



Betting It All on Instagram with Sue B. Zimmerman

Episode #11

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Lisa Larter (00:01):

Welcome to, She Talks Business. If you're an entrepreneur, business owner or aspiring mogul, chances are you want to learn more about marketing and mastering and monetizing your business. She Talks Business is where you'll learn all of that and more. My name is Lisa Larter and I'm an entrepreneur, high school dropout, wiener dog enthusiast and your host. Let's get started.

Lisa Larter (00:25):

Hello everyone and welcome to this episode of She Talks Business. Today, you are going to listen in on a conversation with a former client, dear colleague, and trusted friend of mine. Sue B. Zimmerman, also known as The Instagram Expert, joins me for a conversation about strategy and business.

Lisa Larter (00:55):

And if you think this conversation is going to be all about Instagram, you are wrong. We are going to talk about what it took to build this business of hers. We are going to talk about the challenges along the way to getting to a profitable seven-figure business. We're going to talk about how do you rebound when Facebook shuts your ad account down that you rely on for a steady influx of leads? And we're going to talk a little bit about some predictions for the future, the value of relationship marketing and being really generous in how you give to others.

Lisa Larter (01:40):

Sue has been an influencer on Instagram for the last eight years. She really bet the farm on Instagram; she went all in on that channel when she still owned her retail store. So we're going to talk about why she chose to do that. So many nuggets in here. And I got to tell you, she only used the F-



word twice, which is amazing. But you might get a chuckle out of that Sue, if you're listening. Sue has helped so many people, thousands and thousands, and thousands of people with their marketing strategies on Instagram. And recently, she has pivoted to helping people on Clubhouse. And in a two-month period has attracted over 20,000 followers there.

Lisa Larter (02:30):

This is not what you would expect as a typical interview with Sue Zimmerman, this is all about the business of building a business. And if you aspire to be an influencer or to have influence and to build a company that generates seven figures and a great big profit, then this show is for you. All right. So I'm here with Sue B. Zimmerman, one of my favorite, most enthusiastic colleagues and friends. And we're both making out with our mics because Steve Dotto says that's what we have to do to sound good. So Sue, so good to have you here.

Sue Zimmerman (03:14):

How do I sound? Do I sound all juicy and up close and personal?

Lisa Larter (03:17):

Oh, you sound great. You look great too.

Sue Zimmerman (03:20):

It's great to be here again with you.

Lisa Larter (03:22):

Yeah, it's great to be with you. My God, we have so much fun when we connect. It's like we should do it on the daily, but we are both so busy.

Sue Zimmerman (03:30):

We're both so productive. The word is productive, Lisa.

Lisa Larter (03:33):

Oh yes, the word is productive. I aspire to be productive and not crazy busy. Future goals. All right. So you are known by the world as The Instagram Expert. And I really don't want to talk to you about Instagram today, I want to talk to you about other stuff. I want to talk to you about strategy, and I want

to talk to you about money, and I want to talk to you about all the fun things that you have done over the last, what is it? It's got to be-

Sue Zimmerman (04:04):

Over eight years.

Lisa Larter (04:05):

Yeah, eight years of building this business of yours. So my first question for you, because I love strategy. And strategy, it's like the red thread that is woven throughout every single show that I do. Doesn't matter what the topic is, it's always about strategy. And strategy is just a fancy word for, really a plan, making a bet on something and believing you can do it. So eight years ago, you decided to bet on Instagram. Why was that your strategy, because everybody else was on Facebook? Talk to me about why you chose that channel as a place to dominate, influence, and build a business?

Sue Zimmerman (04:51):

Well, there's three reasons. One, my teenagers, my twins were on it. And I know that teenagers, well, they set mobile trends, it's just the truth. And at the time I was teaching social media, I was teaching two moms off season, and I had my store on the Cape. But we were on vacation in Belize. And I looked at Lila and Kara and they were not talking or tapping, they were scrolling. And I had no idea what that motion was. And when I looked at them and they weren't talking back to me, I'm like, "Guys, what are you doing?" They're like, "We're on Instagram, don't get on it because then you're going to start teaching it," because they knew I was teaching social media.

Sue Zimmerman (05:28):

So I of course downloaded the app, I read every blog. And at the time, it wasn't widely used for business, it was just a photo app. But I had a store on Cape Cod in Massachusetts, and I was doing everything to drive traffic and increase sales. And I started using Instagram. And because of my strategies around what I was posting, the geo location, and hashtags, people started driving to my store because you can open up maps when you geo-tag and coming into the door and buying the product that I was sharing on Instagram. And all these light bulb moments went off where I went all in. But the second reason is because my brain thinks and processes the world visually, so this app was made for my brain. And then thirdly, no one was teaching it at the

time. So when I went off to a conference all about online marketing and selling and I had no idea what that was, I decided I was going to teach Instagram to a global audience.

