



## From 140 Square Feet to 7 Figures with Emily Countryman

Episode #51

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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 (00:24):

Hello and welcome to She Talks Business episode 51. 51, ladies and gentlemen. That means next week is 52. It's a whole year. Whoop! We're going to pop champagne on that show. Today I have a very special guest, Emily Countryman, who is a CEO and founder of Ideal Wellness.

### Lisa Larter (00:46):

Ideal Wellness is a Washington State based chain of weight loss clinics that serve clients in-person locally, and across the country virtually. You're going to love this conversation with Emily, because she started out in 140 square foot office, never realizing to the degree of growth that she would experience in her business.

### Lisa Larter (01:14):

Emily is passionate about educating women on how to lose weight and maintain that goal weight. Since opening the doors of Ideal Wellness, Emily and her team have helped thousands of clients lose over 100,000 pounds with their three-part ShiftSetGo program. She has six locations. She's continuing to grow. She's worked in the industry since 2003. And she's



determined to make a better future for the next generation, believing that our society can end the obesity pandemic with the right education and information. Emily is a certified weight loss coach and a board certified holistic health coach from the Institute for Integrative Nutrition.

**Lisa Larter (02:05):**

Now, that is a little bit of a mouthful in terms of introducing her to you. But I want you to understand who Emily is. I want you to understand that she went from 140 square feet to six locations and a national virtual presence. She has done amazing things, but when she started her journey, she didn't know that she was going to do everything that she has done.

**Lisa Larter (02:32):**

She is proof that sometimes you don't have to begin with the end in mind. Sometimes it's one step at a time towards the goal that you're looking to. It's one step up at a time. It's one shift at a time that helps you to attain the success that you really aspire to have in your business. I hope you enjoy this conversation with Emily. And I hope you get lots of insights from her journey and how she has built this remarkable business. Let's get started.

**Lisa Larter (03:05):**

All right. So here we are with Emily Countryman. I wish you could see her background because her 16-year-old dog is fast asleep in the corner. And anyone who has a senior dog in the house knows that once they reach a certain age, they can't hear anything. So she has assured me that we likely will not hear from the dog, but I am not holding out hope that we might get a woof-woof sometime on this show. Emily, welcome.

**Emily Countryman (03:35):**

Hi, thanks so much for having me. And I can't tell you the last time he barked. So I think we're going to be good.

**Lisa Larter (03:40):**

It's going to be my... And you have earphones in. So he can't even hear me. I can literally try to make him bark, but I won't. Anyways, I am so happy that you said yes to being on the show with me. I am really excited about kind of talking to women who have built million-dollar businesses, because we are such a small group of women.

**Lisa Larter (04:06):**

And I'm really excited to talk to you because I would say that you have a real business, meaning you're not just in the online marketing space, you have a bricks and mortar business. You have a product line. You have multiple locations. So why don't we start by you telling our listeners a little bit about your business, and what it is, and how you started?

**Emily Countryman (04:28):**

Yeah, absolutely. So my company is called Shift Set Go and it is a weight loss company. So we have six locations here in the Pacific Northwest, all between about an hour north of Seattle to Bellingham, which is up by the Canadian border. And I started this back almost 11 years ago now. So it's been a long trek. Just started step by step, one location, then two. Actually in 2018, we opened three, which I do not recommend three and a row like that.

**Lisa Larter (05:01):**

That's a lot.

**Emily Countryman (05:03):**

Yeah, it was a lot. And my husband, he is now full-time in the business with me, but he did not come on full-time until the fall of 2018. So after we had opened those three. So that was a busy year, we'll say. But going back to the beginning, I started the business, just my own desire to lose weight. I had figured out a specific program that was really focused on your macros.

**Emily Countryman (05:29):**

So instead of "eat less, move more", which is one of my least favorite sayings now, because so many people do that thinking they're going to lose weight and it just kind of runs them backwards and they're so frustrated and figuring out it's not the quantity, it's more the quality. So changing what you're eating and realized, okay, this works. In about five, six weeks, I'd lost my 20 pounds of baby weight that I was looking to lose. And said, I have to share this with other people.

**Emily Countryman (05:58):**

So it started really small, just renting a room in a chiropractic office. I was the office manager at the chiropractor's office at the time and then moving out

into my own a few years later. So really, it was just me, myself, and I, didn't really know where it was going to go for the first, I would say probably three or four years.

**Lisa Larter (06:17):**

Okay. Let's stop there for a second.

**Emily Countryman (06:18):**

Yeah.

**Lisa Larter (06:18):**

So you started out me, myself, and I, you didn't start out with this grandiose vision of I'm going to have six locations, a product line, and a business that is less than what 2% of women ever achieve.

**Emily Countryman (06:31):**

No, not at all. I knew I would be an entrepreneur from childhood. My parents, my grandparents, all my aunts and uncles, literally my whole family is made of entrepreneurs, but I didn't know what that would look like. So when I kind of stumbled upon this, I thought, okay, this is the thing, but I still wasn't really thinking that big. It's not that I didn't want that. It was just I was in my mid-twenties, during the time I had the business, had my youngest, she's now nine years old.

