[00:12.0]

Hello and welcome to the advice line on How I Built this Lab. I'm Guy Raz. This is the place where we help try to solve your business challenges. Each week I'm joined by a legendary founder, a former guest on the show who will help me try to help you.

[00:27.7]

And if you're building something and you need advice, give us a call and we you just might be the next guest on the show. Our number is 1-800-433-1298. Send us a 1 minute message that tells us about your business and the issues or questions that you'd like help with.

[00:45.5]

You can also send us a voice memo@hibtid.wondery.com and make sure to tell us how to reach you. And also, don't forget to sign up for my newsletter. It's full of insights and ideas from the world's greatest entrepreneurs. You can sign up for free atguyraz.

[01:03.0]

And we'll put all this info in the podcast description. All right, let's get to it. Joining me this week is Lyndon Cormack, co founder of the Vancouver based apparel brand Herschel Supply Company. Lyndon, welcome back to the show. Thanks for having me, Guy. Happy to be here.

[01:18.4]

It's great to have you back. You were first on How I Built this in October of 2023. You told the story of building Herschel into a multimillion dollar apparel brand. And if you guys haven't heard that episode, go check it out. It's so good we'll put a link to it in the episode description. But basically, if you don't know Herschel, they make really stylish travel gear and things like backpacks.

[01:38.3]

And you know, I think a lot of people listening will recognize them because they have this kind of retro feel. And in that episode, Lyndon, you talked about how you and your brother started it in 2009, you and Jamie, and although both of you had worked in retail, neither of you actually had any experience in manufacturing.

[01:54.5]

So you kind of had to figure it out as you went along with some fits and starts and some disastrous product runs. But it's just a great story and I'm so glad to have you back on. Thanks for being here. Thanks for helping me give advice. Oh yeah, it's a pleasure and an honor. And again, I always love hearing entrepreneurial stories and the trials and tribulations.

[02:15.7]

It's a tough road, but it can be incredibly rewarding. It's a tough road. As you know, as you've trudged through that before we bring on our first caller, I Want to ask you a couple questions. One of the things that you, you guys did so well, and I've made a video of this on my Instagram.

[02:31.5]

I make videos of our episodes was story. And, you know, the brand tells a story. Like, you don't have to know that Herschel was inspired by this town you visited when you and your brother were kids. And you kind of already know that just by looking at the label and the design.

[02:47.6]

And I know that was really intentional story, right. In sort of building a brand, what advice would you give to the startup entrepreneur trying to figure out a story or how to tell their story? We have these words that we've used throughout my time at Herschel, which I'm still at today, and we have this thing that says story matters.

[03:07.2]

You know, how we tell stories, how our product tells stories, how we act as a brand, how we use visuals. All of those things are just so important to making sure we're telling the story that we want our end consumer to hear. And, you know, Herschel's always been a very democratic brand, and that was on purpose.

[03:25.0]

But being a democratic brand makes you tell a whole bunch of stories. So we really try to find these macro stories that we find that cross pollinate a bunch of different demographics. And certain things would be our commitment to quality, our commitment to sustainability.

[03:41.3]

Our bags are all made from recycled textiles, our consistency to having fun, you know, not taking ourselves too seriously. And sometimes getting it right takes time to figure out what the right story is. But when you have it and it feels good and authentic, then lean right into it.

[03:57.1]

Since you started Herschel, the landscape is a lot busier, a lot more crowded. Right. How much of what you do has to be, you know, promoting the brand, keeping it front and center? I mean, is there, is there always this kind of push to just make sure that, you know, people are aware of the brand?

[04:14.2]

In other words, given that there's so much competition in the space, I guess you can't really just sort of sit back and let the product sell themselves. You have to constantly reintroduce it to people. Yeah, reintroduce, introduce probably both of those things.

[04:29.2]

I think the most important thing for us is just staying relevant. And we want to age up with our consumers who might have bought us in the very first year and the first numbers of years of the brand. We're 15 years old now, but we also want to make sure we're relevant to the new audience.

[04:45.6]

So, you know, the 15 year old someone just going into high school and how do we remain relevant to both. You know, we're with people as they're creating their own stories, whether it's the first day of a job or a trip overseas or anything.

