

Laylee: Hey friends, welcome back to So Here's The Thing. We are so lucky because we are being joined by the incredible Sarah Schultz today.

Sarah works with small business owners to transform their meh business into an obsess worthy brand that effortlessly attracts dreamy clients through clear messaging and unforgettable visuals, which I feel like, first of all, so needed across the board by everybody, but also so prevalent right now in like.

Where marketing is, where it's come from, where it's going. I'm literally just saying Cotton Eye Joe, basically, where did you come from, where did you go? Here we go. so, that being said, I'm excited to dive into this. We're going to be talking today with Sarah about how to become the it girl for your brand, how to incorporate personal branding. And we're going to just like dive into all things marketing and branding. She's a genius. Sarah, welcome to the show. Thank you so much for having me. Yay.

Thanks for being here. Okay. Tell us all about you, like a little bit about your business and kind of why this topic has become something that you're really passionate about teaching on.

Sarah: Oh, wow. Okay. The too long don't read is after leaving corporate America. Like I feel so many of us. Um, my original business kind of fell in my lap.

I was in the wedding industry doing, stationary design and I just had that up at my cube. I worked for Target. And, People would come by and be like, Oh my God, who designed that? And I'd say, Oh, I did. And they're like, Oh, you're a stationary designer. And I said, I am a stationary designer. And clients just like slowly started to pop into my inbox.

And, you know, way back then, this was 2012, 2013, you know, there were no processes or no systems. I was literally flying by the seat of my pants and over, you know, the next 10 plus years as a business owner, I have used that same attitude of like. Yes, I can do that as different things that interested me came up, whether it was from somebody I knew or like a dreamy client that came my way, I was like, I need to work with them.

And my business has evolved into lots of little things along the way. And here I am now getting to coach other women just like me, just like you have these huge dreams and much larger goals than just living in like the mediocrity that sometimes we can fall into. We want something more. And I get to help create

structure and a really compelling story so that you can find your dreamy clients and stay relevant in your space.

And so I specifically focus now kind of the last iteration of my Business evolution before here is I ran a creative agency. We've worked with lots of really incredibly well known brands and we've helped startups get going. I had a team of eight. We did branding, web design, photo and video design and production.

And I loved that so much. And with every good pivot, whether you want to pivot or not, it proved to me that I wanted to help more. I wanted to go back to kind of that early stage founder that I was, you know, 10, 8 years ago. We got a little bit of fear, but we have a lot more belief in ourselves. And so, you know, stepping away from more established businesses and working again with those of us who are really big dreamers and ready to go, helping coach them to create something that's fantastic, has been really fulfilling, really fulfilling to just get to work with more women who are ready to make a mark and be known in their industry and have their dreamy clients fall in love with them.

So I think it's important to Not just focus on, impact in like, I've worked with known clients before. That's exciting and that's really sexy. And, working with Maybe, business entrepreneurs who are earlier in their journey and helping them get set up for long term success. Helping them get to be the known.

That's it. That's what really excites me.

Laylee: I love that. I feel like there's so much to be said for, one, just kind of like allowing yourself to make a pivot when you feel like it's time. And not being afraid to kind of like, make a change going from. A level that you worked with to a new one and I think it's, also really probably helpful for all of your clients, whether they're more advanced or, just starting out to know that their coach and the person they're working with has been able to like run the gamut of working with all different levels and seeing success in those different places too.

Sarah: Totally. I think that's one of the problems. Right now, as we are building businesses, there's this very rigid structure to like what a business strategy should look like, or your business plan, or your five year plan. And in all of what is very normalized and taught, like if you were just to Google, you know, business strategy, we have completely forgotten to think about Us as the founders, what we want, what drives us, what fuels us.

And we also have completely forgotten to find other metrics and ways to decide, is it time to evolve? you don't have to just burn it all down if you want to change it. You can effectively change it. And there's just some things that you need to keep in mind, but we don't talk about that.