**Emily Countryman (06:59):**

So it was really kind of like this is a great side gig. I did end up leaving my full-time job and only focusing on this. But we still had that net to fall back on. My husband was full-time employed in a union, amazing benefits, all the things the job you don't quit from. Right? So it was just kind of like, well, this is great. It's extra money. We'll see where this goes. It wasn't really until about five years in, I thought, this can really go somewhere. And I leased a, what I call like the good location. I went out of that one room. I think my first office was 140 square foot. Literally an office, right? In one of those medical professional buildings. So 2016 is when I did my first five-year lease of in a shopping plaza next to the cell phone store, all the chains. Right? And so it wasn't until then when-

**Lisa Larter (07:54):**

You were really a big girl business then?

**Emily Countryman (07:57):**

Yes. Yeah, it was, oh my gosh, a five-year lease. And it's one of my... It's probably my cheapest lease now because then we added more, but it was such a monumental thing just to sign that lease to say, okay, I'm in this for another five years, because at that time I was only about five years in, I'm going to make this happen. And sadly, actually in that specific strip, we've already had, of my four, two other businesses come and go. And one is actually vacant as we speak. And we're into our second five-year lease now in that specific location. But yeah, that's a big deal to sign that lease, to find that, and to get someone to trust you being my first lease.

**Lisa Larter (08:37):**

How did you know you were ready? Because I remember when my husband and I owned our bricks and mortar wireless business and signing the five-year lease with the five-year renewable, it's really scary to be on the hook for that money for five years. So how did you know... What had changed in the business that made you know that it was time?

**Emily Countryman (08:58):**

Yeah. What had changed was, so again this is five years in, I realized this is something. I mean it didn't take me five years to realize that this could be something, but it was really just the natural process of things. But it was still probably the scariest lease I've ever signed. The last one was just kind of, oh great, here's another location. You just get so used to doing something, it's just, yep, here's another. Not as huge of a deal as that first one.

**Emily Countryman (09:26):**

But just the business had grown enough that I did have another employee at the time. Super part-time. I think she worked Saturdays at that location, but knowing we can't grow beyond this because we are physically limited to this small space. I had to have the inventory go to my home, drive it into my location, because it was just so small. There was literally no storage. And it just wasn't sustainable anymore. So I had a feeling, half of it, you just have to go on your gut, is this going to work? I hope so. And just taking a risk, right? And just trying it.

### **Emily Countryman (10:03):**

And like I said, that's one of my cheapest leases now. So knowing that, yes, this is a big chunk of change every month, but looking at the history and what we'd been doing, I saw we could absorb it and only had to grow by X number of clients to absorb that. So it was definitely gut, but also analyzing the numbers and everything too, because that's important.

### **Lisa Larter (10:26):**

So how did that shift in thinking, that opening of that first real storefront change things for your business? I'm curious as to how that helped you build momentum. And I'm also curious, if you don't mind sharing, how many years it took you to get to seven figures in your business. Because I think that there's this misconception out there that people think that it's easy for everyone, but them. And I know for me, I think it took me seven years in my business to finally reach the coveted million-dollar mark. Seven or eight years. I felt like I was a really, really slow. I felt like everybody around me was doing it. And it's like, what's taking you so long, Lisa? So it was hard for me. What about you?

### **Emily Countryman (11:13):**

Yeah. Moving into that location really legitimized us. It wasn't even just the moving in. We had to get the signage, those giant back lit signs that are \$15,000. We had to get all of the furniture for the whole office. I mean, it was just a big leap forward, but somebody driving by could literally see my sign now. They could then look us up on Google, look us up on our website. They could literally walk in.

### **Emily Countryman (11:40):**

Whereas the other one, it was a little more hidden. It was kind of more of a, not a... It's more of a destination place. They know that they're going there from a personal referral. So we started to get more people in the door that hadn't heard of us before, because now we had the actual location that they could see. And it was within that next 12 months is when we hit seven figures.

### **Emily Countryman (12:00):**

So going to this location, and it was later that year we opened the second location. And I think doing that, it just really legitimized everything. People could see that this is a real business. We had these two physical locations. And I think that helped tremendously. So us just really betting on the business and it paid back.

**Lisa Larter (12:21):**

That's awesome. That's awesome. So when you opened that first location, did you have any idea that you would grow to six locations?

**Emily Countryman (12:31):**

No, it wasn't even in my future plans to have a second location. It just kind of... We stumbled upon it, really. Another weight loss clinic had reached out and said, hey, we're not going to do this anymore. Do you want to take us over? Basically. So I acquired that clinic and did the exact same thing because they were in a funny little medical professional building and moved it into an official location. I think we moved in there almost a year after we'd moved into our first "real" location.

**Emily Countryman (13:06):**

And so that's when really it got the ball rolling now that we had two, because I can't be in two places at once. So seeing, okay, we can do this. And that's when my mind kind of got rolling because that was then 2017 thinking about more, which is why I said, in 2018, we opened three.

**Lisa Larter (13:23):**

So you acquired your second location?

**Emily Countryman (13:26):**

Yes.

**Lisa Larter (13:27):**

So not only have you built this, you have actually acquired another business.

**Emily Countryman (13:31):**

Yeah. I've actually... So of my six locations, three of them were acquired from other weight loss owners. They were doing the same product line that I was before we launched our own. And they just saw like, oh wow, Emily really

knows what she's doing. She's put it together. I had really taken this kind of hobby business and turned it into a real business. And I was really the only one in this product line. We did it in our industry doing these real locations and really taking it out of just a one woman show and making a business out of it.

