



Why Your Strategy is Dead with Elizabeth Young

Episode #13

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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):

All right. So can we talk about your strategy and what it means to have a strategy before a pandemic hits and what the heck you should do once that pandemic hits and what you should do if you own a retail brick-and-mortar store and now all of a sudden, everything has changed. This week on the show, I am having a candid conversation with a long-time business advisory, client of mine, Elizabeth Young, from Flowers Talk Tivoli in Ottawa, Canada.

Lisa Larter (00:59):

Elizabeth Young is a rockstar. All right. She is... How would I describe Elizabeth? She is fiercely loyal. She is not one of the loudest people in the room, but she is one of the most contemplative and creative and quietly courageous people I know. She is also one of the hardest working women I know. She is never afraid to work long hours and do what it takes to build her business. She's also created some flowers for some pretty important people like Oprah Winfrey, Michelle Obama, Sarah Richardson, Hillary Clinton. She has been in the industry for years.

Lisa Larter (01:43):

Her business, although, she doesn't even look this old, is 33 years old. I think, she's the second owner of this business. She bought this business seven



years ago, but prior to that, she ran her own floral shop called Flowers Talk, and then she acquired Flowers Talk Tivoli. She is a well-known personality on the news in the Ottawa area. And she is probably one of the most generous people in the community I know. She regularly participates in fundraisers and giving back to the community.

Lisa Larter (02:22):

So you're going to learn a lot in this interview about what it takes to adapt your business during a pandemic, how to brush off the naysayers, how to let the people who are throwing darts at you just fall to the floor and keep your focus on what matters most, and how you need to think about the future and make your own decisions about what your new normal in business looks like. Enjoy the show. And if you can hear my husband in the background, making coffee and pouring water, I'm sorry.

Lisa Larter (03:02):

Hello, hello, hello. I almost forgot to bring my microphone close to my face. That is a podcasting faux pas to be so presumptive that my mic can carry my voice from far, far, far away. We are here today with the one and only the super fantabulous, Elizabeth Young. I have known Elizabeth for a number of years. She can tell you a really funny story about a text message that I sent her many years ago before she knew who I really was threatening to kick her, you know what? And I am proud to call this woman, a client, a colleague, a friend, and one of the most creative, one of the most courageous business owners that I know. Elizabeth, welcome to the show.

Elizabeth Young (03:57):

Oh, thank you so, so much, Lisa. I'm so honored that you asked me to be on your podcast. When you told me you were starting this, I was like, "Oh, one day, one day." So thank you. Thank you. I'm so excited to be here.

Lisa Larter (04:08):

Well, the purpose of this podcast, and originally, it was going to be a solo, that I was going to do on my own, really talking about why your strategy is dead. And the more I thought about it, the more I thought, if there's one person that I know who has exemplified innovative, courageous, bold thinking throughout the pandemic and leading out of the pandemic, it's you. And I thought it would be really interesting for us to have a conversation

about where things were at pre-pandemic, some of the decisions you made during the pandemic, and what we predict may happen post-pandemic.

Elizabeth Young (04:53):

Oh, yeah.

Lisa Larter (04:54):

So let's just go back a little bit. And I still remember when all of this COVID stuff first hit, you own a bricks-and-mortar flower shop. And I remember the panicked call you and I had when you weren't sure if you were going to be allowed to keep your business open.

Elizabeth Young (05:20):

Exactly, exactly. That was scary and surreal, all at the same time. There was everything going on in the world, but then there was everything going on with business. So we decided to close for curbside pickup and delivery the week before we were deemed non-essential. And really most of the decisions I make in my business, I do get so much feedback from my team. So it's really, they're my family. They're my designers. They are the talent. They're the core of the business.