Sue Zimmerman (06:36):

And I did what I think you would do, Lisa, is I got back from that conference, and I manifested what I wanted, but I didn't just manifest it. But I did the act of manifestation by putting my cell phone in the woods on a branch. And I recorded a video that lives on YouTube that we can share in the show notes where I declared I was going to be the Instagram expert. I was going to teach a global audience how to use Instagram to grow a business. Fast forward eight years, here I am.

Lisa Larter (07:07):

I remember that, I remember the conviction that you had. And I remember when we first met face-to-face, we had been connected online for years. But it was back in 2014 that we met at a social media camp in Victoria. And I remember how ridiculously committed you were to owning that space. I remember thinking you were a little bit crazy, this new social media channel and you were so convinced. And maybe crazy is the wrong word, but you were a little bit obsessed.

Sue Zimmerman (07:51):

I think it was obsessed, enthusiastic, and passionate, all of that. Because I think what you're referring to were my hashtag signs that I carried with me everywhere. I wanted to make my mark, I wanted to stand out. I wanted to be memorable, and I wanted people to feel connected. And for me, as you probably recall, that connection is always and has always been with a photo because that's a timestamp of a memory, and it's a story. And it can be a blog post, and it can be a reference. And it can be that was then, this is now. And you and I have those photos, Lisa.

Lisa Larter (08:28):

I have my hashtag sign for my event hanging here in my office.

Sue Zimmerman (08:33):

Yeah. So there's all of that. I know how to make an imprint and leave a memory, and that's what a photo does.

Lisa Larter (08:42):

Yeah, it does. And I would also say that it's more than just a photo with you. I would say that that passion really makes a difference. I'm writing a book right now, my first commercially published book, and I'm writing it with Alan Weiss. And the working title is called Masterful Marketing. And one of the things that we're writing about is value. When you give value, there is a reciprocity factor that takes place. And when I think about you and the work that you do, you have this hugely generous spirit. And you are generous in terms of being a gift giver, you are generous in terms of giving your time, and you are generous in terms of giving your expertise. You put it all out there, you are a model example of I'm just going to give it all away. Whereas a lot of other people are like, "Oh, don't give it all away," then you won't have anything to sell. So can you talk to me a little bit about where that spirit of generosity comes from, and is that part of your strategy or is that just nature? Is that just who Sue is?

Sue Zimmerman (10:04):

That's a great question. I think it's in my DNA, I have always been a gift giver, always thinking of the perfect gift for the person. And I get so much pleasure out of that. And I know from past experiences, not just teaching Instagram, but from all of my businesses that the more I gave, the more I always got back. And getting back was not always money, it was not always the direct correlation to money in my bank account. It was just the connection of meeting someone awesome, the connection of growing a community. Taking it back to my story at Cape Cod, I had these high school girls that worked for me, and all their friends came. And not only did I sell clothing, jewelry, and accessories, but I did chalk in people's hairs, I put feathers in their hair, I did face painting.

Sue Zimmerman (11:00):

I created a memory, and it was always happy. And I think at the end of the day, everyone wants to experience more joy. It's who I am. And when you say strategy, I love that we're going back to that word because in essence obviously the law of reciprocity happens. And people either keep you top of mind, appreciate you, but most importantly, talk about you. And there's this whole ripple effect. Even if you're not talking to someone who can afford your coaching or your product or your service, if you left good imprints and made them feel good, they're going to talk about you on Facebook, they're

going to talk about you in Clubhouse. They're going to talk about you and tag you on a post or remember you. You and I both get so much business from others who have talked about us, right?

Lisa Larter (11:57):

Absolutely. And I think there's a fine line between generosity and manipulation. I think there are some people, they have too well crafted a strategy around giving with an expectation attached to it. I've known you in real life, like met you face-to-face for seven years now. And I can see that there is a pureness of generosity in you because it just shows up over and over and over again. So let's talk a little bit about the grind because you and I did a little bit of work together years ago when you were building at the beginning. And so I know that it wasn't an overnight success. And a lot of people would look at you and because your personality was so big and positive and outgoing, it's easy to interpret the personality as the success of the business. So talk to me about some of the challenges you-

Sue Zimmerman (13:08):

Yeah, that's a great question. When we were working with you, we were struggling with, I will never forget, the pebble and rocks exercise that you had us do. And the customer journey that we could take our community through that was in alignment with what they needed and would serve and help them in the long-term. And it took a long time to go from the free offer to the paid offer, to the bigger offer, and then the bigger offer. And to do it in a way that, again, was what they needed. Not what we wanted to make the money, but what they needed to have the success in their business. And I know that you and I always lead with this kind of integrity, but it is challenging, especially when you are new in this online space. And at the time that we worked with you, I was newer, again, coming off of years and years, and years of product-based businesses and knowing nothing about online marketing and selling. And to your point, some of the manipulative things that happen which are not in alignment with the way that we work.