[05:00.7]

Herschel's a small part of that. And we've always wanted to be sort of a co star in the movie. We didn't want to be the star of the movie, and we wanted the individual to be the star. And as people are creating their own stories and hopefully sharing them along the way, we take so much inspiration from that.

[05:16.5]

Yeah. All right, Lyndon, why don't we take our first caller. Let's dig into this. Hello, caller, Please introduce yourself. Tell us your name, where you're calling from, and a little bit about your business. Hi, guy. And hi, Linden. Thank you so much for taking my call.

[05:31.9]

My name is Lauren Beefis, and I'm calling from Grand Rapids, Michigan, and I am the founder of Memory Lane, Jane. So we partner with families and family owned businesses to preserve their life stories and legacy in bespoke commemorative books.

[05:49.5]

Well, thanks for calling. Welcome to the show. Thank you. So tell me a little bit more about this. This is a. You basically work with families to put together, like a book about their family story. Mm. So, yeah, we sit down with a family and we spend hours interviewing them and going through pictures, mementos, doing outside research.

[06:11.5]

And we it all together in this commemorative book for the family to have. Wow. And tell me how you came up with this idea. How did this start? Right. So I have a very small family, so I have no siblings, no cousins.

[06:27.7]

My grandparents, they also, they passed away when I was really young. And so there aren't a lot of people to keep our family story alive. That kind of was the beginning of it. And then I worked as a newspaper reporter hearing stories so many World War II veterans.

[06:44.0]

And I'm hearing these crazy, courageous things that men and women had done and they had never told anybody their family didn't know. And so I thought, okay, there's something here, and I want to do something about it. What I love about this idea is I'm a former journalist, too.

[07:01.7]

And this really is a great use of your skills as a former reporter because you know how to ask questions, you know how to get to the details of somebody's story. I love this. How long does it take to put a book together? Oh, my goodness.

[07:16.8]

Well, our ideal would be nine months. But I will be honest with you and say we still have a few on the calendar from 2018, 2019. It can take a while. And how many projects do you have going at any given time. Like, how many books?

[07:32.1]

Right. So we've completed 35, and then right now we have 15 in process. And you travel. You'll. You'll fly to. Okay. And how. How much does it cost to make? Oh, it's expensive. So it's. Our base price starts at 25,000.

[07:49.2]

25,000? Yeah, 25,000. And then honestly, it just goes up from there. Yeah. I mean, it is a bespoke service. We kind of, you know, we get so involved in these people's lives, it's amazing what we get to hear. I want to bring in Lyndon in just a moment, but before I bring him in, tell us what your question is for us.

[08:07.1]

Right. So we're kind of in this place right now where we've kind of found our ideal client as, you know, someone with a high net worth, this multi generational family. And they want to share their story. And so we're kind of rebranding a little bit.

[08:24.0]

And I'm wondering what is the most effective type of marketing for Memory Lane Jane? To convey our brand and our services. Yeah. All right, Linden, I want to bring you on a bespoke family. It's really cool. I'm looking at the website. I mean, you guys, clearly they're doing tons of research, and then they give you this really, like, very well put together book about a family's life story.

[08:47.4]

Any questions for Lauren or any thoughts? Yeah. Hi, Lauren. Congratulations. Thank you. Yeah, I mean, I will say one thing that I think my daughters might be very surprised, but I never get sticker shock. And when you said 25 to 30,000, I was like, okay, yeah, these must be really, really good.

[09:06.9]

It sets the bar high, which is really great. I was just. As you were chatting, I was. I was scrolling through actually, your Instagram and I saw a quote saying, give the gift of your lifetime, which. Which I think sounds really nice. And that feels like that's what you're doing.

[09:22.9]

Is it just you maybe walk us through? You know, is it you? Is it a team? How do these things come together? Right. So I right now am the one who does all of the interviewing. That's kind of my sweet spot. And then it's a very collaborative process.

[09:39.4]

I just hired this year, I have a director of projects and communications and then everyone else on our staff. So we have 12 contractors that we work with. So designers, editors, writers. In terms of the price point, I think, you know, just to kind of make it clear, because I can imagine the amount of work that goes into it.