Elizabeth Young (05:58):

And so when all of this was coming about and things, talk about being shut down and announcements coming out, it was really the decision to close before we were deemed non-essential because of the comfort level of my team. So a week before the announcement came out, we decided to close. And we were just, not close, but sorry, do curbside pickup and do deliveries. So over the phone and online. And that week was scary. It was crickets. No one had heard of what curbside pickup was at that point. People weren't as comfortable to shop online. So that first week was very scary. We got a lot of painting done and a lot of cleaning done in that store.

Lisa Larter (06:41):

Well, and then you went through a period where you were basically the only person working in the store.

Elizabeth Young (06:47):

Yes. Yes.

Lisa Larter (06:48):

Because I remember your team was a little bit scared of what was going on, rightfully so. A lot of people were scared. And I also remember you, and I remember you saying something to me about people's mental health and how flowers make people feel good. And we can't not allow people to send flowers to the people that they want to make feel good. People can't be with their family members in hospitals. People can't go. So you were really adamant that you would not let the lifeline of giving be cut off.

Elizabeth Young (07:30):

100%. I felt, and it could be my little happy flower world, but I felt that flowers were more essential than fast food. So I knew that people needed them and people were not able to physically connect with each other. And flowers really do talk. Sending flowers from one end of the city to the other can change a whole person's week, it can change their outlook, it can change the way they look at themselves, the way they treat other people. I just knew that we needed to keep getting beautiful things out into the world so that there was some sense of normalcy for people.

Lisa Larter (08:08):

And your peers who own flower stores in the city weren't all supportive of your decision to boldly lead this way.

Elizabeth Young (08:23):

Exactly. And Lisa, you know exactly what it's like to be a change maker, right? You like to come up with ideas and just go for it. And people can get maybe jealous of that. People can get scared of that because maybe they didn't think of it first. But I felt that the beginning of the pandemic was not the time, personally, for me and for my business to put the brakes on. It was the time to put your pedal on the gas and just hold on and go for it. So there were a lot of haters, there were, but there were a couple of really great supporters. And I had a couple of colleagues in the floral world that I was able to call on for help. And that's what helped get me through it.

Elizabeth Young (09:08):

And you can't stay closed forever. The haters ended up turning around and they opened up in time for Mother's Day, but there was that period of time from March to Mother's Day that we were one of the only operating flower

shops in the city. My team was at home. They felt more comfortable being at home. They checked in with me every little bit and I felt it was best to work with their comfort level, have my team at home, and I was the only person in my store. So the couriers would pick up at the back of my store. I'd be nowhere near them. My delivery companies would drop flowers outside of the store. So I felt that I was very safe with the public. I felt I was keeping the public safe, but a lot of people didn't think that was the case, but they turned around when it came time to open up for some of those big holidays, which is understandable.

Lisa Larter (10:04):

So I want to acknowledge you because I think that you really acted boldly in terms of how you chose to lead your business. There were a lot of people that chose not to act boldly. There were a lot of people that were seeking permission. There were a lot of people that were sitting at home waiting. And it's interesting, I just wrote a blog called If It Matters, You Will Find A Way, And If It Doesn't, You'll Find An Excuse. And I think that you really exemplified leading your business during this challenge. So talk to me a little bit about some of the things that you did in terms of creating a different offering. Because prior to COVID, 90, 95% of your business was walk-in, was it not?

Elizabeth Young (10:59):

Yes, it was. Yeah, walk-in and that big floral cooler right in the middle of our store. And it was usually having a lineup on Mother's Day, lineup at Easter for people to come in and see everything. So we, and a huge thanks to you too. You were there, you were my sounding board. "Am I crazy? Am I nuts? You think I can do this?" And you were just encouraging, encouraging, encouraging, which is, I'm forever grateful. And we had some great resources. So we were able to get every single, pretty much every single item that we sell in our store up on our website in a very short period of time.