Sue Zimmerman (14:22):

I wanted the psychology behind the serving and selling to match up to the experience that we wanted to give. And we did such great work with you that really helped catapult us into a more successful business and scale. I

mean, we're all about scaling. And since day one, year one, our business has grown every year, but we wanted to hit the seven-figure business mark.

Lisa Larter (14:51):

I remember Morgan, "I just want to build a seven-figure business."

Sue Zimmerman (14:53):

We wanted to hit it. It's not just the money part of it obviously. I always throw in the word profitable whenever I say I have a seven-figure profitable business because anyone can have a seven-figure business by throwing seven figures of ads at a business. And so with you, you took us, you really held our hands at the beginning. And we saw what was possible when we work with someone that had more experience than us and had more success than us and understood us. Working with you was fun, and it was like being with my friend who was cheering me on every step of the way. And we mentioned Morgan, Morgan is my CEO. Morgan honestly makes most of the decisions in my business because she is the one analyzing the data consistently. That is her brain much more so than mine, and we are in alignment with how we grow this business steadily every year.

Sue Zimmerman (16:00):

We never were racing to have seven figures. We wanted to have seven figures, but we didn't want to do it at the expense of our work-life balance, which I know you and I totally love the ocean and just having our time with the ones that we love and the things that we love.

Lisa Larter (16:18):

Can you talk to me a little bit about the lessons you learned about attracting the wrong audience? I remember us talking about all these people who loved you that really didn't have any money to invest. And I think that sometimes people, they get focused on what I call vanity metrics. They're focused on their followers, they're focused on their list, and they're not as focused on the actual growth of their business. Can you talk to me about that?

Sue Zimmerman (16:53):

So I need, the word that we use, Lisa, is more the hobbyist. The hobbyist is the one that is so passionate about what they create, but they don't have a strategy. They just don't even put time into learning, understanding. And they

just want to create, they have no idea what the value of the time or how much time it took to knit the sweater or paint the piece of art, any of it. And so it's frustrating to attract that audience that isn't willing to invest money in growing, learning, collapsing time, and most importantly, making an impact in the world. And so a lot of the shift for us came with our messaging around who we wanted to attract. And so that comes with having and investing in really good copy, understanding who is it that we love working with so much that it doesn't even feel like 'a client', but a girlfriend that I would sit and have coffee with.

Sue Zimmerman (18:00):

And I know that your clients are those same individuals, Lisa. And this is why we love what we do so much because we work with people that make our lives feel more fulfilled by doing what we do best. And it doesn't feel like a J-O-B, it's like our life purpose. And when you attract those who appreciate the value of your money, and all money is an exchange of energy and value. But when they appreciate the value, the alignment is there instead of like, "Why am I even marketing to this person? It's not who I want to work with."

Lisa Larter (18:38):

Right. So talk to me a little bit about the step-up journey and what you have learned about hiring and building a team and hiring the right people, knowing when to maybe off-board the wrong people. That's a huge part of the journey too, right? It's great to create this culture around generosity and creativity with your clients, but it's almost like a completely separate animal, another business that you're running on the backend when you start hiring a team. And before we started, you and I were chatting, and you said you're hiring 2 new people, up to 16 people now. I'm in the similar situation, we've got between 20 and 30 people working with us at any given time. And there's a lot of personalities and a lot of dynamics that go into making a team work. What have some of your biggest lessons been on that?

Sue Zimmerman (19:42):

Yeah. It's such a great question. And I feel so, I want to say, I don't know if the word is privileged, grateful. To me, this is the success. This is the "did all fucking the work", and this is the success, to have a team that has your back every day, all day. What we did is we took the StrengthFinders test. And that was so important because-

Lisa Larter (20:09):

I think I told you to do that.

Sue Zimmerman (20:10):

What?

Lisa Larter (20:11):

I think I told you to do that?

Sue Zimmerman (20:12):

I think you did, I think you did.

Lisa Larter (20:13):

Yeah, I love that test.

Sue Zimmerman (20:15):

And that was such a pivotal part in my relationship with Morgan mostly because you can get frustrated with what people aren't doing. But when you know what their strengths are, then you can lean into those strengths and not look down upon their weaknesses, but literally celebrate the strengths and what their gifts are. And so I say that because so much more respect for each other and our unique brains. She's all system, processes, automation, backend. And I'm all educating, inspiring, motivating, mindset, entrepreneurship. The respect was just elevated for each other. And with that, today the bigger we get and the more we hire talent to do the things that we don't love grinding in. I don't like managing my calendar, I don't like looking at emails, I don't want to book any of my travel. I don't write my copy, we have a graphic designer, we have a videographer.