[09:59.5]

I mean, It's. I'm imagining this is not. You're not designing this business to scale. It's hard to scale something like this. You could do it, but it's hard. I mean, it really requires teams of people, long hours, slow, methodical work. Right.

[10:14.8]

So next year our goal would be to sell 20 books. That's scaling for us. Right. It's a very. It's just like a boutique, right? A boutique kind of service. And so a lot of our work comes from referrals. And once someone sees a book, I mean, we can almost guarantee that they'll want to do it, I mean, if the book is in hand.

[10:37.4]

And so I've thought, okay, is the book the marketing piece? But the books are really expensive. The books are private. So these are just for the family. A lot of the families want their books to be seen. And so I thought, okay, how do I kind of branch out and just drum up more interest from someone who has never held a book in their hand and all they have in their mind is, say, a Shutterfly book, and then they hear the price and they think, what?

[11:07.0]

Never. Yeah, Linda, I mean, we're talking about a super premium service here and something that, you know, takes many years to do. It's like making a long term investment in a family story, which is, which is worth a lot. We don't put a price on it necessarily, but we, you know, why not?

[11:25.4]

Right? I mean, how would you go about trying to sort of explain to people why this is, you know, worthwhile and then how to convince people that this is something that they should, you know, maybe consider. Well, full disclaimer. My mind goes at a million miles a second, so I might spit a whole bunch of stuff back at you, Lauren, and permission to tell me to be quiet so you can ask me questions.

[11:46.1]

But it feels like this is a luxury brand. And I, I do feel that you should look at yourself as a luxury brand and then take your favorite luxury brands or ones that, you know, you aspire to look at and, and really figure out what they do.

[12:02.3]

Well, yeah, you know, how they brand, how they speak. Because the people I think, you know, you've mentioned, the high net worth, etcetera, Those are the people you're going to be speaking to. And I think that those luxury brands have done a good job of knowing and crafting a language. I sort of was thinking beyond that about estate planning and, you know, someone's doing an estate plan and who knows what a lot of money is these days, But I think $25,000, if he had a, quite a, A large estate is nothing.

[12:33.2]

Okay, so how do I think that was. You mentioned the referrals is going to be key, but how do you get more people in the pot? So there's more referrals coming and I feel like just, you know, financial wealth managers, I can tell you, they're all over LinkedIn. Like, is that a great platform you're using and utilizing already to really go after those kind of people?

[12:53.1]

No, it hasn't. I honestly, I feel like up until this point year, you know, we, the website hasn't changed since we. I first started, right. I just, we got really overwhelmed with the work of the business instead of working on the business.

[13:08.4]

And now I feel like finally this year with, you know, hiring our director of operations and then having all this contract staff, I think, oh, now I could do the LinkedIn. Now I can, you know, change the website and the branding a little bit to make match the luxury product that we're offering.

[13:30.5]

You know, this to me seems like it seems like an opportunity to really get, you know, television news coverage of what you're doing or a magazine article, like a really, a really kind of in depth story talking about the process and how you do what you do.

[13:47.4]

Because I think once people can see that and get exposed to that, they'll understand why this, why this is something of value. And I wonder whether you might want to look at hiring like a publicist, you know, to kind of go out there and build momentum around the brand.

[14:03.9]

Right? That's a really, I think that's a great idea. Especially so when I first started, I was interviewed on one of our local news stations and it crashed my website. I got so many inquiries, but no book out of any of them because they all said, who do you think you are charging that much money?

[14:24.2]

So I thought, oh my gosh, okay, maybe this isn't my market. But I think what you're saying with a publicist is they could find where our people are, right? They could narrow that down and I couldn't agree more. I mean, first of all, I think that the price you're charging is like, I think it's a gift, right?

[14:44.1]

Like, I think it shows quality, but also it actually could be a little bit of clickbait, right? Like if people are seeing it, that's probably actually intriguing. And I think that, you know, again, I'm not going to be an expert in all the magazines in the United States, but I think of like Forbes or Robb Report or my oldest daughter goes to school in Orange County.