Elizabeth Young (11:37):

So we worked with a really fantastic web team to be able to do that. And we had already had a very great website before, but it just had very minor offerings. Now, we put up all of our giftware, all of our plants, all of that, but we also really honed in on less choices for people for floral. So instead of having every flower that we have in the cooler, we had ideas and snippets

and price points, just a small offering that made it less confusing for people. Though I realized we didn't need to offer A to Z, offering ABC would work really, really well for us. And I think that simplified the confusion for people. And I think it made ordering online a lot easier for them.

Lisa Larter (12:25):

For sure. You made it super, super easy for people to buy, but I think the other thing that you were doing that people probably didn't realize is you were adapting to your ever-changing supply chain, right?

Elizabeth Young (12:39):

Yeah.

Lisa Larter (12:39):

Getting flowers became problematic for you too, did it not?

Elizabeth Young (12:44):

Huge impact. So a lot of the, 80% of the flowers that usually would come in would be coming in from Colombia, Ecuador, Thailand, Holland, all over the world. And those flights were just not coming in. And those farms were heavily impacted. And the whole supply chain has just gone almost to a grinding halt. And we're going to see the effects of COVID in the floral industry and the supply chain for probably a good couple more years. So even this year for Mother's Day, there were not the same offerings that there were in the past because those farms were unable to plant those flowers last year. And all those flights were not coming in, but we were able to still receive beautiful flowers, but we were able to receive flowers from the Niagara area because they were not going to shut down agriculture.

Elizabeth Young (13:40):

And so the growers there in the, sorry, in Niagara, really came through for all of the flower shops. We had the most beautiful selection and it was all Canadian made. So it's really made me shift our flower dollar into more of the Canadian market now than the overseas. So that excites me a lot to see how we can support those fellow Canadian growers and those suppliers that were able to support those farmers have our business forever.

Lisa Larter (14:14):

Yeah. It was a great example of local supporting local, meaning local within the country supporting local businesses. And there's just so many great stories of business owners who rose to the occasion during the pandemic. I want to just ask you, percentage-wise, what was the, what would you say your average percentage of growth or decline was through the COVID season?

Elizabeth Young (14:44):

Oh, growth. We grew. So because we didn't close the first six weeks or so, we were up, I'd say, we're up about 20% or so. And everything was online.

Lisa Larter (15:02):

Yes.

Elizabeth Young (15:04):

So scale is handful [crosstalk 00:15:05].

Lisa Larter (15:04):

That's huge. That's huge.

Elizabeth Young (15:05):

That is huge. That is huge. Because I had a lot of inventory. I had a full team that I needed to have a place for them to come home to. So I'm very happy, all the support from the neighborhood, and even the support from people who've never physically stepped foot into our store still felt comfortable purchasing from us online. So without that, we wouldn't be here. So I'm forever grateful for all those fantastic orders and fantastic customers.

Lisa Larter (15:37):

You also did, so you led the industry in a bunch of ways. You led with curbside pickup and delivery. You led with giftware. You led with transitioning to a simplified online model. You led with adding on through your online model, but you also led by hosting workshops. And I thought you were crazy. I had to tell you, the first time you told me you had to do workshops, I was like, "Alright, try it. You never know." How did that go?

Elizabeth Young (16:07):

Oh, that was, oh, [crosstalk 00:16:09].

Lisa Larter (16:11):

You are like the Martha Stewart of the floral industry. You're famous for your workshop.

Elizabeth Young (16:15):

It's been fun, but man, the thought process, I did not put it all into place, really, to be honest. I hosted my first workshop live without ever hosting a Zoom meeting before. So it was hilarious. So we used to do workshops in the shop. They were just this fun get together, have a small group of people, some men, some women, some family members, mothers, daughters, all that. So I just loved bringing people together and doing something creative. And I love interacting with people. I love teaching people. I love when I get to see someone's beautiful creation at the end of a workshop. And so I felt that was missing. And on top of having the store closed, not closed, sorry, curbside pickup and delivery, and me being by myself, I decided to start hosting virtual workshops on Facebook Live.