**Emily Countryman (14:04):**

So I think they saw, wow, I don't really want to do that, but she does. And even one of them I acquired, the former owner was one of my employees for a number of years after that, until she moved out of state. So a lot of them started this because they weren't business owners, they were just passionate about helping people lose weight. Whereas mine was a little bit of the opposite, wanted to be a business owner, but enjoyed the helping people lose weight. And so yeah, that's worked out really well to do it that way.

**Lisa Larter (14:35):**

Yeah. I love that you have done that though, because I think that a lot of people think that the only way to scale and grow their business is to just keep adding new customers. And I don't know a lot of other women that have actually acquired another person's business as a way to grow their own. And so I think that's something that is important for people to know because there's got to be a certain amount of trepidation around acquiring what someone else has started to build. How did you know that you would be able to turn and/or improve what they had when you were making those decisions?

**Emily Countryman (15:15):**

So with the first one I acquired, I remember being very nervous. I had a business coach at the time. And we had our standard standing calls whatever day of the week. And I remember calling him on not a call saying, hey, kind of an emergency, 9-1-1, this has come up. What should I do? And so it was really good to have somebody talk through it with me in addition to my husband and then my parents who are business owners as well. But just having that, let's not act on emotion, let's get all the facts in line here.

**Emily Countryman (15:44):**

But I had a feeling because it was in a really good area that if we moved its location, it would do what the first location of mine did, taking it kind of, like I

said, from that small little office building where it's more of a hobby business and putting it into a true retail strip. So I could see the potential. And then it was kind of a no-brainer once the other owner said she was going to stay on as the coach because that's who all the clients knew to expect. And it just worked out really well, because she didn't want to be a business owner, I didn't want to be a coach there. And so everything just kind of worked out how it should in that.

**Lisa Larter (16:21):**

That's awesome. That's really great. What I love about what you said is you created a proof of concept in your own business and then you saw how you could apply that basic success proof of concept to another business in order to grow your own.

**Lisa Larter (16:38):**

Now, you talk about this product line. So at some point you decided to create your own product line. Can you tell us a little bit about what went into that? Because, again, I want listeners to really learn from different types of women who have created these unicorn businesses that have done things that are different.

**Lisa Larter (17:01):**

And so the fact that you have acquired other people's businesses is not something that I hear a lot of women talk about. The fact that you designed your own product line is also not something I hear a lot of women talk about. So can you share what was going on that made you realize that's what your next step was?

**Emily Countryman (17:19):**

Yeah. So we started that second, it was at the time a second business. And now we've merged them all into one, but the product line in 2019. So I mean we were years and years into the business. My husband was I think, gosh, maybe only six months into being full-time with the business, but that was a huge help. So it gave me time to do the more CEO type roles as I wasn't working in the business day-to-day. It was more, okay, I can work on the business. He took over some of the other things I was doing.

**Emily Countryman (17:52):**

So having that time freedom was huge. But we were just seeing some not great signs of the other product company we were with and thought we need to figure out how to not be reliant on them. As much as we are our own business, we're reliant on this other company. Things had been going downhill for a number of years there. So we thought, okay, we need to have something that's sustainable and that our clients can count on forever. Because if something happens to this other company, then it's going to affect our clients.

**Emily Countryman (18:22):**

So we just started doing a little bit of the research because I had no idea how to do a product. I was a location company. We were very service-based. So we were, clients come in we coach them. So we're really huge on coaching, training our coaches, that type of thing, but I didn't know all the terms that they're throwing out when I started calling the different co-packers and manufacturers and things like that. They're saying this label, MOQ, what are you talking about? I'm Googling, okay, what is MOQ? Oh, minimum order quantity. Okay.

**Emily Countryman (18:56):**

Then when they're speaking in 50,000, is that dollars? Is that bars? Is that boxes? Is that cases? So having to... And just asking a lot of questions saying, I'm new to this, but here's what my volume has been. Can you work with me? Because a lot of them work with very, very large brands out there. And then saying yeah, that's definitely in the realm. You're going to pay a little bit higher of a premium if you're not doing X number of volume discount. But it was just step by step by step, figuring all that out.

**Emily Countryman (19:26):**

So we launched it to our clinics about six months later. So the end of 2019. And we were just not really knowing how would this go is a massive, massive risk, but it went wonderful. And then in January of 2020, we launched at wholesale to other weight loss clinics. And so that, we've been doing for a little over two years now. But yeah, that was a bigger risk than leasing the first location. But I think everything just builds on itself.

**Emily Countryman (19:58):**

So then my confidence was higher. Okay, I can do this. And then my confidence is higher. Okay I can do this next thing. But 10 years ago, I wouldn't have thought I'd be sitting here today with six locations, the product line. Now we have online virtual. None of that was there day one. You just kind of have to trust the process and see where it's going to take you.

**Lisa Larter (20:18):**

So you had just brought this brand new product line to market and your husband had only been full time in the business for a few months when COVID hit.

**Emily Countryman (20:28):**

Yeah, that was fun.