[15:04.8]

California. And every single time I go to the hotel to see her, I got this Orange county magazine. And that's talking about whether it's new stores or restaurants or ideas or ideas like this. So I actually think this is a story that's endearing, engaging, emotional, like all the.

[15:20.9]

All the heartstrings you really want to pull. And I do think a publicist would really help get this out there. It's a great idea. Those city magazines that you mentioned, Lyndon, people read those, man. Those. I mean, and you're doing a story on a family, let's say, in Detroit or, you know, whatever.

[15:39.9]

I mean, that's maybe where you want to start to pitch the idea. And maybe the magazine writer can also visit with the family and. Yeah, but I love this idea, Linda, that you brought up of thinking of it as a luxury brand. Like, thinking of it as an LVMH brand. Right. Because nobody bats, you know, an eye when you go into Gucci or Hermes and, you know, there's a bag there for $5,000.

[16:02.0]

Nobody's like, wait, that's just a piece of leather. You know, nobody says that people literally buy this stuff. So there is a world where people look at that price and they say, well, this must be really special. Yeah, I think that I would definitely talk about what your core business attributes are.

[16:20.2]

Like, what do you really want to be? And I think that the elevated experience, unearthing untold stories and doing it in a very bespoke, stealing your word, Lauren way is, I think, going to be really important. And I think there's so much opportunity with, like, I think of luxury retirement communities.

[16:38.8]

I think of, like, Palm Springs Springs to mind when I think about this. But, like, where are you able to, you know, finding the 15 people and the 30 before that you've already worked with, what were the similarities? And when you figure out what those similarities are, then look for lookalikes, right?

[16:57.1]

Look for the lookalike consumers. And then just to rewind one second, when you said scaling is going from 15 to 20, which I think is great, but maybe go from 15 to 18 and spend that extra time on brand.

[17:13.1]

Right. Spend that extra time where you invest in your own brand, and then Maybe you do 22 the next year after that to make up for the loss in revenue. Yeah, that's really good. The company is called Memory Lane. J and Lauren Beefis, thank you so much.

[17:29.2]

Good luck. Congrats. Thanks so much for calling in. Thank you so much. Thanks, Lauren. Thank you. Yeah, I mean, we have sort of scattered family history. Stuff. And we just started to kind of be more proactive about this.

[17:44.8]

You know, my parents are, thank God, in great health and shape. But just to make sure that we know the story and we know the details, and this is like, this makes it easy. This is like it's there forever. I mean, my parents are as well in good health, but I, I feel like as, as people are maybe having conversations about estate planning, just having the knowledge that these things exist out there, I feel that's one of her obstacles that Lauren's going to have to get around is just letting more people know that things like this exist.

[18:16.8]

And, you know, we, we have to have stories written to read. Yeah. All right, we're going to take a quick break, but we'll be right back with another collar and another round of advice. Stay with us. I'm Guy Raz, and you're listening to the Advice Line right here on How I Built this.

[18:44.2]

Welcome back to the Advice line on How I Built this label. Hi, I'm Guy Raz and my guest today is Lyndon Cormack, co founder of Herschel Supply Company. What do you say, Lyndon? Should we take another call? I'd love to. All right, let's bring in our next caller. Hello, welcome to the Advice Line. You're on with Lyndon Cormack of Herschel.

[19:00.1]

Introduce yourself, tell us your name, where you're calling from, a little bit about your business. Sure. Hi, Guy. Hi, Lyndon. Hello. I am John Thirding. The business is based in London, but I'm currently in Johannesburg, South Africa, and I am the founder of Floor Drop, which is the solution to to the clothes that are currently sitting on your chair.

[19:16.0]

Aha. I don't even want to tell you how much crap is draped over the chair in our bedroom. What is floor drawer? How does that solve that problem? So what it looks like is essentially a ladder that takes up much smaller space than a whole chair would.

[19:32.6]

A ladder that doesn't fold. Just a static ladder? No, it just sort of sits up against the wall and then it's got two different types of hook. The first is just normal hook where you can hang your anything with a loop, but that tends to stretch your clothing. And so the second type of hook is a 9 centimeter miniature coat hanger that allows you to put on your work shirts or your hoodies or something that doesn't crease your shirt so it's actually ready to go the next day.

