

So, Here's The Thing Episode 131

Laylee Emadi

Welcome to so here's the thing, the podcast for small business owners, entrepreneurs and creative educators who are ready to take their business to the next level, through candid conversations, tactical approaches and a few unpopular opinions. We're lifting the veil on what it takes to build both a life and a business that you love. I'm your host Layli Ahmadi, a coach for creatives and founder of the creative educator Academy, where I help entrepreneurs step into the role of industry leaders and educators. I'm so glad that you're here. Now let's jump into today's episode. Hello friends welcome back to the show. We are joined once again by my business bestie my real life besties Sarah Erickson of Sarah and design and we are going to be talking about just some of our opinions and hot takes on I hate the phrase hot takes but I said it anyway. And we're we're we're gonna use it because I know that you know what I'm talking about here. But are unpopular opinions on sales strategies like today? So sales strategies on social selling into DMS? Should we shouldn't we like what is actually working for people right now? And how are we responding as consumers and as creators to all of these things. So Hi, Sarah, thanks for coming. And being back on the show for the millionth time.

Sarah Erickson

Thank you, as always for having me back. I love that we get to do this. And this is definitely one of those topics that came from you. And I just chatting about this by ourselves and saying, Hey, we should hit record on this. I think there's a lot to talk about. And like you said, we may have some unpopular opinions. And I'll be curious to hear what your audience thinks about this as well. Because like you said, it's something we're experiencing, both as business owners and trying to decide which strategies we want to implement for ourselves and something that we're experiencing on the other side, as consumers as people who are getting all of these different sales strategies thrown at us. So it's interesting to hear what's working for us, and maybe in particular, what is not working for us? What kind of rubs us the wrong way?

Laylee Emadi

Yeah, hundo p. So first off, let me just say, for everybody listening, I'm just gonna keep it real with you guys, because I always do. This episode is happening right now, because I was experiencing like an influx of aggressive sales in my DMs, which turned into like, a lot of complaints and rants to Sarah. And we had a lot of back and forth on this. So I'm just gonna kick us right off with the spoiler alert how I feel about selling in the DMS. I don't love it. Where are you at? Sarah? What's your opinion on?

Sarah Erickson

So here's the thing, I also do not love it, for a lot of reasons that we'll get into. I do love when my phone starts blowing up. But I know that you're experiencing something that you are not enjoying at the moment. And I feel like that's what happened here where we're both just getting bombarded with these types of sales tactics. And for us personally, as consumers, it's it's not working on us, it's having the opposite effect and kind of driving us away from wanting to work with the people who are selling in DMS. So I know there's a lot of different ideas out there and a lot of different target audiences. So it may work for some people, but at least for you and me, it is clearly not a sales strategy that is working well on us.

Laylee Emadi

Yeah, and I feel like I've experienced it in like a myriad of ways recently, where it's it's gotten like sneakier, but instead of being like sneaky, and then like, they slide in with a sale, and then bam, it works. It's like they're sneaky. And then it makes me so angry that I've been messed with that I'm literally like, just morally infuriated. And I'm like, I will never spend money with you in a million years, even if you have the best product that was meant for me. And maybe that's just how I don't know if that's just like, a me thing. But that's, that's how I've been feeling about it lately.

Sarah Erickson

I would say it's also amazing. In that case, it's at least both of us. I just I do I feel like it's out of control. As you know, I'm not even on Instagram 95% of the time, but when I do pop in my DMs are just a full list of people selling selling coaching programs, selling services, selling products, and it's just to me, so discouraging. And then unfortunately, like you said, it really lowers my opinion of a lot of people who do that. Unfortunately for me, what bothers me the most is this commodification of our relationship. So all these DMS feel like they start out the same way. It's like this, this cute little friendly message. It's like Hey, friend, oh, by the way, I have a \$15,000 business opportunity for you not just doesn't feel right. It doesn't feel right in the platform of the DMS. And it really feels like they're trading on this personal connection that we were supposed to have in this more private and conversational messaging space to ask for what's a pretty considerable business investment and something that I feel should be sent to my email during business hours like a professional.