Elizabeth Young (17:13):

So I'd send out a couple of kits, and if you wanted to watch me do it without buying a kit, then watch me do it without buying a kit. Like, "Let's bring a little bit of creativity into people's lives." And the feedback I was getting from people was like, "This is really great. I'd like to be able to see what the other people are making or things like that." So I went ahead with our fall workshops that I normally would have carried in the store, but I offered them virtually. So we started shipping our kits across Ontario, certain kits that were perishable levels. And shipping those across Ontario, and then just people in the city wanting to do them. And it just became this thing, and people looked forward to it and they looked forward to creating something really beautiful that they could be proud of.

Elizabeth Young (18:02):

And it was great when at the end of it I'd hear from people, "That was my favorite Zoom meeting of the week." Or, "Oh, I just, it felt so good. This was me time. After I worked all day and put the kids to bed, I'm able to hop on and watch this recording because I couldn't watch it live. And thank you so

much." And it just became this community. And I love it. I love doing my workshops online, and I don't know if I'm ever going to go back to hosting them in the shop. I like the reach that we have this way.

Lisa Larter (18:31):

Yeah. And not only, I mean, a, it was a really, really great business idea to do that. B, people were bored silly at home. So you really did give them a creative outlet. And, c, it became a wave of marketing for you because everybody who was sharing what they were creating. And then, because it was becoming so popular, you started having corporations reach out to you to do private workshops too.

Elizabeth Young (19:02):

Yeah. I love that. That's fun. And I think that's something that will continue. And our shop is very small. It's very small. It's very, very, very full. So I can only host a maximum of 12 people in my store tightly for an in-person workshop. So corporations have larger groups. So this is great. And people can do this from the comfort of their home, or it's great because, "Grab your favorite bottle of wine, or grab your spouse or your kids join in." So it was neat to be able to see them, colleagues together, and it's like, they hadn't been together doing something creative in such a long time. So that's a real fun thing that we started doing. I'm really excited about where that's going to go in 2021 and 2022.

Lisa Larter (19:47):

Yeah, I love it. But what I really want listeners to take away from this is sometimes you just have to have the courage to lead. You have to put blinders on and pave the way for you. And just because somebody else is saying, "Oh, you shouldn't be open. Oh, you shouldn't be doing that. Oh, workshops aren't going to work." You are an entrepreneur. And when you have an idea, and you're passionate and committed about seeing it through, sometimes you got to trust yourself and just not listen to those naysayers.

Lisa Larter (20:25):

I mean, Liz, I've seen you do that, Elizabeth, sorry, for those of you listening. You're not, it's Elizabeth, unless you are in the inner circle, which I know I am. If you have ideas and you are waiting for somebody to give you permission, you're never going to lead. And you have just done that over and over and

over again. What other really interesting things have happened in the year of the pandemic that you'd like to share with people? Is there anything else?

Elizabeth Young (20:59):

Oh, so much has happened. Wow. And I can't believe it's been on this long. And while this is being recorded, our area is opening up to a 15% capacity. And I've made the decision to keep curbside pickup, keep delivery, and not open up, to that 15%. Not because we don't want to have people in the shop. I would love to have people in the shop, but just the number of team members that we need to be able to create all these beautiful arrangements would only allow for one person in the shop. And our customers don't want to line up. So I'm finding that curbside pickup and delivery, people are finding it so convenient.

Elizabeth Young (21:40):

So people are back-to-back meetings right now. They want to be able to get something when they want it. They just have to place their order ahead of time. And they like being able to just come, pick up their arrangement and go. So this may change the way we do business in the future. We may be eliminating those lineups at the major holidays and things like that. I don't think curbside pickup will ever go away for us. I think it's going to make it a lot easier and more convenient for people to be able to do that. We've expanded our home decor line immensely. We weren't able to go shopping and people want to support local, yes, I know you can buy quite a few of our things from the big online distributors, but it goes back to the people and the relationships and people really want to support local. And so they're purchasing our decor pieces. People have signed up for receiving flowers weekly for themselves just to be able to make their space more beautiful, right?

