will stop them from scrolling and be like, yes, this is it, this speaks to me.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. This is something I'm constantly working at. Okay. I just have to tell a quick story about my mom because it just reminds me of my mom. But my mom, like every time we used to meet my mom for dinner, my mom, first of all, loved going out to dinner. So she like always wanted to meet you for dinner. Every single time you meet her for dinner, she had a different purse.

And every time the purse was like, it would be like a big person, then a little person, then a medium person, then a big purse. And she was constantly trying to find her purse. Like she wanted the purse, you know? And she would always be like, Sammy, I need to have a bigger purse because that's how I'm going to like fit all my stuff in it. And then she would like get organizers for it. And then the next time you see her, she'd have a tiny purse and she'd be like, I've realized I need a tiny purse because the bigger purse I have, I just put more stuff in it. And it was like this constantly evolving thing.

This is how I feel about titling podcast episodes. This is literally how I feel. I'm like, okay, I'm going to do like quippy titles. And then I'm like, quippy doesn't work, I'm going to go to like super boring titles. And I'm like, boring doesn't work, I'm going back to quippy. And yeah, I find titling episodes very hard and something I'm putting a lot of time and effort into learning.

I think that's important for people to know, by the way, is that like, regardless of where your business is at, how much money your stupid business makes, like all this kind of stuff, it doesn't matter, you're constantly a student. And like, I am learning, I'm humbled by this business and by the process every day. And all of the things that we do within our

business also are constantly changing themselves, right? Like podcasting has changed even in the two, three years that I've been doing it. YouTube has changed. Instagram has changed a ton. Like email newsletters have changed. Everything is changing all the time. I find that very cool. And I'm like very happy about it on the one hand, but I also just want people to be very realistic.

And this is like something I'm writing a lot about in the book is like really understanding that you're a student essentially of entrepreneurship and you have to like constantly be learning. That's why I think it's so important that it's like, you better like this because like, I love podcasting so it doesn't seem like a chore to me. I'm like trying to -- I feel like I'm like in the movie, like The Mummy, and I'm like trying to figure it out. I'm just like running around trying to figure this whole thing out and I enjoy it.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. I love that you said that you enjoy it, and it makes you excited. With the platforms and the algorithms and how everything is changing, that could be -- I mean, there are days when I feel so frustrated because you're like, I can't figure this out. But maybe the whole point is to not figure it out, it's to be the constant in the state of learning, and that is okay. We're all in this together.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. It very much feels like, what was it like Jumanji or something? We like move the thing around. Like, that's like how it feels. I just feel like it's like constantly moving and I'm like, where are we going? What are we doing? Like, how are we going to do this? I definitely think actually, when I did the interview with Jen last month, she was telling me on the episode that she thought this was like, evidence of a growth mindset, which is not how I've ever thought about it.

But I guess I understand what she's saying in terms of like being open and excited about it. I could understand why maybe somebody would be listening to this and thinking, okay, I'm going to start a podcast. I'm expecting like X result from it. And if it doesn't go that way, then I'm out. And I do think with all the things in your business, you have to enter it with a

little bit more of a scientist mindset of being like, you know what, I really enjoy this. I'm kind of up for the challenge. Let's see where it goes and be curious about it.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. That's such an important question to ask yourself. And again, have those check ins like multiple times during the process because you might feel like quitting, but if you do actually love doing it and you want to keep learning, you will keep going. Yeah.

Sam Vander Wielen:

You've podcasted for a long time though, much, much longer than me. And like, so you've seen this change a lot. Like how do you approach the constantly and like the navigating that landscape, I guess?

Michelle Rubinstein:

Sure. Yeah. And what's so fun of working behind the scenes on your podcast and working with you is coming from you had a business and an audience, which did help you. I come very much from the entertainment space. And so I started podcasting in 2009 as a hobby. I know. Brain Showers was my first podcast baby. And then I went into commercial convo, which was just my husband and I talking about commercials on television because I was in marketing classes in college. And so that was very much as a hobby.