Laylee Emadi

Yeah, I mean, I think a lot of it is the fact that we have all these social platforms. And so people do feel really casual and they feel like it's almost like they're breaking my trust, you know, because we are in a friendly conversation or even if we're not in friendly conversation, it's a friendly conversation app. And then they're sliding in and being like, oh, forget the fight. You know what it reminds me of, actually, I'm like cutting myself off, because I just got excited. It reminds me of like, maybe 10 years ago, when a lot of my friends were like, new moms being targeted by MLMs. And then people that I went to high school with and hadn't talked to forever were like, you know, that whole, it became really Mima FIDE or whatever. Like, there were just like, so many memes out there, like, Hey, girl, and I haven't talked to you since high school, but I have a great business opportunity. I'm like, when did we become the people that we used to kind of poke fun at for getting, you know, getting into all these MLMs. But we're business owners supposed to be professional, trustworthy, and have high ticket high level offers. I literally got there, you know this story already, but I'm going to share it with our listeners, because it really took me by surprise. I am not a new business owner. I mean, I'm not you guys know who have been here for a while. I've have a decade of business under my belt. I'm not new to social media, everything I've built has been built off of social media, among other things. And I literally got taken almost for a ride by somebody who came into my DMs and kind of like, love bombed me for like, lack of a better term, she was consistently complimenting me and, and targeting things that I have put out there and talking about them. And it was like a real true effort. But the effort was not to get to know me it was not to actually build a relationship, the effort was to get to a cell. And the cell came faster probably than than I thought it would have. But like surprised me so much, and then infuriated me. So that's one example.

Sarah Erickson

That's like, where the trust is breaking is you think that it's this personal conversation. And then it turns out that it's actually a one way street, where they're asking something of view and the giving was only to get to that ultimate objective of selling to you. And it's just, yeah, it's it's exactly what you said about maybe MLMs are similar business models where this personal connection has just become purely transactional, you were looking forward to having this conversation, only to realize that now someone's taking advantage of that personal connection to make money off you. And they're trading on your social capital, it's like they already have this buy in from you based on the personal connection. And they're talking to you in a format that is supposed to be a little bit more personal, casual, intimate here in this messaging. And then they're taking advantage of that personal bias, and it puts you in this unfair position. And now you have to consider their offer as a business investment in this space, where you're just having a personal conversation. So now you're not just saying no to their offer, you're forced to say no to the person. And so rejecting this person is now going to be so much harder. And that's why the sales tactic works for them. But on our end as the person being sold to, I think it does feel not great, you know, it does feel like this break and trust and now you're forced to reject them in this personal setting, too.

Laylee Emadi

Yeah. And so sometimes I just don't like I go so do you say no, I like half the time I say no. And half the time I just ghost because I'm like so mad, I can't even handle it.

Sarah Erickson

Well, I do think, I guess for anyone listening who feels the same way that we do, and maybe you don't maybe you maybe you enjoy having these conversations in the DMS, obviously we are to who do not. But I do think you have a couple of options when people try to do this kind of selling in the DMS the first like you said, I'm okay with ghosty. In that situation, I think you don't have to feel the pressure to respond, especially if you're feeling like this is someone who has taken advantage of your relationship. And I think it's important to note that even if you do respond, you can do so on your own timeline. I think that's part of why the DMS feels so sneaky is that they're more immediate, you know, versus receiving an email where you might have a day or two to kind of think about the information, process it, formulate a reply. In the DMS, you're expected to respond a lot more quickly, you know, they can see that you've read the message. And there's this sense of urgency on like, Oh, what am I going to say? So I think just reminding yourself, you can take as much time as you need, if you even choose to reply at all. And don't let the person selling take advantage of this format to rush your decisions or fonts. You know, take it on your own time. I have responded and been pretty upfront about my opinions on this. So yeah, happy to kind of, I guess, give some scripts on what I might say. And I'd be curious to hear how that goes for you too.

Laylee Emadi

Yeah, share them.

Sarah Erickson

I think one easy answer is just to ask for the information to be sent in a more professional setting. So for example, you can just say, Thanks for your message. Would you mind sending your offer and any relevant information in my inbox? I prefer to review my business opportunities there. Thank you, you know, oh

Laylee Emadi

my gosh, we're gonna write that out in the show notes, y'all. I mean, it will be in the transcript to you but that's like a copy and paste right there.