**Lisa Larter (20:30):**

Now I know a lot of people that have pivoted successfully during COVID. And I know a lot of people that have basically rolled up the sidewalk and closed their business. So tell me how you adapted to not only... Because you just said the product line was a bigger risk than the rent, basically, the leases that you were on the hook for. How did you adjust and adapt to all of that? Because you are in California and-

**Emily Countryman (20:56):**

Washington.

**Lisa Larter (20:57):**

Okay. You're in Washington. So-

**Emily Countryman (21:01):**

Basically, it's that.

**Lisa Larter (21:03):**

Okay. All right. So I was just going to say it's like a little bit harder over there than where I am in Sunny, Florida. You got to still operated peace, love, and wear your mask if you want to.

**Emily Countryman (21:14):**

Yeah.

**Lisa Larter (21:15):**

Not quite the same on the other coast. So how did that all work out for you?

**Emily Countryman (21:21):**

That first week or two, and I mean the whole world felt this way, but just not knowing anything and hearing, I think on a Monday evening they said, hey, on Wednesday everything's shut down. And I think a few days prior, my kids had gotten their school canceled for what was supposed to be six weeks and just going, you know what? What is happening? What do we do?

**Emily Countryman (21:41):**

And our plan that year was to basically launch and grow that wholesale side of the business. And we had a few accounts at this time because we had just launched in January. And luckily, we have a better profit margin than pretty much all the other food lines in our industry. So that actually helped, going into the summer, of people going, oh, other weight loss clinics saying I need to save my business, what do I do? And really looking to us to say, okay, how are you doing it?

**Emily Countryman (22:12):**

So the wholesale business did fine that year. But the clinics, having physical locations, one of our plans that year was to launch virtual and have an online shop and do all this, which is so funny, because I know that's so backwards from other business. I mean the online world just, oh, people go on Facebook or Instagram. It was not a business to me at all. It was, people walk in the door, people pay you actual cash or credit card or we get checks sometimes. So this whole online thing, that wasn't in my thinking at all.

**Emily Countryman (22:46):**

But we thought, in January, February of 2020, oh, wouldn't it be nice this year if we added virtual then we could serve more people? We have our warehouse now, we can ship to them. So it was very, just kind of a thought like, we'll look at that more in the summertime. Hopefully by the end of the

year we'll launch it. And then it became a, oh, just kidding. Tomorrow we'll launch that.

**Emily Countryman (23:06):**

So literally in a week's time we got the ability to order online. I mean it was a real wonky website, but luckily my husband is the tech side. So he got that up and running. We got all of our coaches switched to virtual, which meant they all needed their equipment at home. They all need the computers. They all needed Zoom accounts. And most of our coaches are not techy. So that week was just all hands on deck. That was a terrible week.

**Lisa Larter (23:33):**

Yeah.

**Emily Countryman (23:33):**

But we didn't want to have that disruption. I mean, luckily, we had the forgiveness of the clients because the whole world was going, what do we do? What do we do? How can we help? How can we make it through this? It was not what we would've launched if there was no COVID and we said, by the end of the year, we'll do virtual and have an online website. But kind of in hindsight, that was the push we needed to get it going. And now it's very smoothed out. And the website's beautiful. And the shop site. And we have a lot of virtual clients. It's almost like a seventh clinic, really, with the volume that it does. We've brought on more virtual coaches.

**Emily Countryman (24:08):**

But yeah, getting through that, I think we were physically closed for six weeks because we realized that we sold food. So in Washington, you're essential if you sell food. So we went back probably before we should have. But we did have a letter from the state saying you're essential. And luckily all my team came back. None of them wanted to stay home and get unemployment any longer.

**Lisa Larter (24:30):**

That's good.

**Emily Countryman (24:31):**

That was super challenging though, because you weren't expecting it at all. You plan a little for a rainy days. So we had a bit of a savings to get through, but it was, gosh, do we have to call landlords? Do we have to... What do we do?

**Lisa Larter (24:45):**

Businesses were shut down for six weeks and your revenue... I mean, most of us have a bit of savings, but your runway when you are paying rent on six locations, I know from when I had my location. We're not talking a hundred bucks a month here. You don't sign a five year lease for not a lot of money. And so that starts to add up really fast and can really, really, really affect your cash flow.

**Lisa Larter (25:14):**

So talk to me a little bit... I look at what you have built and what you have experienced and I'm just fascinated by the fact that you started in this little room and you really didn't have this grand vision for where you ended up. So if you were to go back and you were to have a conversation with the younger Emily who was starting this business, what advice would you give that woman for the journey that she was about to embark upon?

**Emily Countryman (25:49):**

I would probably tell her she can dream bigger, think bigger. I always felt like I was a big thinker, but now looking back, I go, wow, I could have done three, four, five, six locations at the five-year mark, not the eight or nine-year mark. I mean, I don't have any regrets with the path that it's been on, but I know now if I was to ever start another business, I would be 20 steps ahead. I wouldn't have as much fear. And I wasn't necessarily an afraid person, but it was just more, I was cautious, right? Like, okay, we'll do this. Prove it. Okay, great. That worked. Okay, now we'll do this next thing. Now we'll do this next thing.