And so then I started, that was very much on the side of doing it, but I was very obsessed and I always loved it. And the medium of podcasting is such a, well, like you said at the top of the show, it was very intimate and to connect with someone. And that's why I love spoken word. And taking radio in college was always my favorite because it's just like, oh, you can have so much fun with audio and audio dramas.

And so anyway, going from that, it's always just been in the entertainment space. And there's a lot of competition. And I feel this way with podcasting and everything. There's room for everyone. You do have to find your community and they are there. When I started really taking this seriously and formed my business, my company started Tree Hill Talk, which is a One Tree Hill podcast. And at the time, we were the only like rewatch One Tree Hill fan cast. And we did really well. We did really well. And

that felt like luck. I'm going to be honest with you. We're like, oh my gosh, the One Tree Hill community, they are a bunch of people. Shout out to you, guys. OTH love.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Some of them are here.

Michelle Rubinstein:

I'm sure. Right. Hi, let me know. We love Lucas, Nathan. Right. But then when the pandemic hit, all actors started making podcasts and rewatching their shows as they should. They were on it. Let's hear their experiences. But that definitely was hard in the fan cast niche of where I'm at. So there's definitely days where I'm like, why am I doing this? But then I'm like, oh, I really do love this. It's just evolving and keep educating yourself on how to market and find your community.

I will say we have found like a really loyal fan base that have been with us since 2017 and they're still supporting us.

Sam Vander Wielen:

They send you gifts.

Michelle Rubinstein:

They send us gifts. They come to our events. We meet them at conventions. They'll come up to us and I'm always, I get very emotional and I'll like cry and I'm like, can I hug you please? Yeah. So if you love it, you want to keep learning about it and evolving.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. It's something among many, many things that I love about you so much is that like you are so like, first of all, you're like unapologetically yourself, which I love. And you have all these interests and hobbies and you just like go for it. And then you create a community because there's lots of other people out there like you. Right.

So I think you're a great example to anybody who's listening that's like you want to create a show about this like specific topic and maybe somebody's questioning, like, is this enough? Are there enough people out

there going to listen to this? And like you created something before it even existed. Like you weren't even mimicking another type of show and then they start mimicking you.

And so it's like, it's very interesting, but yeah, you've created this tight knit community. It is funny too, how not only in podcasting, by the way, but everything in business and media and creator world, we focus a lot on like high numbers of people, right, versus like you have this like depth of community, which is really interesting.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah, like a lower number, but they are consistent. They have stayed with us. And we're now on our fifth show, fifth show, and they have stayed with us. And they're like, okay, what are we watching next? And they show up every week and it's wild. And also I co-host a movie review podcast, which is so funny. And Sam, I love talking to Sam about that off mic, because we always are comparing what movies to watch. And that's been interesting because there are so many movie review podcasts out there, but people listen because they like our personalities. And you have touched upon that, people tune in because they like the way you will explain a marketing tip, a legal tip. They like you. And that's a huge part of it too.

Sam Vander Wielen:

That's what they say, but I don't know. I have a hard time believing it. But yeah, I think so, by the way, Michelle's movie review podcast called Movie Friends, you guys have to go listen to it. It's awesome.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Thank you. Thank you.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Her and her cohost, Seth do a great job. But I think it's an interesting thought though, that people can apply in your situation where like you started a podcast, a rewatch podcast about One Tree Hill, like about a specific show. And so we can probably assume that when you started, people found that show because they liked One Tree Hill. But then people ended up liking you guys so much and probably like your analysis and breakdown and

banter about One Tree Hill that then that carries over to like everything else you do.

And I see like a similar effect in business. That's like, even if I do an episode that's not completely on target with like, I've done personal episodes over the years, or I've done, obviously I do episodes about different parts of business, not just legal, like people start to like you and kind of tune in.

And I know we talked about earlier, you asked like, what are we, what am I like working on or what do I want to do different or better in podcasting? It's like, yeah, creating that binge ability where like you guys have honed-in on that factor, but creating that audience dedication, I guess that people then want to continue to listen to you, I think it's cool. And you also mentioned about like the production of the episodes and like something I've been thinking about a lot lately is that when like say you're going to go into podcasting, for example, you should become really obsessed with how to produce the best audio.