Sarah Erickson

Well, you're welcome to take it or you can even keep it shorter than that. I think just a really simple Copy and Paste message, which I have literally typed out and copy and pasted to all of the sales in my DMs is to just say something like, please direct all business opportunities to my email. Thank you done, like easy enough. And I think messages like that will show that you're setting boundaries around your communication and that you won't let them take advantage of your relationship to sell something. So it takes the personal connection out of the equation, which I think we need a little bit of distance on in this situation, and kind of refocuses that message on business and puts it into what I would consider a more appropriate format. And then lastly, if you're feeling spicy, I've got some scripts for that to begin with. And I know that selling in the DMS makes you feel differently about them or their sales strategies. So I would definitely save this for more egregious sales pitches, but sometimes they happen. And if you want to want to kind of reflect that personal type of messaging that they have going on, I think you can do that. So that might look something more like Hi, so and so I appreciate you thinking of me for this opportunity. But I wish we could have explored it in a different setting. When I saw your name pop up in my messages, I was looking forward to a conversation with a friend. And I have to admit I'm a little disappointed it turned out to be a sales pitch. In the future, I hope we can keep DNS as a channel for personal communication rather than sales. Best of luck with your offer. Done.

Laylee Emadi

Oh, I love that Mic drop.

Sarah Erickson

You are not afraid of, of sending a little bit of a spicy message as long as we can still keep it professional, spicy professional is that even a thing?

Laylee Emadi

I mean, I think the whole the whole theme of this episode is keeping it professional like just the concept of professionalism, which you know, I talk about when pitching I talk about when you want to become a speaker or an educator how important it is to maintain professionalism. And then we're out here y'all being coached selling our stuff as unprofessionally as possible. I do want to make a quick note before we like as well, I think we're at like at the halfway mark of this episode. And I probably should have made this at the beginning. But this is not conversation to discourage building relationships on social media. That's what you should be doing. This is not a conversation to dissuade you from approaching maybe more authentic sales strategies or marketing strategies. There's a huge difference between marketing through building relationships in DMS and straight selling, like you're peddling an MLM garbage in my DMs nonstop, there's a huge difference. And I just don't want anybody to feel we're saying stop selling, you should be selling, you should be selling with competence. And you should be building relationships. This is just I just want to put that disclaimer out there. If anybody's like, wow, they really don't want me to like run my business or be successful. That's not what we're saying. Because both of us have offerings that we want to get in front of people in a really authentic and genuine way and share our services with people.

Sarah Erickson

Absolutely. I mean, I'm glad that you brought that up. And I think it's a good distinction and that hopefully, most of our listeners know the difference of what feels authentic or not, when you do get to develop those relationships over social media or virtual relationships, those can turn into real friendships or can turn into a real audience who truly values what you have to offer that you're genuinely serving. But I think we also all know the difference when you open those DMS and it's like two or three messages in and then they hit you with an offer to invest \$10,000

Laylee Emadi

Yeah, it's rough. Um, I also I do think it's, it's worth talking about too, like, how are we consuming stuff? Like, how are you purchasing things? Are you? Are you like a customer in the DMS like, like, how does that work for you? Because I'm not.

Sarah Erickson

I mean, like I said, I'm not on Instagram 95% of the time, so they're not likely to get a response for me at all. You know, or my assistant might pop in a few times and just make sure that we're responding to any messages that we might need. Like I said, I am not one to be able to take that kind of investment seriously in such a casual setting. Again, I would feel really comfortable saying I'm sure your program has a lot to offer but I don't think it's the best fit for me. You know, in all transparency, this sales strategy makes me feel disinclined to work together. And you know, I'm I'm okay to say that and to say I prefer to learn from coaches whose marketing values better align with my own, I'm okay to say that. I do think that there are people who are looking to buy in the DMS because if I'm allowed to complain from from both sides here, I will that I also take some issue with people buying in the DMS in the way that I see it pop up frequently for me, again, when I do check those DMS fairly infrequently. I'll also have messages quite often that say something like can you send me details about your services and pricing? I'm just gonna I'm just gonna leave it at that. How do you feel about getting that type of job?