Sue Zimmerman (21:25):

We are able to hire the talent for the specific contribution to this business. And when you do that, you offload all the things that you do as an entrepreneur. And believe me, Lisa and I have done all of it personally because at the beginning you have to grind and wear all of the hats all of the time. And so we've been able to afford, to hire the talent that serves this business to keep scaling and keep growing. And it's amazing what happens when you put all the cogs to the machine together and everyone has the same vision and the same values and the culture behind the team and the

business that you're growing, it's magical. And I never imagined to have the life that I have today with the team that we have working with us.

Sue Zimmerman (22:19):

And we are very close, and we love working together. Lisa, I think this probably is true for you, but I always say to my husband, "Everyone that works for us treats this business and makes decisions as if it's their own business. They have so much enthusiasm and commitment to the greater success of our mission."

Lisa Larter (22:43):

Why do you think they're like that?

Sue Zimmerman (22:46):

Because of the way that we treat them, the way we pay them, we're very generous. And the way we include them in the decision-making processes and the way that we've outlined what their role is, the job description that Morgan literally documents and what they're responsible for and why. So everyone knows what their wheelhouse is, it's clearly defined. And we all know who to go to for what and why. And so when we're communicating in our Slack channel, it's just so easy to have projects flow seamlessly and be ahead of projects, never scrambling to get the copy with the graphics for the blog or the YouTube video. Everyone's contributing in a timely manner. And we've got the systems and processes in place to bring that enjoyment around each person's position.

Lisa Larter (23:50):

And so do you get people to go through the StrengthFinder before you hire them or after?

Sue Zimmerman (23:57):

We haven't done it with every employee, and that's an interesting question. When we interview now, it's quite a process to bring someone onto the team. Always with the video, we always have a video part to the component just to check the energy level and just hear the enthusiasm. But that's not a part of the hiring process today.

Lisa Larter (24:26):

Okay. One of the things that I do, and I'm not consistent with it, but I would like to be is I basically have a strength, StrengthFinders grid. And I have all of my team members written down one side, and I have all of the different strengths. And I have them categorized into the four different areas. And then I mark off what the strengths are. And the reason that I do that is so that I can identify gaps in our strengths. Because as an organization, you need to be whole, you need strengths in all areas of the business not just the areas that are like you. And I have found that mapping that out on a one-page document and being able to look at it really helps me to see where we are missing strengths in the business.

Sue Zimmerman (25:14):

That's so smart. Yeah, I like that idea a lot.

Lisa Larter (25:21):

What have you learned about hiring people that are not the right fit? I know I've done that. And one of my favorite questions is a question that Tim Ferris asked in a, I don't know if it was a blog or a podcast of his, years ago. It might've been a podcast, but it's written in a blog, which is what are 20% of the people and/or things that create 80% of your stress? And I remember when I asked myself that question the very first time, it was like ding, ding, ding and a person's name on my team came up, and I was, "Ugh."

Lisa Larter (25:58):

I just had that ugh feeling in my gut because this person was a great person, but they were no longer the right person on the team. They were no longer the right person on the bus. Has that happened to you? And what has your learning been around that? And what advice would you give to people who are listening right now about how to make smart decisions when that happens? Because Sue, you are such a positive, loving, fun person, it's hard to imagine you getting really down to brass tacks and being like, "Look, this isn't working."

Sue Zimmerman (26:38):

It's happened twice. And it happened with someone who was with us for five years as the OG. So it was a really hard to deal with that. And I think I even reached out to you a little bit and got advice from other people, even my

husband. It was hard, it was so hard because this person was a part of the very, very beginning and committed for five years. When we brought on new people, it was really stressful. And this particular person just felt like her job was taken away or that she wasn't the big cheese anymore, and she wasn't able to make decisions. And the energy was so hard and so frustrating. We were talking about her too much behind her back. To your point, it was occupying my brain too much. It was like-

Lisa Larter (27:35):

I love what you just said, we were talking about this member of the team too much behind their back. When that starts to happen, when you start to have conversations internally that do take up too much time that way, it's such a big red flag.

Sue Zimmerman (27:49):

It's such a red flag. And it was over and over again, it was so much mind share and so much energy. And it was just like, I just said one day enough. And I texted Morgan, she's like, "Wait, are you serious? Because I thought it was going to be me telling her." I'm like, "I'm done, I'm done. We're doing this, I'm done, I'm done, I'm done." But it was hard. So that was the first time. The second time we made the mistake of hiring a student who we thought had all kinds of skillsets that she claimed she had and may have had but were outdated to today's ... You know how quickly online marketing moves and software moves and all that.

Sue Zimmerman (28:30):

And so we did not do our background check, Morgan just did an audio interview. And if we had done a little bit more digging, I think we would have discovered that she wasn't capable. And there were a lot of insecurities with her decisions. She was reaching out to other team members before doing anything because she was afraid of failing and disappointing myself and Morgan. It just happened too much. And that ended well and very professionally, the first one did not end well at all, and it was a shit show.