And yes, I mean, in terms of having a decent mic, like you shouldn't sound terrible, but I actually mean more in like producing a story that with audio, that's something I've been thinking about more lately is like, how do we create more of a show, right, which I know you guys, you do really well, you have segments and like you do a really good job with that.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. And I feel like you're doing an amazing job too. I mean, I know I'm a little biased, but I love you and I love this show, but like you're just such a natural, you're such a natural and it shows, it comes through.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Oh well, thanks. I think I'm just trying to get better at this. Like that's something --

Michelle Rubinstein:

Well, that's just great too.

Sam Vander Wielen:

I'm like, I want to be better. Right. And it's just always the sign that you'd like something. And I feel pretty passionately about people picking things in their business that you like, because first of all, life's too short, but also like business wise, I just think things are going to go so much better. If you really like it, you're going to be more excited about the content and people can tell. Like people can tell.

So if you feel like you're like forcing yourself into a YouTube box or podcasting feels like torture to you, you don't like this and that's fine, no problem. Like, I feel the same way about like, when people tell me like, oh, I'm trying to make it on TikTok. I'm like, oh, do you like TikTok? Oh, I hate it, but I know it's the thing I have to do. You know what? Three weeks later you text them, how's it going on TikTok? Oh, I haven't posted in a week. I hated it. It's like, well, yeah, because you didn't like it. Like, and it's totally fine. There's no like right or wrong. You're not better for podcasting or being on YouTube. It's like, it doesn't matter. Pick your thing.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. Yeah. And be open to trying it and being okay. If it doesn't go well, that's okay too.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yes. It doesn't mean anything about you. And it could also mean too, that like maybe podcasting didn't go well because of something you did. Like I think people are too quick to quit sometimes in like, maybe the strategy was bad. Like maybe the episodes weren't making sense or like yeah, there's just like all kinds of -- I think there are a lot of factors.

So that's why I believe in trying to do it consistently for a long period of time because you need to give yourself some time to test those factors out and say like, what happens when I do episodes on this topic or, oh, I noticed I've done 50 episodes now and I noticed that whenever I talk about money, we get way more listeners, so I need to do more episodes about money and like build that up. So, yeah. And you need the practice to get better at it.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. And that's a really good point you brought up too, of learning to read your analytics and like really study like, oh wow, this topic did well. I didn't realize that. Maybe I should touch upon it. How can I make that more interesting or what else can I bring to the table that my audience would enjoy?

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. Like a part two or even asking the audience like the next time you go to do an episode on that topic, you're like, what are your questions about X? And now you do like a Q&A. Or set up like the phone number so people can call and like, leave you a voicemail or text you a question. Like there are all kinds of things you could kind of like keep it going. Really creating - - I'm often thinking about like creating that kind of spider web of content. So if like something went well, what are like the other ways we can branch off about this? Yeah.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. How much does your audience questions influence what you end up talking about?

Sam Vander Wielen:

I try to really take them into consideration in particular because of what I feel like because of what I do. Like I graduated from law school when I was 23. So it's been like -- I was a baby lawyer and was like I never have created a business without being a lawyer. Right. Essentially. And so I feel like I'm a very good example of somebody who like, I feel very clear about what you guys should all be worried about or like what you should be really cognizant of and like what order you should do things. However, that very much does not match up with what you are actually worried about.

And so I tried to be really cognizant of like, what are my people worried about? What are their questions? What are they confused? What's tripping them up? What's keeping them from moving forward in their business? Because the stuff that you're often worried about is not the stuff that I would tell you to be worried about, or at least not in that order. I would be like, oh, that's something to worry about like way down the line. Right.

And so I tried to pay very close attention so that I'm not speaking at people and are just like really meeting them where they're at. I'm like, oh, okay. You're like, you're worried about that. All right. I'll do an episode about that. Like, I don't really think we should be worried about this, but okay, like that's what we'll do.