Laylee Emadi

I mean, you know, we I'm the kind of person that like, we have websites for a reason. You know what I mean? Again, it all It goes back to professionalism. I don't mind questions. Usually, if I get a question about pricing, I just send them the link to my website. I'm like, you can find everything here. I think it's I, you know,

Sarah Erickson

you know, you know, I think yeah, I feel the same way, when I get those kind of basic level questions. If people want to chat more in depth, of course, I'm more than happy to answer questions via email to hop on a call to chat together, you know, someone has a genuine interest, I'm available for that and genuinely want to connect with them. But when I get that initial message that just says, you know, what's your price? I'm like, you know, I actually put a lot of time and effort into listing that information very clearly on my website. So believe it or not, that information is ready and waiting for you, all you have to do is click that link in the bio. So I'm the same way I'll send the link. But I do have to say that generally is probably a red flag for me when someone is just DMing. Me Like, what's your price, you know, that's probably not going to be the most ideal client. For me, I need someone who's willing to invest, you know, at least 30 seconds of their time to just kind of get to know me in my offerings via my website. You know, that's kind of a minimum effort to show me that you're engaged enough to take a look at my website and start really building that relationship.

Laylee Emadi

Yeah. And I also think that it's worth talking about, like, where are you inviting people to kind of shop with you or like, buy from you, for me, I do, I do a lot of like Insta Stories, and I am very, very, very present on Instagram. So it's a little bit different than in your situation where you're basically like, pieced out from that platform as as, you know, an active marketing tool. But for me, I use it like daily. And so I will say in my stories, like, Hey, if you want this link, DM me for it, and I'll send it to you. So if I'm opening that up, like I'm in no place to complain about that. But I do think there's something to be said about, it's similar to when I talk about pitching on here, and I and I help people kind of find out how to best pitch themselves for speaking positions, or podcasts or whatever. And I always say, Well, where is the person who's in charge? Where are they wanting to receive things, because you have to match what that person is putting out. So if somebody thing like, Hey, if you want this DM me, then sure, obviously, you match it. But if they're not saying anything, like you're not seeing anything zero, you're like, not even there. And in fact, on your, the, your whole bio, I'm pretty sure says like, you can email me, and that's it. It's like I'm not on here. So just like match the person, it takes two seconds, you know, I think

Sarah Erickson

that's such a good point for anyone buying, selling, pitching all of that to really look at who you're wanting to work with and what they're requesting for forms of communication. And I think that's a great way to determine the level of professionalism or the level of intimacy or how casual is this, you know, you asking for questions or feedback and DMS, I think that's a perfect way to use DMS that feels authentic, that lets you serve your audience that gives you a chance to answer their questions to start those conversations without having to feel salesy. You know, it's a great place to do that. And it really invites people to the platform where you want them to engage. And I think that's what people should be looking for, especially for things like pitching or selling. You know, I think you're, you're gonna have a hard time getting your offer across selling in the DMS, if this is someone who doesn't request to be engaged with in the DMS, you know, you want to find that ideal customer at the ideal selling place for them. So if that means in their inbox, that's where you need to be. And I think that a lot of people are just kind of turning to the DMS, because it seems to be the latest trend. And that may not be the best fit for everybody. Clearly not the best fit for for you and me. So,

Laylee Emadi

yeah. And I also I mean, I wonder too, like, I think that there's just such a big difference between engaging and, and sharing an opportunity with somebody who you've had conversations about that service with before, versus nurturing a fake relationship, just to sell the person in the end. And I think that's being taught a lot right now, which is like, hey, go build those relationships, and then slide in and sell to them. And it's like, whoa, whoa, whoa, when people say that, they don't mean like, send a few friendly DMS and then sell them. They mean, like, this should be an actual relationship. I remember. Last year, I was I don't remember honestly, what the service? I don't know. I don't know if it was like for the conference. I don't know if it's for my course. I don't know if it's for the Academy. I don't know. But there were a couple of people who I reached out to one on one on Instagram and I was like, hey, like, not a sales page. But just so you know, like this is happening and we've talked about this before and you have expressed to me before that you were looking for this and now I am doing this so if you want to come but if not no big deal. Versus like, I Googled this person and then was like, hey, we'd never met. You should you should give me You're giving me your hard earned money time. And well,