Lisa Larter (29:12):

Yeah. I think it happens, it happens. The one thing that I will say that someone said to me at one point about someone on my team was, "When you first started this business, did you use Infusionsoft?" And I said, "No."

And they said, "What did you use?" And I said, "Oh, I think I used Constant Contact." And they said, "Okay. And did Constant Contact work well for you at that stage of your business?" And I said, "Yeah, it did." "And so what made you move to Infusionsoft?" "Well, my needs changed. I need something that did A, B, C, D, E." And the person literally turned the performance issue that I was having into a metaphor that sometimes people are the right fit for certain phases of your business.

Lisa Larter (29:58):

But then as your business does step up, some people will step up their skills in conjunction with the business step up, and some people will want to hang on to that early stage of where you were before. I think it's important to recognize that the people that contribute at different stages, it's that whole thing. What is the expression? Some people are here for a season or a reason. I think it's about being able to identify when someone is not the right fit for the next stage of your business.

Sue Zimmerman (30:37):

Yeah. The next phase or the stage. That's a great teachable lesson for everybody listening, for sure.

Lisa Larter (30:43):

Yeah. Okay. So I want to talk a little bit about risks associated with business because you dropped a little bomb on me before we started, and you said you lost your ad account. We are also dependent on social media in so many ways for lead generation. And there's a few things that I've heard lately that have happened to people that I know. You're not the first person that I've heard all of a sudden their ad account is gone or all of a sudden their profile or their page is gone, and they don't even know what they did. And I also had a client reach out to me just recently because PayPal froze her PayPal account because she made too much money in one month. And they deemed that because she has a coaching business that she was high risk and they're holding her money I think for six months, and she's got to find a new merchant provider. But they're literally holding her money for six months.

Lisa Larter (31:50):

Some of these tech companies have the ability to really influence the results in your business when you are too embedded in them. So tell me a little bit

about what happened and then tell me what you did and how your ability to pivot and your strength in building relationships has helped you overcome this challenge?

Sue Zimmerman (32:13):

Yeah. So two months ago we, in preparation for the iOS privacy updates, went in and changed all of our ads in one day just in preparation for that. My team was in there doing that. And we do work with an ads consultant team, we have a team that was overseeing this. And our ad account got shut down, it was probably like a red flag. Some changes were just going on too quickly. And we appealed it and appealed it and appealed it. And weeks later appealing, appealing in conversation with Facebook, finally got on with Facebook, but we just couldn't get it back. We were relentlessly, I mean, I reached out to some of the gurus in the industry that spend millions of dollars and knew people at Facebook, and we just couldn't get it back. So we were like, "We need to take control of what we can do."

Sue Zimmerman (33:07):

And at the time, fortunately Clubhouse came out, and Clubhouse came out. And I got on the app at the end of December. And I'll talk about Clubhouse in a minute, but I'll talk about ... Let me just tell you what we did with Facebook. So we tried everything we could. And when we knew that there was just no way that we could get our account back, we had to start building nine months' worth of work, nine months' worth of creating ads and visuals and graphics, and all the funnels, all the things. And so we had to open up a new credit card, so a new card was associated with that account. We had to use my address here on the Cape instead of in Boston. We had to open up a new Facebook page, get a new email URL, redirect everything, lots of steps.

Sue Zimmerman (33:58):

We're still doing what we need to do to build the ad account up. And you can only spend a certain amount of money as you start an ads account. And we were spending close to \$2,000 a day, and it was generating all the leads all day long with our evergreen sales funnel to Ready Set Gram. It was a beautiful thing. We finally figured out the code of making money in our sleep, it was beautiful. And that was really a blow that happened. Fortunately, we hit all of our numbers from last year. But we had to figure out, as entrepreneurs do, what can you do to help generate leads organically? And

Clubhouse came along, and you know me being an early adopter on every and all social platforms like Sue B. over here just wants to try everything because you never know.

Sue Zimmerman (34:52):

And clubhouse has turned out to be a place where I am daily. I have my own room five days a week, I have my own club called The Real Deal. I have over 1,000 people in my club, and I've built almost a 20,000 following in a little over two months. And with that has come organic leads close to 100 to 200 leads daily from Clubhouse. So now we're not spending any money, and we're having great results with-

Lisa Larter (35:23):

Oh my God, you're going to have so much profit this year.

Sue Zimmerman (35:25):

But the really cool thing, Lisa, you heard me speaking at the beginning about all of our offerings and working in our high end coaching. The conversion from people listening and hearing what I teach, what I do, how we do it in these rooms to people wanting to apply to our coaching has increased. And our last sales in Ready Set Gram Pro all came from Clubhouse. And the closing on those, zero friction.

Lisa Larter (35:57):

That's amazing. Why do you think people are so responsive and enamored and engaged with Clubhouse?