[19:56.0]

You can wake up in the morning, put it on and head out the door. And it's for those clothes, those in betweens. You know those ones that you've worn once, they're not going in the laundry, but you sort of feel we are putting them in the wardrobe. That's where they go. I'm just gonna be transparent here. But I am.

[20:11.1]

I think I'd be really embarrassed if you guys and everyone listening were to come to my bedroom now, because I have. I do have crap on the floor. I just put it on a shelf or on a chair, because. That's. Right. Like, I don't. If I wear a shirt or something once, I don't need to wash it.

[20:29.1]

Right. And so. And I'm too lazy to. Or I just. I take it out, put it aside, and I'll fold it right away. So this is for those people. People like me. Exactly. Guy, you're not alone. And me personally, and speaking to some of our customers, they feel a bit weird putting it back in the. In the wardrobe.

[20:44.6]

Yeah, that's like clean clothes. Very clean clothes. You know, it's in between space. It's in between the hamper and the closet. Exactly. Yeah, exactly. And so that. That is. That is the wardrobe. How did you. How'd you come up with this idea? Yeah, so I moved to London last year, or me and my girlfriend moved to London last year, and we moved into a small flat.

[21:04.1]

We were avid chair users, both of us. We had one chair that was just filled with all the crap, but our bedroom didn't have space for the chair. And I realized that I would just put my clothes on the floor. And the chair's bad, but the floor was just, like, terrible for me. And I was, like, picking my clothes up off the floor, putting them on, going outside.

[21:19.7]

And that was. That was terrible for me. So I thought, I can make something better here. And then it's ready on a couple of times. And then got something for myself. My girlfriend used it all the time, and she was. She's one of those people who. She loves me. But she wouldn't have. She would have said, john, this is not a good product. But she was using it every day, and I thought, maybe there's something here.

[21:35.9]

And so I Googled factories in Vietnam who make furniture. And we got. We got a sample made. Got a couple of samples made. Weren't good the first time. And then we had a Kickstarter. Kickstarter went well. And now we have a business. And you designed this. You basically said, I want, like. Basically a ladder with hooks.

[21:52.2]

Yeah, exactly, exactly. So the ladders. The ladder, sort of the simple part, the hooks was a Bespoke part. Right. But I was sort of like, okay, the hook is, is where I think the value is. Otherwise it's just a ladder. So you got one sort of sample made and then you launched a Kickstarter to launch the business.

[22:08.2]

Yeah. How much did you raise in the Kickstarter? Yeah, so we, we wanted to pre sell about Â£4,000 worth and we sold about Â£18,000 worth. Wow. Of units. Just one product, Just a floor drobe. Wow. And then we. Well, we, I made a website and now we just started selling the product.

[22:24.3]

And how much does the. Is it cost right now? Yeah. So the floor drobe costs Â£60. Â£60, so about 70 bucks roughly. Yeah, yeah, 70, 68. The pound is so weak compared to the dollar now. So. But, and is this your full time job now?

[22:41.3]

No, no. What's your job? Yeah, so I work in climate finance essentially. Like we build carbon projects and this is, this is my side hustle that is fast. Fast turning into like two main hustles, I suppose. Yeah. And with the hope of maybe making this your main job.

[23:00.0]

Yeah. Okay. All right, cool. So lots to talk about. Tell me what your question is for us today. Yeah, so my question to you and to Lyndon is as a D2C business, we need to get people to try the product. But we're not a sweet business. Like you can't just pick us up off the aisle, try it one time and think, oh, that's great, and then go back and get some more.

[23:18.2]

It's more binary that you buy it or you don't. Yeah. And the bedroom is quite a uniquely personal space. And so I think people are quite hesitant to put something in their bedroom. Rightly so. And so as a DTC business, it's how to get people to try the product maybe without them having to commit to a full purchase, you know, so they can see it, feel it, get comfortable with it.