Lisa Larter (22:40):

Oh, sign me up. I know. I wish I was in the city and I could get your flowers weekly because your designs are just outstanding.

Elizabeth Young (22:49):

Oh, I would love to be able to send flowers to you weekly. Eventually, we'll see, we'll see. Flower shipping scares me a little bit, perishable. And also with all the shipping delays and everything like that, it gets a little scary. But we're

just trying to think of new things and opening up to new ideas and new lines and trying to find local artisans, local makers, to be able to support them also. So that's really what we've been able to do in the last, however long it's been. It feels like 18 months. I don't know. It's less than that, but just try new things. And this has given us the opportunity to expand and try new things, get in a new line of something, if it doesn't work, it's not the end of the world. Just do it. That's what we've been doing, just doing it.

Lisa Larter (23:37):

Yeah. You absolutely have been doing it. And what advice would you give for business owners that are potentially afraid to break the rules? Because even when we were looking at the guidelines around whether you were considered essential or not, it wasn't expressly clear. And so you were prepared that somebody could come knocking on the door and say, "You're not allowed to be open." So where did you find the audacity to do things your own way? And what would you say to other business owners who maybe are feeling like they can't bend the rules?

Elizabeth Young (24:22):

I felt the rules weren't clear. I truly believed I wasn't breaking the rules. I was very, very careful as far as the safety of my team, again, at home. And then when they came back, there was no contact with the public at all, unless it was over the phone. And since e-commerce was allowed to operate, since those big box retailers online were able to deliver overnight, then I didn't see the difference between them and me to be honest. And I didn't overthink it. So if I had gotten into my head too much, it would have scared me enough to not do it, but it scared me more of the potential of not doing it. It scared me more that I wouldn't be able to make payroll. It scared me more than I wouldn't be able to sell all the products in my store. That I wouldn't have a home for my team to come back to. So you can't overthink it and you can't let people get into your head, and don't ask every single person for their opinion. Look to the people that can give you guidance.

Lisa Larter (25:36):

And that's so good.

Elizabeth Young (25:37):

I have you. You're my mentor. I can ask you. You're an educated, brilliant business woman, I can ask you your advice. I can ask my husband, I trust his advice. I'm not going to ask Joe Blow off the street, or I'm not going to ask maybe another shop that has decided not to open. I'm going to look and seek advice from a few handful of people that I truly admire and appreciate their opinion. And if they disagree with me, that is completely their opinion and I'm okay. And I've learned to be okay with that, but my gut told me that I could do this. My gut told me I needed to do it. And I'll go down with the Titanic. That's just me.

Lisa Larter (26:22):

So the irony is we were together with a group of individuals, actually, you and I spent a half day together, the month before this all went down, creating a brilliant strategy for your business for the upcoming year that literally went out the window. And so I'm curious as to what you think about your business strategy moving forward. As the market starts to open up, what do you believe will be your business's new normal?

Elizabeth Young (26:58):

That is a great question. And I feel like I, we did, we had that great little plan. We created a beautiful color-coded template. We knew where I was going to head for the next year and then boom, COVID hit. And it actually propelled me forward into a couple of those ideas that we had about how, "Oh, I'd like to get more online. I'd like to do more home decor. I'd like to do this." And then it was like, "Boom, Elizabeth, it's sink or swim. Let's do this." So it did catapult some of those ideas to start a little bit forward, but as far as the strategy moving forward, I don't have my head wrapped around a strategy for a year yet because I feel like we've been working in phases of the lockdown.

Elizabeth Young (27:43):

So it's almost like I have to work myself in quarters, and I'm redesigning my whole store so that I can allow for better customer service for customers once they're able to come in, more space for my staff, more room for online orders, more space for curbside pickup. So we're physically changing the way we will be welcoming people into the store and we will be streamlining our

options as well. So there will be a lot, it sounds weird, there'll be a lot less options, but a lot more options. If that makes sense.