Sue Zimmerman (36:07):

Several reasons. You can really hear that enthusiasm, that integrity, that honesty. You have to think quick on your feet if you're going to contribute to a conversation. And it has to come from experience, from wisdom, from knowledge. It can't be something that you just heard in another room or you read on Google. And so because my knowledge on Instagram marketing is deep and goes back eight years, they know that I'm the real deal, hence the name of my club. And because of it, I have quite a reputation in and around the hallway and in the clubs because I'm pulled up on stages and given the moderating badge, which just is a green beam for those of you that need to know any of the nuances. But it really just is whose ever room it is, they

typically moderate those who can contribute to the conversation at hand and support the audience as well. It doesn't mean that you're better or greater or anything like that. In my opinion, it's a stamp of this person knows what they're going to talk about and can contribute. And so with that ... Yeah.

Lisa Larter (37:24):

But I also think it's a relationship thing. I think there's a level of relationship and trust that allows people to bring you up in a room. Most of the time if I go into a room on Clubhouse and somebody is leading the room that I know sees me, they bring me up right away. And it's again, it's because of the relationship. They know you're not going to go all Grant Cardone on them and that you're going to be respectful to the audience. You're not going to be pitching the audience, you're going to add value.

Sue Zimmerman (38:01):

Yeah. Speaking of that, what annoys me is when someone like him comes in a room and you're in the middle of a conversation, they stop the conversation just to give him attention that he's looking for. And the whole energy in the room shifts. That's when I say, "Peace out, I'm out of here."

Lisa Larter (38:19):

So what are some of the ... Well, I guess we don't really need to talk about some of the downsides of Clubhouse right now. I think there's a lot of masculine energy that is really pushy, pushy, pushy. And I think that that's a good thing because I think it creates an opportunity for women to go in and lead their way and to connect and communicate their way and really stand out.

Sue Zimmerman (38:46):

I am learning and have learned that obviously you choose where you hang out and where you want to broadcast what you know. And for me, it's always the smaller, more intimate, mostly women led clubs and rooms where I feel most alive and purposeful with just the conversation and the comradery and the sisterhood and the love. And that's where I like hanging out the most even though I do enter into some of those masculine rooms. I do want women to know that they can stand firmly in those rooms if they want to, and contribute. I have a little edge about that as well.

Lisa Larter (39:30):

Yeah. I'm the same. I don't like that ego push, push, push mentality. I see it on LinkedIn now too, everybody and their dog wants to connect with you on LinkedIn. And then the second you accept a connection request, they want to sell you something. And it's just such a turnoff. Social media for me has always been about relationship building and adding value. And when you build relationships and you add value over a continuous period of time, it becomes a no-brainer for people to want to do business with you because they know you, they like you, they trust you. I don't believe that telling is selling.

Sue Zimmerman (40:15):

The manipulative energy, I have such a problem with it, I really do.

Lisa Larter (40:21):

So let's talk predictions. What's next? What do you anticipate is going to happen in the social media landscape? Without going political because that's not-

Sue Zimmerman (40:36):

Yeah, that's not my thing anyway.

Lisa Larter (40:41):

We've seen a lot of tech companies exert control and control the narrative to a certain degree. And there was an article in the New York Times about social media and tech companies basically acting like the Supreme Court over what they considered to be fact. I'm just curious, I know that some of the people that I've had conversations with, they're starting to feel a little bit jaded around social media. And you're starting to see some divisiveness on social media too. And so I'm just curious what you think the future impact is, especially given the experience you just had with your own ads account?

Sue Zimmerman (41:34):

The first thoughts that are going through my mind are, I've observed because I observe so closely trends and just movements, and I think there's a big movement with the whole authenticity of the person behind the brand. And I think Sara Blakely and her husband Jesse do this brilliantly in exposing all of it, the good, the bad, the ugly. The perfection as you and I know don't exist.

When people can feel more intimately connected to you, whether it's your lifestyle or the fact that you have dogs or whatever, the way you dress or any aspects of that lifestyle is shown in a way that's not braggy or look at me, I have this convertible or I bought my second home or I'm wearing this Cartier bracelet. Any of those kind of pretentious ways of showing off success or fame or money, which is so not in alignment with me. But you do see the backdrop of my lifestyle and so much of my stories and my photos. I think there's a movement for, are you that person that is all over the internet in person? You and I both are that person.

Lisa Larter (43:01):

Is it the same person? Is the person I meet in-person the person that I see online?

Sue Zimmerman (43:06):

Exactly. And if there is a disconnect, that trust is broken the second you see someone. It's like, "Whoa, you're 20 years older than that profile photo, what happened?" I think that there's that movement, it's been evolving even before the pandemic. I really have sensed that. And my team and I are trying to put less perfectly curated photos from my photo shoots, which are fabulous and more iPhone photos here in my feed as well. So that's number one. Number two, in terms of ... Did you want to add anything to that?