[23:35.7]

All right, cool. Lyndon, I want to bring you in here. The floor drobe. Maybe this is not a problem you have. Maybe you are very disciplined, Lyndon. Maybe you fold your stuff, you wear your jeans, you fold them perfectly crisp and put them back in the closet.

[23:51.0]

Yeah, I wish. First of all, congratulations, John. And I am not really good at the folding or putting things back back. Maybe a few things like I'm. Lots of sweaters I'll fold and put down on a shelf. But aside from that, I'm not so good. John, I have a few questions.

[24:07.7]

Your question, I'm not sure if it's exactly the question I would have, you know, The Kickstarter proved that people can see value in this. So I think, you know, every business, I always say every business starts with a problem and you've identified one. The product is simple, you know, it is a ladder with your bespoke cooks.

[24:24.6]

And I think that it's pretty easy to see that on your website. I mean, I can, I sort of get it right. Maybe I don't get the, like it doesn't stretch out your shirts and all that, but I think that's a value add, which is great. But I mean, I feel like you've got a lot right so far, you know.

[24:41.1]

So where my mind goes is you live in London, there is unbelievable boutique hotels, everything from high to low. Oh, it's a great idea. And you know, having this associated with some of those. So people could potentially try it on in Soho House as one comes to mind in Shoreditch or one of those.

[25:01.3]

But also just continually using beautiful spaces to show different environments that your product lives within. Whether that's renting, you know, borrowing a room for, you know, a couple hours or renting it for the night and you, you and your girlfriend can have a staycation after.

[25:18.9]

But using these for photo shoots of just illustrating all the different spaces and places that you can use your, your product. I mean, I guy knows this from our episode, but I love design, I love interiors, I love spaces.

[25:35.0]

And you know, this I feel like where it would really motivate me is just seeing this continually in beautiful spaces. Especially because I think you're selling neatness. Yeah. Like you're selling organization and neatness, you know. Yeah, for sure. Yeah, exactly. House proud.

[25:50.1]

Yes. I guess one of my sort of follow up questions would be, you know, one of my customers came back and the sales since, since we've launched haven't been like the Kickstarter, it's been a bit slow. And one of my customers came back and he said the product is so much higher quality than I thought for something that I bought off Instagram.

[26:07.7]

And so like that still got me thinking. I was like, well, I think people need to feel it or touch it. And you know, Lyndon, when I was re listening to your episode, you went straight to retail. And so I was thinking, well, maybe, maybe it shouldn't just be D2C. Maybe it actually, you know, you can touch it, you can feel it, you can see it in the bedroom.

[26:23.7]

I think Lyndon to kind of double down because I think it's a great idea what you talked about. And John, I was wondering if you had reached out to Any boutique hotels or, and if not, maybe you should consider doing it. You know, I think we did an episode on a bike brand in the US Called Priority a few years ago, and their whole strategy was to work with hotels.

[26:42.3]

There are hotels all over the United States that have Priority bicycles. You know, when you want to borrow a bike, they've got like six of them. And so that's how they built awareness. So the idea of having these in, you know, you pick a couple of really cool boutique hotels or Soho House if you can get in there and with a little, some kind of sign or some kind of way that people know that they could order it, you know, but would you like your own floordrobe?

[27:07.5]

You know, here's, here's the QR code. But I also think that there's a world where you, you work with gift stores and really cool, like boutique shops in London and you work with them on consignment. You know, maybe they have one or two in stock and people can just kind of see how it works because it's not a product you can, you can send to people like, you know, Warby Parker glasses, or they send you the pair, you try them on, then you send them back.

[27:33.1]

Those costs are too prohibitive. I mean, the cost to ship it and then return shipping, you can't absorb that. Yeah, I, I think it feels like, John, what you're, you want to start is again, I always go to like, okay, what are the values? What, what does this brand want to do? And I, I, I feel like if you want to sell organization, you probably want to be a design brand.

[27:54.2]

I can tell like from the aesthetics. You know, you care about aesthetics and sort of that's a game where my mind goes to these beautiful spaces in London. I think also having association with other brands is going to be also important. So I did just look again on your front page and I do actually see a Herschel bag on one of your photos.