**Emily Countryman (26:27):**

So yes, they were risky, but not a horrible risk. If something had gone wrong. If the two locations weren't doing great, we wouldn't have done three, four, and five. So I would definitely tell her, think bigger. Whatever you're thinking, double it, triple it. That 10X Grant Cardone thinking, I always thought that

was just kind of nonsense. But looking back now, I see, yeah, you absolutely... You can do that. There's no reason you can't.

**Emily Countryman (26:55):**

I would tell her to hire sooner. I didn't have an employee for a few years. Like I said, it was just me, myself and I. So I would've done that sooner, freed up some more time to do that working on the business, not in the business. And I would've gotten a business coach sooner. I did that probably, maybe three, four years in. And that coach really helped me get all the foundation done. And it wasn't just okay, let's think bigger, let's do this. It was, get your employee handbook done, get your policies done, get your KPIs done.

**Emily Countryman (27:31):**

Those are all the things that you need to successfully run a business. And I was just kind of flying by the seat of my pants before because it was just me, myself and I. So I could just make decisions on the fly, but that was extremely helpful. So I would do all those things sooner if I could go back.

**Lisa Larter (27:49):**

How much of your success do you attribute to working with a coach or a guide or a mentor along the way? Because I've had periods of time where I'm not working with anyone. And I've had periods of time where I've worked with people that have been incredibly helpful. And then I unfortunately hired some duds. So I'm curious as to what your experience with that has been.

**Emily Countryman (28:12):**

I didn't come from the online world. And when I hired a coach, it was probably 2013, maybe 2014. I just Googled "business coach" and it was what came up. And I will recommend them. It was called Action Coach. It was probably all just a bunch of older men. But I thought, okay, this guy's been in business... The specific one that was more in my area. And he was actually halfway across the state. So we would fly to see each other on occasion or meet with the bigger group of other businesses that he coached for.

**Emily Countryman (28:46):**

But I didn't... I think a lot of people find duds because there's just so many coaches out there. Now that I see the online space more, I'm like, how is everyone a coach? So I had someone that had actually successfully run

multiple locations of the specific industry that he was in. And so it could have been male or female, but I was really looking for someone older than me, more experienced than me, that had really proven that they had done this.

**Emily Countryman (29:08):**

And so that's kind of how I stumbled upon him. At the time, the investment to me is, I thought it was huge. I think it was probably, I don't know, maybe \$5,000 a quarter or something like that, but I thought, oh my gosh, should I really do this? This is such a big step. But yeah, hands down, I would not be where I am without having had that coach and just mentors, like I said. My parents having a business, but they didn't know the ins and outs of mine, so it was really nice having that coach to talk to every week or two weeks, however often we connected. And also it's kind of your business therapist too. So that's helpful.

**Lisa Larter (29:43):**

Yeah.

**Emily Countryman (29:43):**

So I would recommend... I think you just probably have to try them out. I've had another coach since him when my husband and I started together. And she was a little bit more tech-minded. Which was great, because he was the tech side and he had never had a business before, been in the day-to-day of it. So I've only had two. I'm not working with anyone right now, but I do enjoy it when I have a business coach. And just hold you accountable and kind of keep you moving forward. I think you get too stagnant without.

**Lisa Larter (30:13):**

I think sometimes if you have the right business coach, they can see opportunities for you, potentially before see them yourself. I know I've coached a few couples in my business. And I have a couple that was just recently here in Florida to spend a couple days with me. And it's interesting because what they are looking for now is they're looking for business coaching/mastermind experiences with other couples.

**Lisa Larter (30:44):**

So they've literally said to me, Lisa, you run this beach house event. We want you to run something like that, but make it for couples only, like that work in

the business together. So that they can mastermind and learn from each other. So it's just a different way of thinking about your business when you work in it together. I mean, my husband works in the business with me too. And I don't know that we've completely figured out the right rhythm of what he does versus what I do. He helps with more just tactical stuff in the business, but it's actually a waste of his potential. Because he's built and sold a multimillion-dollar business. He know us how to do this too, but I'm not leveraging his true talent. So I think that it's different when you're in the business with your spouse. Right?

**Emily Countryman (31:30):**

Yes. Yeah. It's very different when he quit his union job to come do this, we knew he was better at tech. And we joke I handed him a duct tape pile of tech and said, here you go, I've built this website. And I don't really know anything about a website. And here's this. So it took him probably a year to really upgrade all of our staff, upgrade all of the offices, get us on the server. I'm like, I don't know the language you're speaking. So just you do that, but we never really defined our roles. But we never did when we got married or had children either. Just kind of you fall into what your skill sets are. So far so good. It's worked out.

**Lisa Larter (32:06):**

Yeah. It's great. So you have a program that I think is really interesting. I was on your website. And it's called Shift 100. And you help people who want to lose a hundred pounds or more in weight loss. I know, as someone who wants to lose maybe 10 or 20 pounds at a time, that feels like such a big thing to take on. I can't imagine how overwhelming it might be for someone who wants to lose a hundred pounds or more. And yet you help people do this. I'm wondering if there are any parallels that you would see between the mindset that it takes to accomplish something like that and the mindset that it takes to build a successful business.