Because if I can explain it to you, like, okay, let's take trademarking for example. People often write to me and are like, I can't start a business until I get this trademark. And I'm like, oh goodness, please do not let this keep you from starting a business. Right. But I can't just be like, that's a stupid thing to be worried about. I have to explain why is that the case? What is it about trademarking? Well, people don't know, for example, that you get backdated protection. So when you file your trademark, you can go back to the date you started using it. They don't know how long it takes. That it will take almost two years until you'll get approval. So you definitely can't wait to start your business until then.

So like, that's even a good example of that's something they're worried about, but it's because they don't understand, which makes perfect sense to me, if you're not a lawyer, you wouldn't know these things. And so like, that's like a topic that I would bring to the show and use to break down so that people understand like, oh, I can like put that worry aside and I can now move forward with what she's telling me like I should be focused on instead. Yeah. And so you guys do that.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. That's educational and also very nurturing to go back to nurturing your ready audience that's there.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. I'm sure if anybody starting a podcast or has one already, like the more you can think about, I mean, this goes for creating content period, anywhere you're doing it, but like speaking really to people with where they're at, I see a lot of people on Instagram especially where they're like creating content, that's kind of like telling people -- it's like you're assuming way too much about people, right. You're kind of like talking to people or way further along, and maybe a little bit out of touch with where people are at. So I think it's really important.

I was actually just yesterday writing chapter seven of my book talking about creating a \$1 million product. And in this chapter, I'm talking about doing like a lot of voice of customer research and really like literally using the verbiage of our customers. We do this several times a year. And it also, though, is a way to kind of ground me and like what my customers are worried about and also what their relief is, like what do they feel once they buy our product, once they've been in the Ultimate Bundle, for example. I don't know what that would feel like so I have to listen to them.

And so I pour through that research consistently to kind of keep myself on point and be like, oh, okay, they're consistently worried about this. I see kind of the same questions, same concerns. I see what they want instead. I see how they feel once they get it. And like, I just kind of immerse myself in this like language from them because it's not my story.

Whereas some of you listening, you might have, I don't know, like gone on your fitness journey and now you're like teaching other people how to get fit. Like you've kind of lived more of the experience. I still think it's important though, to get back in touch with like where they're at right now and probably how you felt when you were in their shoes versus like where you are now, which is probably very aspirational for your ideal client. Yeah.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Totally. Totally. Yeah. It's a great point. Good point.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Oh, thanks.

Michelle Rubinstein:

I have some fun questions for you if you are up to it.

Sam Vander Wielen:

I'm always up for fun questions. Yeah.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Okay. All right. So this is a question I like to ask everyone. And I actually don't know Sam's answer, so I'm very excited. If you were a type of pasta noodle, what would you be? And I want to know what sauce is going on top.

Sam Vander Wielen:

That's such a good question. Okay. Well, I'm going to say, because I make my own pasta, this is influencing my decision here. So my dad years ago bought me like a gnocchi board. So have you ever seen this? Like the little wooden board? Yeah. So I'm going to say I'd be like hand rolled gnocchi because they're all different. Like, I love that they all come out unique. And so first of all, gnocchi is super easy to make. You like literally make it in a bowl and like just pop it out.

And then I love that you like hand roll each one individually and they're all unique and like funky and different. And they're not trying to be like the others because if you're like spaghetti or something, it's like so uniform and the same, and I don't like that. So I'm going with that and always something tomato based for sauce. I'm just obsessed with tomato. So I would like bathe in marinara if I could every day. I love it so much.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Marinara is also my favorite. One of my favorite snacks. And this is also what I order at the diner, is sweet potato fries with marinara sauce.

Sam Vander Wielen:

I love that, too. Have you ever had green beans in marinara sauce?

Michelle Rubinstein:

I have had that. And that is -- yeah. And when I order it, I say, Mar Nar. I want sweet potato fries and Mar Nar. Okay, next question. If Huddy was a vegetable, what would he be?