Elizabeth Young (28:23):

And then as far as where we are spending our floral dollars, as far as our suppliers and things like that, we'll be supporting a lot more of those local growers. And I've just seen different spikes in different areas of things that we carry that maybe we'll focus on some of those a little bit more, and less on some of the other things that weren't doing so well in the shop.

Lisa Larter (28:51):

I love what you said though about looking at your strategy from a 90-day perspective. I think that, in the strategy lab, what I'm trying to do is I'm trying to help people actually do that really, look at the year, but break it down into the quarter and then focus on getting things done each month. I think that if I would say anything, what COVID did is it allowed you to think less and do more. So you were able to take an idea and not overthink it, and not get stuck in analysis paralysis. It was like there was a fire underneath you. There was a sense of urgency to get it done now. And I think that that's really great learning because I think what you can see when you look back at how you had a bit of a just-do-it attitude, when you trusted your gut and your intuition, and you just got things off the ground, they took off.

Lisa Larter (29:50):

Whereas, a lot of times what we do is we obsess over every single detail and we overcomplexify our strategy and we sit on it and we don't take action, we don't get any lift or momentum because we make it too difficult. So I think that for anyone listening, if you have a business right now, start playing the short game. One of the things that I like to talk about is making big, small. So when you take a big idea and you break it down into really small actionable steps, you can actually get it done a lot faster. I agree with you though, Elizabeth, I don't think that the new normal, I don't think that we are ever going back to normal. I think there's going to be new normals in terms of how we do things.

Lisa Larter (30:39):

I think that you have taken a consumer base that was 90% or 95% retail store foot traffic, and you have transitioned to a 100% online with a 20%

growth factor. That's huge. So you have literally educated people on how to make buying decisions in your market online, and you can't take that away from them once they've learned and adapted to doing things this way.

Elizabeth Young (31:12):

I agree with you. I agree, 100%. And it's exactly what you always say. And it was in my head every time I did something, done is better than perfect. If I waited till everything was absolutely perfect, everything was perfectly tweaked, I wouldn't have been selling anything. I started, before we had everything up on the website, I started just selling things off of Instagram. And it was like, "I've got this, I've got this. You want this? We've got this. This has got to go." And if I waited and uploaded everything beautifully to the website and took all the measurements, all that, those items would still be in my store.

Elizabeth Young (31:46):

So yeah, done is better than perfect. I had never done Facebook Live before. I was terrified. I had never done Instagram Live before. I never wanted to show my face, but people want to see people and they want to see the people behind the product that they're creating for you. So that's another thing too, is that, if you wait till your hair is perfect, if you wait until your outfit is perfect, you'll never jump on a Facebook Live and people won't be able to buy what you're offering.

Lisa Larter (32:16):

Yeah, absolutely. I think, especially in the creative space, artistry, floral design, even restaurants, I think people really are wanting to know who the people are behind the business today. I think it's a really important point. I still remember one of your first little videos. You're literally dancing and we can just see your apron and your feet going in the store. You were working by yourself and you were working killer hours. And I mean, speaking of killer hours, talk to me about Mother's Day, how late were you at your shop?

Elizabeth Young (32:56):

This year or last year?

Lisa Larter (32:57):

This year.

Elizabeth Young (33:00):

This year. This year, thank you for texting me and making sure I got home ok. This year I worked, there was three hours sleep nights, but we had to get it done. And I would much prefer-

Lisa Larter (33:14):

Can I stop you for a second? There was a three-hour sleep night. There are three-hour sleep nights. And yet there have been customers who have read you the Riot Act because they couldn't get same day delivery done. Do you think that the public as a whole, I know there are exceptions, I know that the vast majority of your customer base has been great, but do you think the public as a whole has any idea how hard it has been behind the scenes to do what you've done?