I feel like, especially as women in business, we're not talking about like, wow, my station in life has completely changed. So now my business needs to change, but I've built this business that doesn't allow for that change maybe. So. Being ahead of some of those really complex thoughts doesn't have to be so scary and we can build brands that, one, support the life that we want to live, but two, allow us to kind of ebb and flow and pivot and be a little bit more fluid, which, you know, rigid business building, I didn't start this to just, be rigid.

I started a business so I could do whatever I wanted to do when I wanted to do it. And there are really smart ways that we can build brand strategy that help support us in doing that.

Laylee: Yeah. it's one of those things where like, if I wanted to have to be stuck somewhere, I would have stayed where I was.

I would have stayed stuck.

Sarah: I didn't want that. It was feeling sticky, right? There was resistance there. So I didn't realize that I was naturally going on this journey of just continuing to refine. It's always been creative. I've always been designing. my brides eventually were like, Hey, I'm starting a nonprofit.

Can you design a logo? And again, I was like, yeah, Sure, I sure can. And then I quickly realized, wait a second, you don't just need a logo, you need a whole suite of visuals. And then I realized, oh my gosh, you don't just need visuals, you need a larger strategy that is rooted in intelligent positioning, so that you sound and look like you're communicating the message you want to communicate.

And then it just, You know, evolved and kind of unraveled into the wow, so many of us are just picking a random logo off of whatever platform or buying it from a template and we're forgetting that visual cues are like the first and most important thing people see and remember, and that it shouldn't just look cute.

It needs to be rooted in purpose. Like, cute is good. We want to look good. But like, it's way more important than looking a certain way. It's about embodying an emotion that your voice, both visual and spoken, can convey.

Laylee: Yeah, I think that's, super poignant, especially because I do think that when you're first starting, it's so hard to differentiate between, oh, this is my taste and this is like what I want it to look like, because this is what I like versus this is what the message to the person who needs to like it.

They're just such big different things. Like if I could choose a brand based off of my style, it would just be like neutral on neutral on neutral, but like I needed to have some bold color. I needed to have like bold. a lot more than that. And my brand designer was able to do that. And it sounds like that's very important with what you do.

I would love to hear from your perspective because how do you equip somebody to get there? If somebody is like, I want to be, The it girl, the it person, the go to expert in this.

Like, how do you set yourself up for that when it comes to your personal brand?

Sarah: Yeah, and personal brand is such a hot thing right now. I really structure based off of three key pillars. And think of this as like a Venn diagram. So there's you, the individual, the human, the person listening. Then there's your brand.

I'm like trying to make a Venn diagram with my hands. It's not really going well. Then there's your brand. We'll kind of do this. Then there's your brand, your brand, and you are two separate beings. And people are like, no, you are your brand. And they really want to fight me on this. And here's my greatest example.

My partner, my husband sees. A very different version of Sarah than the world needs. For better or for worse, it's probably wildly appropriate that not everyone sees what my husband sees on like every front. Like, I'm not gonna yell at you if I disagree with you, but he's gonna get yelled at, welcome to being in a long term relationship.

Sometimes there's yelling, but I'm never gonna yell at you. just, I'm not going to do that. So that's like This little simple version to prove that you are not your brand. Your brand, of course, is going to be wildly influenced by you, especially if you're a personal brand or you're a service provider.

Because you are selling yourself. to those Dreamy clients to prove and connect with and help them understand why you are their problem. Or the solution,

excuse me, you are the solution to their problem. Don't be your Dreamy client's problem. Be your Dreamy client's solutions, folks. You heard it here first.

so we have you, we've got your brand, not the same as you, and then there's your Dreamy client. And the other misconception I see a lot is like the client is always right trope or, you know, We have to do just what the client wants us to do. And that's also not correct because oftentimes the client is looking to solve a symptom of the problem.

And we as experts understand there's a much larger problem that needs to be solved. So with my students, oftentimes. I'm saying with my clients over at my agency, they would come in and they would want a new website and a really good Instagram feed. And I'd say, Oh, cool. we do both of that, but talk to me about your brand and talk to me about your branding.