Lisa Larter (43:47):

No. I agree with you. I remember meeting somebody who had this really big, bold personality online. And I met her at an event, and I shook her hand, and she had the dead fish handshake. And I was like, "Oh, you are not who you pretend to be online." It was really fascinating. And I think that that changes things for people when they have those experiences.

Sue Zimmerman (44:13):

Definitely. Definitely. And I really think in terms of business, you and I both have been in the online education space selling online and in person. You do amazing in-person events. And we tried one, and we will do another one someday. But I think that there's a way to connect your audience more intimately within your community. And so what I'm learning is it's so much easier to retain a customer than acquire, I hate the word, acquire a new one or get a new one. And so we're doing everything to bring our community

together in more intimate ways, whether it's in our pro coaching and we do workshops quarterly or in my Ready Set Gram Facebook group where I do a live broadcast, but we're talking about doing challenges and educating.

Sue Zimmerman (45:12):

When people feel connected to like-minded business owners, magic happens within your community. And if you were to ask me what I'm most proud of, yes, we hit seven figures, yes, we have a team of 16. But I am most proud of the thousands and thousands, and thousands of people in our community because that means that our marketing, our messaging, our work is working.

Lisa Larter (45:39):

And I think right now with COVID, people are craving community more than ever before. And they're craving like-minded community, they're craving generous communities. I used to always joke that people would join my programs because of me, but they would stay because of the community.

Sue Zimmerman (45:57):

True, true. I'm seeing that trend as well because we have a subscription, after our initial 90 days of our pro coaching, we have subscription opportunity for people to stay. And the most of them are for another year.

Lisa Larter (46:13):

Yeah, that's great. So I have one last question for you before we wrap up, because you have built a business around your personality and the brand of Sue. Yes, you are the Instagram expert, yes, you have a team and all that. But really at the core of the business, it is Sue B. Zimmerman, is the influencer that is the one bringing the leads into the business for the most part. Morgan has influence too, I see Morgan's influence. I adore Morgan, I think she is just a super, super, super smart young woman. And I can't wait to see where she is in 10 years from now, I'm just so impressed with her growth. But I'm curious as to what advice you would have for somebody listening right now who thinks, "I want to build a brand like Sue, I want to use my personality, my creativity, my relationship gifts," et cetera, et cetera, "to build something."

Lisa Larter (47:16):

What advice would you give someone who aspires to be ... And I hate saying be an influencer because I think you got to have fricking influence before you

can be an influencer. But reality is people do aspire to have influence, to make a difference in other people's lives today. And at the same time, we have this cancel culture out there where you're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't in some situations. You and I have seen some pretty big online influencers take it on the chin this year for saying the wrong thing or not saying anything. There's that other side that can be a little bit scary in terms of putting yourself out there. So what advice do you have for somebody who's just starting out, they're listening and they're thinking, "How do I do what you did"?

Sue Zimmerman (48:09):

Yeah. This year, the whole team read Russell Brunson's book *Expert Secrets*, phenomenal book.

Lisa Larter (48:17):

It's a great book.

Sue Zimmerman (48:18):

What really resonated for me is building a movement. And yes, I'm the face of the brand. We are actually strategically evolving into more than just Instagram because once you've had success building a seven-figure business, you can take all of those lessons and teach business owners what you did to do that, and it's not just Instagram. Instagram is the marketing tool, Instagram is the machine that brings in the leads. But so much to your point of my growth and success has to do with Morgan's contributions, her brain, and the way that she runs this business. And with this comes bigger and greater opportunities to scale outside of Instagram. So my advice is when you lean into the thing that brings you the most joy and you can build a business around that, and you learn all these lessons along the way and you document them, and you then have the opportunity to teach in a bigger way. And that's the crossroad where we're at right now as we continue to scale.

Lisa Larter (49:24):

So talk to me about documenting the lessons. Do you do that? What is your process around that?

Sue Zimmerman (49:30):

We do. We reflect on every launch, what worked, what didn't. We talk about things that we stopped doing. We actually have a lot of posts and IGTV videos. The things that we've shut down, we shut down a Facebook group with 10,000 followers. The lesson is the more hyper-focused you get to your offer and take away all the other things that are distracting you, things being time to keep up with and create, the more success that you can have. And so eliminating for us and honing in and simplifying. I like to say simplifuckingflying. It's definitely-

Lisa Larter (50:19):

We'll use a little E next to this podcast.

Sue Zimmerman (50:21):

Yeah. I have a graphic on my Instagram account, it's so good that says that. But the more you can simplify and go deep in your craft, the more impact you can make, which leads to that income. And that's what we did to scale seven figures this year. Morgan led the charge with our campaigns and the ad spent to the budget and the hires and just constantly tweaking the copy and the messaging and the webinar, all of it. It requires looking at what worked and looking at what didn't work after you do every launch, every project, every campaign, and documenting it so that you learn and grow from it. And with it came, "Sue, I think it's time to shut down your personal account Sue B. Zimmerman? "Really?" "Oh, I like that account." "Yeah, shut down that Instagram account, it's inactive. Shut down a Facebook group, 10,000 people, just shut down a lot of things."