**Emily Countryman (32:58):**

And it is just that. It's mindset. So when clients come to us... And so we typically see clients that need to lose about 50 or more pounds. And we launched this Shift 100 this year, in January, because we do have a lot of

clients that need to lose more of that 80, 100, 120 pounds. And we thought what, if we put them together? So they do this, obviously, individually, but they meet once a month together. They have a special support group just for them because they're with other people that understand the struggle. It's a different struggle, a hundred pounds than it is 10. But they're taking it day by day, pound by pound.

#### **Emily Countryman (33:34):**

So like in business, we get together. In business groups, you need to have other people in it with you. Running a business is not a one woman thing. You have to have other people, either just maybe to inspire you or just listen to you that day, or you hear a really great idea. So it's totally the same for... This specific group we did was just for women because they lose at a different rate than men. We thought that might be a little discouraging to put men in the group for the year because they're going to accomplish it in six months.

#### **Emily Countryman (34:05):**

But yeah, it's all about that mindset and just taking it day by day. Like I said, when I started, I didn't think I'd be here. And just like the women that started this program, they said, okay, that'd be really great if I lost a hundred pounds by the end of the year. But they need to kind of see it to believe it. So a month goes by, as two months go by, they see that they're 20 pounds down, 30 pounds down. And so really, they're taking it in those five, 10-pound increments, little by little, day by day, even meal by meal. We always say if the day's too hard, just take it meal by meal.

#### **Emily Countryman (34:34):**

So what's the next best thing you can do for your business success? You can't look at it five years down the road thinking, okay, I'm going to accomplish this, this, this, this, and this and start today. I think the task list would just be too overwhelming. So just little chunks at a time.

#### **Lisa Larter (34:53):**

So what I'm hearing you say is that in business, it is beneficial to be around like-minded people that are trying to accomplish goals the way you are trying to accomplish them. It's interesting, in last week's episode I talked about the laddering. And I talked about when we were at The Trust. And we heard

Carolyn talk about how she built "It's a 10" and how, as much as I was impressed by her success, it felt so far away from where I am in my business that it didn't feel achievable for me.

**Lisa Larter (35:24):**

And so I got into the, yeah-buts. Yeah, but she started a long time ago. Yeah, but it's a product line. Yeah, but. Yeah, but. Yeah, but. Whereas some of the other women in the room who are maybe just a ladder rung ahead of me, or two ahead of me, or even three ahead of me, it feels like I can climb up where they are too, because we have more in common. So it sounds to me like you're saying the same kind of approach. Like when you're looking at weight loss being in a group environment where other people are aligned with the goals and objectives is really helpful for you to reach your own goals.

**Emily Countryman (36:01):**

Yeah, absolutely. I think it would be discouraging if you were always in a group, so for the 100 pounds, of people that have already lost 80 and they're trying to just get that last 20 whereas you're still working on your first 20. It just seems so insurmountable. When will I ever get there? Will ever get there? So seeing the person, if you've lost 20 and they're at 30, oh, I can do that. I can get 10 more pounds. I can focus this month and these are my objectives.

**Emily Countryman (36:26):**

So yeah, exactly the same in business. That's something I love about The Trust. We're all in similar stages of our business. Some are doing higher eight figures, higher seven figures. It just depends, but you can see here are the steps to take to get to this next level. And then it's nice just to have that dose of inspiration of someone like her saying, and you can get it to this level too.

**Lisa Larter (36:51):**

Well. Yeah. And I mean, for someone like you who has a product line, that could be the future for you. I mean, she talks about what did it take 30 years, I think, for her to get her business to where it is today. So you have a consumable product. And if you look at the potential down the road, that's probably very inspiring for you. Whereas I look at that in my business where I do business advisement and we do marketing implementation services and

the thought of scaling it to that size is a little bit scary. Yeah. It's not the life that I want.

**Emily Countryman (37:26):**

It is different with the product. But that grass is always greener. We have to... We have our cost of goods. The cons there too is a big-

**Lisa Larter (37:34):**

Exactly.

**Emily Countryman (37:34):**

That's a big number.

**Lisa Larter (37:36):**

Yeah. And supply chain issues and all that kind of stuff.

**Emily Countryman (37:38):**

Oh my gosh. Yes.

**Lisa Larter (37:40):**

So when you think back over your career of growing this business, what's been some of the stuff that's been really hard. Like if you have a really tough lesson that you learned, what would it be and how did you recover? Because I think that, we talked about COVID as an example and how some businesses, they pivoted, they rebounded, they're resilient, they just did what it took to keep moving on. And then other businesses kind of went fetal and all of a sudden they're giving up. Right? And so I recognize that's not a blanket statement.

**Lisa Larter (38:19):**

There are some businesses that really were prevented from being able to pivot. And I get that, but there were some people that also used COVID as an excuse, not all, but there were some. So I think that resilience and creativity and the ability to fall flat on your face and get back up and figure out what to do next is a really important attribute. So can you share with me some place where you went sideways, things went wrong, and how you kind of rebounded from that?

### **Emily Countryman (38:54):**

Yeah. I mean definitely the hardest thing in our business has been COVID. It was, I don't want to say smooth sailing prior to that point, but it wasn't ever that hard. Each day presents its new challenges. But if we take that out of the equation, they're calling it now COVID accounting, so we just delete that year. So if I delete that from my negative experiences, I can't pinpoint it to one, but hiring and firing employees was my weak spot.