And they're like, what are you talking about? I'm like, well, before I can create collateral for your business, your website is not your brand. It's a piece of collateral. Your Instagram is not your brand. It's a piece of collateral. At least you own your website. You don't own your Instagram. we need to talk about.

Who you are, who your brand is, what it sounds like, who your dreamy client is, what are your differentiators, what makes you unique. Like there's a whole underbelly of strategy that needs to be developed first before we can talk about how do we express that. I've never one time had a client, like literally never, had a client say, Hey Sarah, I need a brand strategy.

They're asking about what comes after brand strategy that they're familiar with. But the solution they need first is a really strong strategy that supports their business. That way we know we're making intelligent choices. That way we know we're impacting the market how we need to. That way we know we're calling in the right dreamy client who's ready to close, who wants to pay top dollar, that doesn't say you're too expensive.

They say you're worth every penny. All of these things we've heard so many times. It doesn't start with a cute Instagram feed. That's a bonus. That's a benefit of doing this deeper work. So when we think about that dreamy client as the third piece of the Venn diagram, you is one, your brand is two, your dream client is the third.

If we were only answering dreamy client questions, we would never actually be solving dreamy clients. And so being an expert in that space and understanding all three of those have to come together, if you play them in the middle of that

diagram, you are going to be able to truly connect with the actual person you want by doing the thing you're obsessed with doing yourself and having them fall in love with you along the way.

Laylee: I love that. am curious, like, when you're looking at those first two, like, circles in your Venn diagram of the you and then your brand, how do you differentiate that? Because I love that you said that, and like you said, it's super important to understand the difference. I'm actually working through, like, reevaluating What is different?

Like, what am I holding back on that? my therapist and I are working through this together because the more visibility that comes in business, and like you said, once you've been in business for over a decade, things are changing, right? So I need to figure out Lely Amati Creative, my company.

My brand I mean, it is run by Lele Imadi and I am the face, but I am a person who is different at home. So what, what's the difference there? How do I, how do I figure that out?

Sarah: it's like you teed me up. You didn't even know, like, this is so incredible. So I have a group coaching program called Brandshift Method and we start all of our work around You as the individual.

And I have a lot of different tools to help us explore the you. But one of the things that I suggest, therapy. I love that. Yes. It's so important. It's so important. And with self awareness. You said another thing, remind me, we're going to put a pin in evolution, we have to come back to that because you touched on that too and I didn't even tee you up for that.

But self realization, understanding, like self awareness is The unlimited, the most perfect key to ultimate business success, the more, you know, about yourself, the sooner you get to tap into, and the sooner you understand what is lighting you up and you love to do, and what is feeling like a drag, and then that helps you quickly.

address those issues. Maybe it's, I got to start the whole thing over because I've built something that I don't want. Maybe it's, I just need to pivot a little bit. Maybe it's, I need to hire this out. Maybe that's, I need different support. Maybe it's, I need a different dreamy client. That is all rooted in you as a hands on small business owner.

You get to drive all of those choices. So that your work is deep and it's challenging and it's never ending because you as a human are going to evolve. You're going to change your perspective. You're going to change your ideas. You're going to be in different points of life where what once worked really beautifully for you.

I mean, you've successfully evolved your business, right? Like you're not doing today. What you started out doing that's on purpose. Something was feeling sticky. Something wasn't feeling right. That wasn't necessarily driven by. It can be, but it wasn't necessarily driven by a lull in business or a lull in clients.

I know a lot of women who have stepped away from fruitful, beautiful revenue businesses because it wasn't in alignment with them.

that's the big first part is digging deep on who you are. Then there's your brand and your brand gets to take on a personality that's bigger than you, more than you, not just about you.

Your brand is where you get to think a little bit more about dreamy client too. And we're not going to leave you out of that. Because I'm like you, my brand is, Hey, Sarah Schultz, like how much more can that be? But this is where a lot of marketing strategy comes into play.