Sue Zimmerman (51:28):

And also even, Lisa, to the point of what stages am I speaking on and what I'm saying yes and no to. We now have people that I get sponsorships, and you want me to talk about something. The influence is going to cost you money.

Lisa Larter (51:47):

I want to wrap up because I want to be respectful of your time and the time on the show, I feel like I could talk to you for probably like three hours here. I have a business idea for you. Have you read the book Rocket Fuel Yet?

Sue Zimmerman (52:03):

Yes.

Lisa Larter (52:04):

So I think that you and Morgan should do like a sparkle fuel. And I think that you guys should talk about the left and right brains of two women who have come together to build a business this way. Because there's so much learning in terms of both of your approaches. I know both of you, and I know your personalities are very different. And it takes a lot of trust in each other to do what you guys have done. And I think there's a whole world of learning-

Sue Zimmerman (52:41):

We've been talking about it. And so it's kind of like you're not too young, you're not too old, there's 30 years between us, and it's not too late. And so we have something brewing with a TED Talk, with a book, which I am not writing. But I hear you, friend, I hear you.

Lisa Larter (53:01):

Yeah. I just think that you and Morgan deserve to be acknowledged because a lot of women struggle to work well together, especially in a business partnership. And I think that the two of you with your super creative brain and her super logical process-oriented brain, I think you guys have just done a beautiful job of building this business while still loving each other. Do you know what I mean?

Sue Zimmerman (53:32):

So much love and so much respect. And we've worked a lot at respecting each other's roles and contributions. I trust her so much to make the big decisions. And she hires the next team member and tells me why and what she thinks they deserve to get paid, and we get on a call. I trust her because it's always in the spirit of growth. And like I said earlier, slowly building so that we have the lifestyle that we want.

Lisa Larter (54:07):

Yeah. So if I could wrap the show up with one last thing that I want you, the listener to take away, that is every woman in business needs a younger person to give them insights. So Morgan is 30 years younger than Sue, and it's super, super valuable to be able to tap into that young way of looking at

things. And the same is true for a young woman. A young woman who's in her 20s who's starting her business really does need the guidance and mentorship of someone who is older than they are, 20, 30 years older that can help them. I really believe that yin yang mix in terms of age and experience is a beautiful thing and that not enough people are looking for how younger people can help them and vice versa.

Lisa Larter (55:07):

So if you don't have that person in your business or in your life, you need to find them because there's a lot of magic that happens. I mentor a lot of young women, and I love it. And sometimes I go to them and I ask them questions about things they think I should be doing in my business, and I love the advice they give me. It's just a really beautiful thing.

Sue Zimmerman (55:27):

It is. And it's been a beautiful journey, and it's been my favorite business to date. It's been wonderful. I don't see changing anything other than growing and making a bigger impact.

Lisa Larter (55:40):

Awesome. All right. Sue, thank you so much for your time. I am going to put all of your links and all of the fun stuff about where people can find you into the show notes. And it'll be super, super easy to find you-

Sue Zimmerman (55:57):

Lisa, I would love everyone listening, I love to just say, I'd love for you to come over to Instagram, The Instagram Expert. And just on any of my posts, just tag me, leave a comment and tag Lisa and let us know what really resonated for you today because I love hearing from you. And the best way to do that is to pop on one of my comment threads or just in the DM and tell me. Yeah, we want you to take action.

Lisa Larter (56:25):

Awesome. Thank you, Sue.

Sue Zimmerman (56:27):

Yeah, so fun.



Lisa Larter (56:28):

Great to spend time with you, we'll have to do this again.

Sue Zimmerman (56:31):

For sure.

Lisa Larter (56:32):

Thank you for joining me for this episode of She Talks Business. If you enjoyed the show, you know the drill, leave us a review, tell someone about it and join the conversation on social media. Thanks for listening and until next time remember, done is always better than perfect.





Lisa Larter is a Business Strategist, Digital Marketing Expert, Author and Speaker.

The Lisa Larter Group helps their clients to formulate marketing strategies that support their business goals and objectives. Lisa provides consulting & advisory services, and implementation services including social media & content management, book marketing, and website design.

Sue B. Zimmerman, also known as the Instagram Expert, is the creator of the most comprehensive online Instagram course, Ready Set Gram.

Over the past 8 years, Sue B. has helped business owners turn Instagram into their most effective marketing platform. She's been featured on Netflix, spoken on prominent stages all over the world, and helped thousands of people exceed their bottom lines with her courses and Instagram coaching. Sue B. lives and breathes her belief that you're never too old and it's never too late to make an impact on Instagram.