[28:12.6]

So thank you as well for that. Wow. It's actually my bag. Look at that. Appreciate that. Look at that. I've got my number one fan here. We just talk about a story about your, your bag being a story when you travel with it. Yeah, it's exactly that.

[28:27.7]

Yeah. Awesome bag I moved to London with. That's right. Look at that. He's got a Herschel bag right there on the front page of the website. It's actually next to me right now. That was, you know, shameless self promotion for Herschel. So thank you, John. So I would try to make sure that Brands.

[28:44.9]

When you're doing photo shoots, you're going to have all these consumer segmentations. Right. And so I'll just make some up for a second. But you have maybe for, you know, young guys, you have streetwear, right. Like, I mean, an amazing brand based out of London called Palace, you know, or the supreme of New York, basically.

[29:02.6]

But, like, showing a Supreme jacket hanging on that, showing, you know, a Nike shoe for your streetwear consumer, you know, then you flip to maybe, you know, the person going to where who wears a sport coat or. Or the girl who might be more interested in going to the markets and thrift stores.

[29:21.7]

And what does her floor drobe look like versus what mine would look like versus what guys would look like? It's a great idea. Exactly. And speak to some personality. Like, different personalities that could resonate with different people when they see it. Yeah, I see it. Lyndon, how much do you charge an hour if you're consulting

[29:41.3]

today itself, free. I'm just happy to contribute back to this amazing community. It's a great idea. I love it. John. I love this product. It's really great. And I think that you've got something here. Congrats and good luck. Thank you, guy. Thanks.

[29:56.5]

That means a lot. And thanks, Leonard. Really appreciate the feedback. It's going to be implemented. Of course. John, we're rooting for you. Your assets are going to be key, John. So create beautiful assets and get them out into the world. John, Thurling floor drobe. Thanks, man. Cheers. Thanks. I mean, I just.

[30:13.5]

I love that idea. Right. You just get it in a hotel room, because how many times have you been in a hotel room where there's something really cool. It happened to me. I was in a hotel where they had this beautiful coffee maker, and I bought the coffee machine because it was so nice and it wasn't even trying to sell it to me.

[30:30.4]

It was just in the room. Yeah, I think. I think he's onto something. I think the before and after pictures, like what it looks like with stuff all over the floor, flipping right over to what it looks like. Organized. I think of Pinterest being his friend, you know, like getting, like, beautiful, curated rooms with his product on.

[30:47.3]

Pinterest is good. And then probably trying to find influencers there that, you know, maybe sends a product to and have them speak for him. Of all the. The benefits. But, yeah, he's got a good start. And so just create more content. Get it out in the world. Yeah.

[31:03.7]

All right, we're gonna take another quick break, but we'll be right back with another collar. Stay with us. I'm Guy Raz, and we've got the answers right here on the advice line on how I built this lab.

[31:28.5]

Welcome back to the advice line on how I built this lab. I'm Guy Raz, and today I'm taking calls with Lyndon Cormac. So, Lyndon, what do you say? Are you ready for our next caller? I'm ready to jump in. Let's go. Awesome. All right, let's bring in our next caller. Welcome to the advice line. You're on with Lyndon Cormac from Herschel.

[31:46.5]

Please tell us your name, where you're calling from, a little bit about your business. Hi, Guy. Hi, Linden. I'm so excited to be here. My name is Virginia Lynn Peterson. I'm in Anchorage, Alaska, and I'm the founder of Swoop. I started my business out of a need. My background is in emergency room nursing, and I couldn't find a bra that I loved to wear for a 12 hour shift.

[32:06.5]

So I made my own. And now we've become a lifestyle brand for people on the go. Amazing. Welcome to the show. So, Swoop, this is so started out. You're a nurse. Are you still a nurse? A little bit. I'm what they call registry now, so I kind of work as needed. So a shift here and there.

[32:23.1]

Yeah. All right. And you have, you're working long shifts and you're like, this bra isn't working for me. I'm gonna make my own. I mean, this is a classic entrepreneur story. Yeah. I'm gonna solve my own problem. So you literally sewed your own. And what was, you know, just full disclosure, I'm not super familiar with the inner workings of bras, but what was different about the one that you made?