This is where a lot of psychology comes into play and where some super important, decision making that you probably wouldn't leverage just as like you lately on the street or like at dinner with your friends, that you're going to really start to put this like critical thinking cap on. How you're showing up, what you're saying, why you're saying that.

I really like to use the brand archetypes as a structure here. There's 12 brand archetypes. I could talk about this for hours and geek out over the science behind it. But that's really the first bucket that I like to turn strategy on. I don't want to over strategize who you are as a human, that's exhausting.

We just have to have deep knowing and understanding there. Strategy really comes into play when you start talking about your brand. And so, differentiation, the separation of the two, I think can be freeing. And also unbelievably powerful, especially as personal brands are so important today. A lot of founders who have like thriving businesses are also building out their personal brands to leverage and kind of co support.

Both efforts. and that's not just like showing your daily life all the time. That's not just like using the old Instagram filters and showing your dinner, like what we used to do. And Instagram was simple and it was chronological and the good old days, the good old days, the square feet, the square grits, right.

RIP.

Laylee: yeah, there is so much more to it now. So would love to like. Maybe dive into a couple things that people can be doing to One, grow that part, but also understand what types of things do people need to be including in their personal brand as they try to gain that, momentum as like the go to.

Yeah.

Sarah: You have to have perspective of your dreaming client. Like this is why we can't talk about one without the other. And this is one of the challenging things that I coach on because here we are in the world living on a linear timeline. So I have to teach in order, right? And these three things don't live in a linear plane.

They live together all at once. Very chicken and the egg. What came first, we're not sure. So, I like to structure first. Again, like literally go to therapy. Find a good self help, book, really ask yourself the hard questions. Why am I doing what I'm doing? what do I love to do? What don't I love to do?

Can I set myself up to only do the things I love? I mean, no, there are going to be moments where like as business owners, we're doing things that we don't love to do. I don't want to do my books. I don't want to, you know, keep my receipts. So there are pieces that we don't want to do, right? Like there's things in business, it's just always the way it is. But if we know ourselves deeply, we can build more structure around doing more of what we love. knowing helps inform.

Our values, our differentiators, our value proposition, our mission, our vision. And those things start to connect then intelligently with our dreamy client. What does our dreamy client need and want? What are they struggling with? What are their values? Is there a crossover? Like, yeah, there definitely should be crossover.

And digging into those specific things. are so important, not just to figure out what your dream client wants and then just to go do that, but to find that crossover. So, I mean, that's literally what I spend 12 weeks with my students

doing is unearthing all of these things so that we can build something that's so unbelievably strong.

And we talk a lot about the reality that that's going to evolve. Like. Raise your hand if you've had that one client who was like the most obsess worthy, dreamy, you loved them so much and how that changed your perspective and you, decided to shift to do more of that. And then also raise your hand when you had that dreaming client, you're like, I'm never doing this again.

I quit. This isn't it for me. There are also so many learnings there. and this is where it gets hard. Cause like, I can't just give you a quick little worksheet. Like, Hey everyone, go do this quick little worksheet. You'll figure it all out. Like, Oh, it is digging deep, doing that work.

And then I think the big win here is being willing to do that work every single day. Staying curious on who you are and what's feeling good. That's not easy to reflect on. Like you said, you're doing this now in therapy. Bravo! Working to help make sure you're in full alignment with who you lately want to be.

And then that is going to inform who the brand is. And what the brand is. And what the brand does. And of course you'll connect all of that with How are you speaking to your dreamy client? Your dreamy client is somebody who wants to join your conference the first time you talk about it. They're already on the wait list.

They don't question their price. They're signing up for VIP. They want the one on one session. They want to, right? Like that's what you're trying to call in. And this little journey I've taken you on now, again, it all started with what you learned about yourself and therapy, how you activated that within your brand and how you connected that with your dreamy client.