### **Emily Countryman (39:26):**

So that's gotten me into some pickles. I remember I actually had to... So before we hired a general manager a few years ago, it was all me doing the hiring and firing. And I do not like confrontation at all. I can help them if things are going wrong a little bit like, hey, let's work on this or let's get this back in line. And luckily I had the business coach. So I could kind of talk through it a little bit beforehand, but I do remember one girl. It was mid-December. And I had had to let her go. And it was just this horrible experience. I don't think anyone enjoys firing people.

### **Emily Countryman (40:01):**

But I'll never forget. Then she walked out the door and said, "Merry Christmas". I'm like, oh. But you have to do what's best for your business. And there'd already been signs and conversations a little bit, but that's been the hardest thing for me in business, is dealing with the hiring and firing. We have much better systems in place now and someone that does it for me so I don't have to. But even after that experience, getting better at it, I still had lots of people that I hired after that and others that I've had to let go after that, but just getting a little better at that each time. But that's probably been the our biggest challenge in business.

### **Lisa Larter (40:42):**

People are hard. It's challenging when you have a staff. That's why I just said I couldn't imagine my business growing that big because it just would mean more people. And more people can equal more problems and more complexity. It is hard work to find great people. And it's hard work to be a good leader to those great people so that you bring out their potential.

### **Lisa Larter (41:06):**

And I can relate to that. I've had a lot of those situations. I know that when I worked in corporate, I had to terminate people regularly because I had such a large group of employees. And something that a lot of people didn't know about me is every time I did a termination, after the person left, I would cry. Because I felt so... It's so hard. And you have to be tough.

**Lisa Larter (41:31):**

And you also know that if it's not working for you and it's not working for the business, it's not working for them either. But somebody's got to make the decision. And if they're not making the decision after you've had a number of conversations with them about performance, then you have to make the decision. And you can make that decision, but it doesn't mean that you're cold or that you don't care. It's hard to-

**Emily Countryman (41:52):**

Just because [crosstalk 00:41:53].

**Lisa Larter (41:53):**

... you've had to do that. People are definitely one of the most challenging aspects of running a business. That's for sure.

**Emily Countryman (42:01):**

Oh yeah.

**Lisa Larter (42:02):**

So I'm curious. Have you ever wanted to give up? We talked about this a little bit at The Trust, right? We kind of joke that there are days where you just want to pull the plug. And I don't know if that's ever happened to you? Are there ever moments where you ask yourself, why am I doing this? What have I gotten myself into? And if you've had those moments, I'm sure they're not days, because if you had days, you probably wouldn't still have a business, right?

**Emily Countryman (42:27):**

Yeah.

**Lisa Larter (42:27):**

I think they're moments that happen. But what have you done to kind of get over those moments when things are hard so that you can stay committed to the long-term vision of your company?

**Emily Countryman (42:38):**

Yeah. I've had lots of those moments. Almost 11 years later, a lot of ups and downs. Definitely looking at the ups, giving it more focus than the downs. Because it's been such a great thing. And such a great thing for my family and all the clients and all of our employees. I absolutely love the business and what we've created here. I'm not real a big crier. So I've cried in my business, maybe two, maybe three times. And it was probably all COVID-related. Just, I'd never laid anyone off before. Done a few firings, but that's a totally different circumstance. So that was just hard.

**Emily Countryman (43:22):**

Luckily, what kept me going every day with that was we got to get out of this. This is a crisis of health. With the virus, everyone was worried about their health. And here we are doing something that helps people get healthier. Like I said, we specialize more in that 50 pounds. Most of our clients have high blood pressure type 2 diabetes or pre-diabetic. It is all about their health. Obesity is such... So many comorbidities, especially when you put it with COVID.

**Emily Countryman (43:51):**

So I think that was really all I focused on during that time, is have to keep helping our people. We have to keep helping our people because we have a bigger why that we look to and it's really to help people. I'll never forget, when I used to do the coaching for the first couple years, I had a client that said to me, after he had lost probably a little over a hundred pounds, I mean his life was completely different, but he said, you saved my life. Oh my gosh. We're not just selling blouse or necklaces, which is still amazing. We want to make people feel good, but it's really life or death.

**Emily Countryman (44:27):**

Not to be so dramatic, but for some of these people, it was their absolute last hope. They've done a million diets. They've tried all the things. I mean this program actually works. They're actually getting their health back. So that's

kind of what I will look to. I used to, haven't looked at it in a long time, but I used to kind of keep a little folder on my computer of all our testimonials. So that's probably something I should get back to looking at again and having my coaches look at again on those hard days, like no, look at all these people that you've helped.

**Lisa Larter (44:56):**

Evidence folder.

**Emily Countryman (44:57):**

Yes, exactly.

**Lisa Larter (44:59):**

I know that people are listening to this so they can't see, but if you look behind me on the top shelf, there's a box there that says, thank you, Lisa.

**Emily Countryman (45:07):**

Yeah.

**Lisa Larter (45:07):**

And it's a wooden box that Michelle and Nabil gave me with a beautiful bottle of wine in it. And that box is now filled with cards and notes that people have sent me over the years. So I love the idea of having that evidence folder or that place to remind yourself of the good that you doing in the world. And yeah, it's so true that what you are doing in your work really can be the difference between life and death. It's that serious. That important.