Elizabeth Young (33:50):

I don't think so. I honestly, I don't think so. I don't know if this whole pandemic has made people more empathetic or not, but I'm seeing a lot of just meanness on social. And I feel that we don't have to, we don't personally, but I feel like we don't have to keep posting, be kind, be kind, because that should just be normal human behavior to be kind, but we're not a food delivery service that can be an app that you can have within 15 minutes at your door. We have hardworking designers behind that product that need to process those flowers, to clean those flowers, to hydrate those flowers, create that beautiful design for you.

Elizabeth Young (34:32):

So we will do everything we can, everything in our power to get something for somebody immediately. And it's special case-by-case as well, but there are some... So we can look at all those beautiful, beautiful messages.

Lisa Larter (34:47):

I just don't think people would imagine their local florist, the owner of their local flower shop, the 100% women-owned floral shop being at her business until two o'clock in the morning because there was no way that she was going to, a, make her team work extra hard the next day. And she wanted to get ahead of the curve so that Mother's Day orders could be delivered on time as planned. I feel like I'm your cheerleader because I am, but I think for the listeners, what I really want you to get out of this show is, it takes a lot of

damn hard work. It's not easy. It might look easy on the surface. It's not easy to make decisions and have your colleagues throw darts at you and say mean things about you on Facebook in front of other people.

Lisa Larter (35:48):

It's not easy to have customers respond to your email about choosing not to open and criticize your judgment. It's not easy to have to find new suppliers in the middle of a pandemic because the ones you've relied on for years can't deliver. It's not easy to adjust your product mix to figure out how to keep your store afloat. It's not easy to stay at your shop till the wee hours. It's not easy to fulfill orders all by yourself. And so I think that a lot of times as business owners, we get into business sometimes because we want things to be easier. And a lot of people quit their boss. They don't quit their job. They think it's going to be easier.

Lisa Larter (36:36):

And I think that the lesson of all of this is there are people that chose to not necessarily work as hard. And there are some people, I just want to be really clear to those of you who are listening. There are some people that had absolutely no choice. I mean, I have a client who is in the swim school space, and God loved them, every time they turned around, they were not allowed to offer lessons. And so, they literally had zero control. You can't exactly teach kids how to swim without a pool. And in the middle of the winter, you can't exactly teach them how to swim from home using Zoom.

Lisa Larter (37:18):

There are some legitimate businesses out there that were handcuffed. And my heart goes out to the restaurant industry more than anything, because some of those restaurant owners, they would do anything to keep their team employed, but the, "Oh, you're open. Oh, you're closed. Oh, you're open."

Elizabeth Young (37:37):

Oh, closed. Opened, closed.

Lisa Larter (37:37):

The zigzag of all that was just awful for them. But then there are people out there that I think really looked for the opportunity and people that looked for the out. And looking for the opportunity and doing what it takes to really

stick with it and grow your business when times are tough, is not easy to do. It's hard.

Elizabeth Young (38:03):

Oh, it's easier to binge watch Netflix.

Lisa Larter (38:06):

Way easier to binge watch Netflix and apply for sub. Like, "Give me the free money from the government and let me sit at home." I mean, yes, it's easier to do that, but the people that choose to really step up and do the hard work are the people that are going to reap the rewards like you have. And Elizabeth, I've known you for a long time and you, I would say you are not a confrontational person.

Elizabeth Young (38:39):

Not at all.

Lisa Larter (38:41):

You are a very kind-hearted, loyal, empathetic, caring-

Elizabeth Young (38:48):

People pleaser.

Lisa Larter (38:48):

... People person. And I know that making some of these decisions was, you had to wrestle with some of those decisions. And I love that you were determined to have a business that your team could come back to. I know that you were determined to create an environment that was safe for your team and your customers. And I knew that you were determined to ensure that people were still able to get your product. And I think that that passion and commitment, really, and that determination for other people is what helped you continue to move forward.