Sarah Erickson

yeah, it's a two way street there where you actually have that conversation and relationship, it feels more authentic. And I think people do pick up on that I think people understand when it's kind of this false impression of a relationship. And I know you so well, and community building is something that you've really prioritized. And these are people that you've known for 10 years, five years, who have already asked you for information about your services, and you're still like, should I pitch it to them? Sometimes? I'm like, Yes, they've requested to hear more about this, you have something valuable to offer to them, you know, that's a huge difference compared to just that, like, sneaky. slide into the DMS, like we're talking about. And I mean, I think part of the equation there, too, is sometimes the value, like the dollar amount value of the service that you're offering. Because again, DMS, I think feel more intimate and casual. And I've noticed a lot of people are reaching out to sell these very high ticket offers, like a mastermind or a coaching program through this casual format. And one of the reasons I don't like this is because they're making it seem like it's no big deal to invest this considerable amount of money. Like, I mean, would you just casually ask me for \$15,000? In a text message? No, we would have a conversation about it. So I think that's a big part of the problem is kind of matching the level of your offer, you know, the financial investment level of your offer to the medium in which you're selling it?

Laylee Emadi

Yeah, absolutely. So taking a quick little pivot. Before we wrap up the episode, what are some like? What are some places that you're feeling like sales and marketing strategies are effective and are doing well, like you're not really on Instagram, I still think Instagrams doing great for selling. I think it's just the approach, like we talked about being really intentional, your reach probably isn't as good as it was before. And so you do have to be really, really careful and strategic, and really have a well thought out plan when you're selling on Instagram now, but gone are the days of like the one post and everybody sees it, and everything is so exciting. What a time. What a time that those were the good old days, but I still like it, you know, but aside from that, like, what are your favorite places to sell and to market? Yeah,

Sarah Erickson

well, I want to touch on what you just said there that I think is so important is that I think you are still using Instagram in a way that does build relationships and offer value to your audience. It's not just about a direct sell. And I think that's where, like we've said, we see people kind of leaning into this space that does not feel as genuine versus if you're using the platform to really give to your audience and to invite them to ask questions and to get to know you better. You know, I think I think that is a great way to use the platform, and then it doesn't feel so jarring, you know, when some sales are mixed in, of course, you still have a business that you should be able to promote. But I think as long as it's mixed in with those, you know, real acts of service to your audience that you're actually giving and doing something genuine to make sure that they're receiving resources. And really well thought out content, you know, that helps kind of balance the ask, you know, it's a give and take. And I think you do a great job of giving the gift. So that when it's time to ask them for a sale, that it doesn't feel false, you know, so I think just just good job, I love the way that you use Instagram. Oh my goodness, I think for me, you all know my feelings about Instagram. For me, I think some of my most authentic sales strategy comes through my email list. And that feels like a great place for me to be able to do the same thing I just said, You're doing well on Instagram, I'm trying to mirror through my email list where I can provide insights and resources and really try to give people a lot through that list. And then again, you know, when I'm asking for that sale, hopefully it doesn't come across as jarring. Because we've kind of invested this time in a conversation where I'm really trying to give and make that two way street instead of just ask us ask all the time. So I like that email list, something that people have opted into. So it doesn't feel like a bombardment in your DMS, you're like, Wait, I didn't even ask for this. But an email list is something

that people have decided to sign up for. And they're welcome to leave at any time. So for me, that also kind of helps set something that feels a little bit more, a little bit more genuine for me and my sales strategy. And that's where I feel most comfortable right now. I think the bottom line is just coming at it from a heart of service, you know, and I think that does make a difference when people are putting authenticity into the relationship building. And it's not just like we've said a couple a couple of quick messages that kind of pretend we have a relationship and then ask for a big sale. I think we all know what feels what feels genuine in those moments and what is not.

Laylee Emadi

Yeah, and I think at all I mean, it all just comes back to building that trust and like being worthy of the trust. Like you're not just doing it for the sale, right? Like there was a reason that you stepped into. For most of our listeners here. It's leadership. It's education. It's growing. A brand that people want to learn from wrong. And so huge part of that is having the reputation the trust built. And it doesn't take a lot to break that. And I think that once you do, it's really hard to gain it back. So just proceed with caution and proceed with professionalism and best intentions and, and you'll be fine. Like I know it's kind of like, I don't want to say with like a harsh episode, but it kind of was if I don't think it's hard for anybody who's listening. I actually did an Instagram poll, during the height of my, like, peak rage when I was getting repeatedly sold to, and I was like, stop selling in my DMs, it's not gonna happen, stop trying to make it happen. And I put a poll. And I think it was one of my most responded to polls, I think like 2000 people voted on it. And I think it was something like 96% of people said, Absolutely not, do not sell me in my DMs, especially cold pitches, especially if I don't know you. And I think the 4% of people who said I love cold pitches in DMS, or I love sales in DMS. I'm pretty sure they're the ones that do it.