And once that formula is figured out and you're willing to kind of like ebb and flow through that. Ease comes into your world. Attraction comes into your world. Magnetism comes into your world because it's literally oozing out of your pores. You can't help but not call in those people because you've got so much clarity.

I'm obsessed with this work. It is just the coolest.

Laylee: I love it. I love how passionate you are about it, , can you share like another example of that, like same kind of formula? Like a client you've seen or yourself even.

Sarah: here's a recent student example that I think makes a ton of sense. So, I worked with this student, Kelly, who was building out programming to help, originally, help women, find like more peace and joy in their lives.

And through our work together, she created this incredible parent brand that was definitely calling in the right people. And as she's working with these people, she's like, Oh my gosh, there's a huge opportunity, a huge group of these women who are in alignment, dreamy client, who are stuck in corporate jobs that need to leave and they want to do something else.

And they've got a lot of fear. And so she learned in working with some of her coaching clients. I have an opportunity to create additional programming specifically to help who I have found out I love to work with. I didn't realize they were also stuck in corporate. I just thought this was something maybe different outside of job.

They were finding more joy. No, they're miserable in their careers and they're ready to make this epic exit. So then she developed a completely new program. And because of the core foundation she already had, in building out who her brand was. And because she had found and learned more about her dreamy client, And then she went back and was like, yes, me, Kelly, the founder, I love this work.

Helping women quit is like 10 out of 10 for me. She did some soul searching, right, to see does this feel good. She really quickly was able to execute a new program. had clear messaging, it tied back to her larger brand strategy. So that's kind of an example of like, not starting with you, learning from dreamy client need, but doing that gut check back to the you.

Do I like this? Just because they need it, do I need to answer it for them? And then don't break up brand strategy and structure that Makes sense for that individual program, but works for the parent brand as well, because, you know, we can have multiple programs that serve slightly different functions, right?

Let's like having different scopes of work or different services for your clients, whatever that looks like.

Laylee: Yeah. That makes total sense to me. I can see now like what you mean about it not being linear because it might not start in the same place, but it ends with all three things being addressed.

and I really love that example too, because I feel like it opens people's eyes that opens my eyes and hopefully our listeners as well. That beyond what we see beyond like the cookie cutter of like what we're seeing other businesses who are in our realm doing there's potential for. a different niche person or ideal client that maybe we haven't even thought about if we aren't doing that reflective work.

I would love before we do our like closing question, cause we're almost out of time, but like, I would love to know if you could give our listeners, like what's one action step that they need to take today to kind of start clarifying either who they want to work with or who they want to be known by and, or for.

Sarah: Yeah, I think if you are feeling like something is a disconnect or you're like, I just know there could be more clarity here. I recommend doing one of two exercises. One is all around the you and one is all around your brand.

Oftentimes, if people are feeling a little sticky, it's way more about you or your brand and a little less about your dreamy client. Your dreamy client kind of gets to clean itself up at that point once you get more clarity. So we'll just shelf dreamy client for just a second. If you are like, yeah, I do not know what the fuck I want.

I am feeling. Like a little uncomfortable or unclear or something is amiss. I think go to therapy. Honestly, find a really inspirational like self help book, find a personal coach that can like help guide you like give therapy isn't it? I take my clients through a dream days activity. That's something that I can get your crew hooked up with lately as a little like freebie bonus.

It feels like a fluffy activity until you actually go through it and realize you have so much disconnect around living your dream life because of the business you've found that you're living in, or that you've built. when we're chasing goals as high achieving women who really want to do great things, sometimes the shiny penny gets our attention more than staying rooted and centered in self.

I don't think everyone likes that answer, but I think it's really important is to really focus on some of that. And then the other thing I would do around Your brand is again for free. I have a brand persona quiz and that helps unlock your celebrity brand persona. But what's cool about that, like that's cute.