Elizabeth Young (39:33):

Thank you. Thank you. I really appreciate that.

Lisa Larter (39:39):

I don't know what else to ask you. Other than, what are you going to do if there's a fourth wave? No, I shouldn't even ask that question. That's crazy because-

Elizabeth Young (39:48):

No. That's in my head. We're just going to keep rolling. And if we need to be closed for another six months, then we'll be, sorry, I keep saying close. We're not closed. We're curbside pickup and delivery. So we'll keep doing it. So this business is 33 years old. And when I bought it, seven years ago, after having my flower shop, it's not just me. It's not my flower shop. This flower shop belongs to my team. This flower shop belongs to this amazing community that we're so lucky to have our store in. So we're going to do everything we can to keep everybody safe.

Elizabeth Young (40:30):

If there is another wave, let's hope not, but we'll just keep operating the way we are. All my team have decided to get vaccinated. It wasn't even a question for them. They're excited to get their second doses. I'm excited for them to feel more comfortable when it is time to reopen. But if there is another wave, we're just going to roll with it.

Lisa Larter (40:52):

Awesome. Any parting advice for business owners in terms of what you have learned over the past year?

Elizabeth Young (41:03):

Oh, what have I learned? Consistency is key. It's easy to not put that blog out. It's easy to not write that newsletter, but put it out there every single week and show up for your community, and you don't know that people want to buy from you. And there's the old saying, "People want to know, they want to buy from who they like, know and trust." Put your face out there. Make those relationships. So make it a Facebook Live, make an Instagram Live. Just put yourself out there, even though it is extremely uncomfortable. And as Nike says, "Just do it." Jump in. Don't overthink it, but follow your gut. If your gut tells you, it's not a good idea. It's not a good idea. But if those ideas that are in your head are keeping you awake at night because your legs are twitching because you're so excited about your idea,

do it and only look for certain people's advice. Don't let everybody else inside your head.

Lisa Larter (42:07):

Yeah. That is really smart advice. Don't let the naysayers pick away at your brain. So Elizabeth owns Flowers Talk Tivoli in Ottawa, the capital of Canada. If you need flowers, she is your go-to girl. I can tell you, she has done flowers for some pretty impressive people. I don't like to name drop, but there's an Oprah Winfrey and Michelle Obama, Sarah Richardson, Hillary Clinton. And I'm sure there's a whole bunch of other people that are not as well known, but are celebrities that she has done flowers for. But I will tell you, the people that she cares about most are the people in her community. So thank you for being with us Elizabeth and continuing success in your business.

Elizabeth Young (42:56):

Thank you. Thank you so, so much. This was so much fun. Thanks, Lisa.

Lisa Larter (43:01):

You're welcome. All right, everyone. Thank you so much for listening. You know the drill, if you enjoyed this show, if you learned something, if you're feeling inspired or fired up about doing things your own way in your business, let me know. Leave us a review, share this episode with somebody who can learn from Elizabeth's brilliance and keep on listening. We've got a summer of reading coming up soon, and I'm going to share some of my favorite books with you. And then I'm going to share some author interviews that I have done for our thought readers community that you are going to love.

Lisa Larter (43:40):

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.

Elizabeth Young is the Owner of Flowers Talk Tivoli, Ottawa, Canada.

Ever since she was a child, she's been playing in the dirt and growing all kinds of things! Thankfully, this paid off and she has been running her flower shop business since 2005. She offers fresh-cut fair trade flowers and plants from all over the world with new shipments daily. She has created stunning arrangements for events hosted in Ottawa, such as Oprah Winfrey, Michelle Obama, Sarah Richardson and Hillary Clinton.

Elizabeth has appeared on CTV news and has been featured in the Ottawa Business Journal. She also participates in the Hospice Care Ottawa fundraiser, Home for the Holidays by creating and donating beautiful floral arrangements in support of the cause.

Elizabeth not only creates floral arrangements but she also offers workshops and DIY kits.