Sarah Erickson

I mean, different sales strategies for different people. This is this is our opinion, and it's totally fine. If you disagree, you know, we're here to welcome that kind of conversation. But it's fun to talk about. And I do think it's just kind of good for people to know that this is something that has maybe become a little bit oversaturated. You know, I think it might have been one of those things that was working for the few select people who kind of started it out early on. But again, when you like me pop into your Instagram after, you know, a few months to check your DMS and it's just full of the sales pitches. I think, you know, it's it's really not working anymore, at least for these high ticket offers. And I think that's good for people to know is they're considering their own sales strategies that, you know, it might have a negative effect like it does on you and me, and that it's a kind of oversaturated way of selling at this point, and it may not have the effect that you're hoping for.

Laylee Emadi

Yeah, not to mention, I just think like, you know, when bad apple spoils the bunch, I hate to sound like a you know, 85 year old but it's true. I really think that like, it just kind of takes the trust out of DMS in general like now I get one and I'm like, is this spam? Is it real? Is this person legit? I don't know. I'm just not even gonna bother with it. So it's not it doesn't seem to be working. So that was on your list of strategies to try. In the next, you know, in the next coming month, maybe pick a new strategy, my friends.

Sarah Erickson

Yeah. And again, just just refocus your business on how you can serve your audience. I think that's something that at least I try to come back to frequently is how can I actually, you know, do something for my audience that serves them? Well. And if you're asking yourself that question and feeling like your

sales strategies are not aligning with that, it could be a good gut check to maybe try something different. And you know, there are lots of other options out there. I know Instagram has always kind of been at least as long as we've had our businesses this, this huge monolith in how we're selling and how we're reaching our audience. And it does still have a lot of opportunity available. But there are also other methods if, if anything about that platform is not feeling right for you, you know that you do have other methods you can explore and don't feel like you have to be sucked into this latest trend. You know, I think that's something we've offered a couple of ideas or you can always work with a coach who can help you find a niche that really does feel you know, right for you and sales strategies that do feel genuine to your brand and who you are. Love it.

Laylee Emadi

Well, I feel like this whole episode was one big unpopular opinion. So unless you have more unpopular opinions to add, it's a good place, I think to hit stop on today's episode. But for those of you who would love to connect with Sarah, where can people connect with you?

Sarah Erickson

People are always welcome to reach out to me via email. By really I do for all of our ranting today, I really do love getting to form those conversations and develop a relationship much longer than a quick doubletap on Instagram or just one DM. So email is a place for me that I love to get to start that conversation and get to know you a little bit better. So please do feel free to reach out. That would be great. And yeah, that I really think we've we've put out as many unpopular opinions as we can for one episode. So until the next one, when we decided to bring our text rants to the podcast,

Laylee Emadi

it's my favorite. It's my favorite thing to do. Because I feel like that's the hardest. That's the heart of the show. And that's kind of how we started it. So you guys can find me on Instagram. I have always there to chat in the DMS but I promise not to sell you on anything.

Sarah Erickson

That's all we can really hope for. Thank you everyone for tuning in. And I'm curious to hear there may be mixed opinions out there. So let us know maybe you love being sold to in the DMS. Maybe you agree with us and you kind of hate it. But we'd love to hear what's working for you and what some of those alternatives might be.

Laylee Emadi

Yeah, and hopefully we saved a bunch of wasted time if you were considering trying it out. So anyway, all right, see you guys on the next episode. For show notes and resources mentioned on today's episode head to so here's the thing podcast.com This show was brought to you by the creative educator Academy, where we teach creative entrepreneurs how to teach, because I believe that industries thrive when experts can share their knowledge. Well, if you're enjoying the podcast, I'd love to read your review in iTunes or see your rating on Spotify. Thanks so much for listening and I'll catch you on the next episode.