Sam Vander Wielen:

Oh my gosh, a little pumpkin, I think. He has a little pumpkin face, doesn't he? Oh my god. Hudson's my dog, in case everyone's like, what are you guys talking about? He is my dog and also my life. I love him so much. Yeah, I just feel like he'd be like, well, I don't know. Are pumpkins

happy? Because I feel like Huddy's like happy all the time. He's just like, he wants to be friends with everybody. And he's so like, it's just cute and like squishable. For some reason, pumpkins seem squishable in my mind, but they're really not. They're very hard.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Pumpkins just, I think, bring on happiness. You see a pumpkin, they can be so many different sizes, especially when they're round. I don't know. They make me very, very happy and I think pumpkin's the perfect answer for that.

Sam Vander Wielen:

They look like they want to be snuggled, which he is obsessed with snuggling. Yeah.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. I mean, do you ever look at Huddy and you think like, oh, if you were a pastry good, you would -- this is my life. I constantly am looking at animals. I'm like, oh, you would be a croissant. You would be a jelly filled donut.

Sam Vander Wielen:

I tell him he's a little piglet all the time. That's what I tell him because he's obsessed with vegetables. Anybody who follows me on Instagram knows how he loves vegetables. He loves kale and spinach and cucumbers and peppers, carrots. He really loves like raspberries and everything. Oh my gosh. So now he knows when I cook. Oh, he really loves broccoli.

And I've learned that I cook with broccoli constantly because whenever I'm cooking, he's standing by my feet and I'm like, wow, I do make a lot of broccoli. So yeah, he just like loves vegetables so much, but he's -- so I call him a little piglet cause he's always standing there waiting, waiting for me to make a mistake, as I say. He's hoping I make a mistake.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Okay. Pineapple on pizza. Yes or no?

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yes. I love it.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Thank you. Check, check. And then lastly, right now, because I feel that this changes, but describe your perfect cup of coffee today.

Sam Vander Wielen:

It really does change day to day. So right now, I've been obsessed with Cometeer, which is like these little frozen capsules of coffee. So they're flash frozen, fresh coffee, say that five times. And it's just so easy. Actually, my friend Erin told me about it when she had just had her first child. And she was like, you can make a cup of coffee with one hand. And like, I don't even have a child. I just find this to be very helpful. I'm like, I love this.

And so also I'm like a coffee snob in terms of roasters and things like that. And they pull from the best roasters. So I love a comment to your capsule and then you just fill it with like hot water because the little disc is frozen. And then I usually put in nut pods, creamer, which is like a mix I think of almond and coconut. Right. And so I'm obsessed with their cinnamon swirl one at the moment. I don't know if you've ever had, it's so good. I like that one a lot. Over the winter, I was obsessed with their peppermint mocha creamer. But I'm feeling because it's like spring now I'm done with it, I'm back to cinnamon swirl.

Michelle Rubinstein:

I love it. I love nut pods. And so I was, as Sam was talking, I'm like nodding crazy. Like, yes, yes, yes. Nut pods for the win.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Yeah. I love it.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Well, thank you, Sam. Thank you for joining you on your podcast.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Thank you for joining me by joining me on your -- I don't even know how to say it but thank you so much. I'm so glad that we did this. And I wanted to have like a full conversation about podcasting, which I feel like we did.

And I also hope everybody will go and check out Michelle's podcast. We'll make sure that we linked to them in the show notes, but you guys got to go listen. I've been rewatching. Before we go, I have to say, I've been rewatching the OC and Michelle has a rewatch OC podcast. So I'm like dying to get into it now because I've been binging the OC cause I haven't seen it since I was like in high school.

Michelle Rubinstein:

Yeah. Oh, I live for Sam and her husband's commentary on the OC. It is wonderful. But yeah, this was so great. And I'm really honored that you asked me on to have this conversation about podcasting with you. And I think it's good to just do a check in every once in a while and talk about where you're at.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Absolutely. Yeah. I'm glad we chat. We should do it again in like six months or a year. It would be interesting to talk about like what else we're learning at that time because like we said, the stuff changes.

Michelle Rubinstein:

And what was implemented and what worked and didn't.

Sam Vander Wielen:

Absolutely. Well, we'll see you guys on the other side. See you next week, everybody.

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