**Emily Countryman (45:44):**

Yeah.

**Lisa Larter (45:44):**

And we live during such a time where so many people are so unhealthy. I feel like we've gone through this period of, where people don't eat healthy anymore. People don't exercise anymore. And now we're losing our brain power because we're all distracted by technology 24/7. And so it's kind of a

scary time for humanity just in that respect, let alone everything else that's going on in the world.

**Emily Countryman (46:11):**

Yeah. Americans have only gotten sicker. The obesity rates go up every year. I mean, it's definitely, like you said, how can I stay motivated and focused because then I look and think, okay, this is the year we'll end obesity. And then it gets worse. And then it gets worse. So you just have to look back at the clients that you did help and they're going to inspire more people. I truly believe one day we can turn it around, but there's a lot of work to do for sure.

**Lisa Larter (46:34):**

Yeah, for sure. And people need to want to take ownership. People need to want to be responsible. And I think that's an important message too, as we talk about this whole million-dollar mind share, is you have to accept responsibility as a business owner for your business's success as well. And for the monetary mechanisms that you put in place for your pricing, for your profitability, for understanding how to run the business, for knowing what your strengths and weaknesses are, so that you can hire people to help you with the things that you don't love to do. Self-accountability and responsibilities is so very, very important.

**Lisa Larter (47:14):**

Okay. I have two questions left for you. The first question that I have for you is, looking back on your career as an entrepreneur, what is the best advice someone has ever given you?

**Emily Countryman (47:29):**

That's a good question. Probably, how can you leverage? So that was something that, for a couple years, I worked on a lot really to get me more out of the business and working on it, is how can we leverage the situation? How can we leverage that situation to keep the business moving forward? So really, someone just to sit and think at their business, how could... The way this is, if I don't like it, how could I change it? And how could I leverage this to be something else?

**Emily Countryman (47:58):**

And kind of a tip I do to help do that is I always, if I'm having trouble with the situation, because I love to problem solve, is I take the situation and just put a question mark on it. So just putting that inflection on the end and I'll do it in my head. And I'll say, for example, it's hard to have employees. And Like it's hard to have employees? And then I think too, is it? Well, why is it hard? Just to really get me down that thought process.

**Emily Countryman (48:25):**

So if someone's just stuck in their business and can't figure out the next step, asking yourself a series of questions of what you thought were statements and facts about your business and flipping the script on yourself.

**Lisa Larter (48:38):**

I love that. Challenging your thinking in a big way. It's really good. Really good. All right. So my last question is, can you help a girl out here? I think that... I don't that I actually know any women that wouldn't like to lose at least five or 10 pounds. So can you leave us with a final thought on how we might be able to do that?

**Emily Countryman (48:59):**

Yes. I have so many tips. Okay. I'll give you just a few. One, drink more water. Actually I'm going to go back. The number one tip is to track what you're eating and drinking. Do that even just for a day. We have so many client say, I don't want a food journal. Too bad. It's the only way. It's your KPIs for your weight, right? So track it for a day, look at it the next day, and increase your water no matter what it was.

**Emily Countryman (49:23):**

The goal that we love to tell our clients that really this is good for just health for hydration is half your body weight in ounce of water. So if you're 200 pounds, you're aiming for 100 ounces of water a day. And you'll know where you're at if you did the tracking. And then third, so you're tracking, you're having more water, is to cut the sugar. Sugar is huge. And look for the hidden sugar. So a lot of people think if they don't have a sweet tooth, that they're not consuming very much sugar. And it doesn't have to be the cake or the cookie. It could have been the pancake or the bread.

**Emily Countryman (49:57):**

I mean, it is the same thing. Once it gets into the system and you start to digest it, those simple carbs turn to sugar enzymes. And that is really what is making everyone so sick, is way too much sugar. So track it first, increase your water, and then cut your sugar. And I bet most people listening to this could easily drop five pounds just doing that.

**Lisa Larter (50:20):**

Awesome. Well, I've been on your website at [shiftsetgo.com](http://shiftsetgo.com). And I see all kinds of recipes and all kinds of interesting things for people. So I will be sure to put the links to your website and where you are on social media in the show notes so that everyone can reach you. And I really appreciate you coming on and sharing your journey with us.

**Lisa Larter (50:47):**

I didn't really know, before this conversation, that you started in this little 140 square foot office. And that you built this amazing business with all of these employees and with a product line and multiple locations from that initial first idea. And I think that sometimes we see the tip of the iceberg. We see what we see today and we don't really know what it took to get there. And I love that you shared that with us. So thank you very, very, very much, Emily. It was great to have you here

**Emily Countryman (51:20):**

Yeah, thank you so much.

**Lisa Larter (51:22):**

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.

Emily Countryman is the CEO and Founder of Shift Set Go (formerly Ideal Wellness).

Emily's chain of weight loss clinics, which serve in-person local to Washington and virtually across the country began when she set out to lose weight one summer and discovered natural ketosis and figured out macros. She is passionate about educating people on how to lose weight and maintain goal weight. Since opening the doors her team has helped thousands of clients lose over 100,000 pounds. Emily is a certified weight loss coach and a Board Certified Holistic Health Coach from the Institute for Integrative Nutrition.