Right. And that's fun. That's like, you know, girly is, you know, Cosmo quiz vibe. But ultimately what that does is unlock a ton of brand strategy ideas. As to how I should sound, how I should look, what colors work for my brand

archetype and my persona, what fonts should I use? Some of those tangible tactical things where like, okay, cool, Sarah, I love what you're talking about.

Like, what do I do with it? That brand persona quiz is a really great way to just. Try on the strategy hat and start making really intentional connected choices so that you're actually activating on something that is serving a much larger purpose. Like, we don't need to just like yell into the void. We need to drive for brand recognition so that our dreamy clients can even find us.

And then when they find us, they're going to fall in love with us. And then that's where know, like, and trust happens. And that's where the money starts to come in. Right? So It's not just like post something and then they'll like me. No, it's not the wild west of Instagram in 2012 anymore. We got to work a little harder than that these days.

Laylee: Yeah, I love that. And I feel like, as much as people may not want to hear that, it's also kind of comforting to know that you're not doing something wrong if that's not working. it's just that You're not doing the hard work that needs to get done before you can figure out what the right is, like you said, on that end result of moving forward for social or moving forward for your website or whatever.

So I love that. I think that's going to be so helpful for so many people. as we wrap up, I'd love to know if you have an unpopular opinion, which I feel like, Honestly, like you said, the whole, like, you're not your personal brand, even though you are you, I think that's an unpopular opinion in itself or like a hot take, but do you have another unpopular opinion?

Sarah: I

Laylee: do.

Sarah: I have one more that I think is about a little riskier. Okay. Do you remember, cause you were in the wedding industry to start, right? Like you were early on that digital gold, that fake gold was like everywhere.

Laylee: And.

Sarah: I'm gonna die on this hill. That's just cheap and tacky looking to me. So, what I think is about to happen, because design trend, like truly, Miranda Priestly, fashion trend leads a lot of what happens in the world.

So we've seen this swing, gold. To silver is the hot new metal. I think we're going to start to see, lot of brands show up with digital silver everywhere. think it's going to cheapen your brand. That's my hot take for today. I love it. So, my real hot take is you are not your brand, but is like my second hot take.

I'm predicting silver will be a big emergence in brand. There are so many smarter ways that you can bring gold into your brand. You can bring silver into your brand that keeps you looking like so top notch, super elevated, desirable, that doesn't maybe cheapen the look of your brand.

Laylee: No, I remember, like, the digital gold, and I mean, who wasn't feeling it for, like, a hot minute. I didn't ever use it in my brand, but, like, I liked it, and then, thinking about it now, though, I'm like, thank God I didn't do that, though.

I don't do well with trends, as it is, so I think that's, That's a

Sarah: huge part of it. And some brands do need to be super trend aware

Laylee: and

Sarah: trend forward. And some just don't. couldn't be me, right? Like, just maybe we don't pick that one up. That's my vote. That's my vote. I love it. I second,

Laylee: I'll second that vote.

I'll second that unpopular opinion. Thank you. Oh my gosh. Well, we're going to link up your quiz everywhere, but I know that you're super active on Instagram, right? It's at Hey Sarah Schultz. Right? Got it. Got it. Okay. Amazing. You guys need to go follow her. First of all, you also, Sarah shares amazing tips on like incorporating your brand into your social like visuals.

Like every time you post, I'm like, what a great reminder. Like I need to take the extra time to like use my fonts and use my colors and like, she also doesn't just share that tip. What I love about what you share on, social, this is like, I'm just gonna brag about you in front of you.

But I feel like people need to know why it's worth following along, is I love that you don't just tell people what to do, you tell people how to do it. And I think that that is like a rarity when it comes to strategy on social by people who teach strategy, if that makes sense. I love that about you, and I hope everybody goes and follows you, and thank you so much for sharing all of your knowledge here.

Of course, thank you so much for having me, Layli. Oh my gosh, we're gonna have to have you back because we have a lot to talk about for sure. Like literally, barely scratched the surface. For real. For real. All right, I'll see you guys on the next episode. Thanks for listening to So Here's the Thing.