[32:44.7]

Yeah. So what makes our bras difference is we put the rings and sliders in the front instead of the back. It's lined with a super soft material called modal. So it's just super soft against the skin. And it's more supportive than a bralette. And a little not as tight as a sports bra.

[33:01.4]

So I know you guys probably don't wear bras, but it's kind of a big deal. For 12 hours, a bralette just doesn't feel good. And after a sports bra for 12 hours, it's just too tight. And are there wires in the bra? No wires. No wires. Okay, so. So wire. Totally wireless. Cool.

[33:16.8]

All right, so you started and when did you start this? Four years ago. We're about to just wrap up year four. Nice. Amazing. It's so cool. How many Covid era businesses were getting on the show now? And I remember during COVID saying, we are going to be talking to so many Covid era businesses in like three, four years.

[33:33.9]

And it's happening. It's amazing. You were basically started out as a bra business. And is it still. Is this mainly what you. You guys make and sell? We've really expanded our product line, so bras were kind of our win, win. And then we brought on an oversized sweatshirt that we call a tunic.

[33:51.1]

So the bras and tunics are bestsellers for us. And then we kind of keep dabbling in other products just to test other things. So we have rain pants and loungewear. We try to listen to our customers and hear what they want to see. And are you selling mostly direct to consumer, or are you selling in shops in.

[34:06.9]

In Anchorage where you were your sales channels? Yeah, we're like a third. Third. Third is what I like to say. So we're a third through our website, a third in person markets, and then a third wholesale. So we're in REI in Anchorage and REI in Fairbanks.

[34:22.7]

Oh, nice. And then we're in a couple of popular local stores here, Dos Manos and Hotel Alyeska. And is most. So most your sales are coming from Alaska within Alaska? Correct. I'm hoping to hit 300,000 this year in revenue. We have, I would say maybe we're like 10 to 15% out of state.

[34:41.7]

Cool. All right, Virginia, what's your question that you have for us today? Yeah, so my question is this. 2024 was a huge year for us in building local wholesale partnerships. We tried to expand that out of state with not much luck.

[34:57.6]

So we did a lot of car cold calling, a lot of emailing. Hey, we'll send you samples. And it was just kind of crickets. So as we're moving into 2025, we're debating about trying to attend trade shows to see if we could get in front of buyers that way.

[35:13.1]

But my concerns are the cost and time, especially traveling from Alaska to get to a trade show. Is it really going to put us in front of the right people? Yeah. A lot to think about. Linden, I want to bring you in here. So, yeah. What are your thoughts about? I mean, I love the story. You know, nurse has this problem, solves her problem, and brings it to $300,000 in sales.

[35:32.3]

Yeah, it's awesome. Yeah. Virginia, nice to meet you, and congratulations on your. Thank you. On your early success. So when you were speaking initially, like, my mind was going, this is designed by a nurse for Nurses. And I just did a quick Google search and there's 3.4 million female nurses in the United States alone.

[35:55.9]

And I go, well, that's a pretty nice market size. Yeah. Even if it's 1%, 10% of those 3.4 million. That's a lot. That's a lot of people. And remember, this is just quick scanning, but as I'm going through your site, your story is clearly about being a nurse and the problem you're trying to fix.

[36:15.3]

It's good for the 12 hour shift. Right. I mean, I think you have that, but I also see a whole bunch of Alaska, which a. I agree, is a good point of differentiation. And you know, we're a brand from Vancouver, Canada. So, you know, Vancouver is a part of our unique identity.

[36:31.6]

And although we're not overtly Vancouver, I mean, we sell all over the world. Vancouver's home. And it's, it does play into the sensibilities of our brand and we're very proud of that. But when I'm hearing you talk and I'm hearing the story, I hear that it's designed by a nurse for nurses.

[36:49.5]

That's the thing that's catching me. Right. And I feel like the opportunity is selling to more nurses. Yeah, I think that's a really interesting idea. I want to. I'm curious, Virginia. I am sure there are bra brands out there that specifically target or are marketed to nurses, but is there a relationship?

[37:06.7]

Would there be a reluctance to do that? I mean, would you, would you be concerned about being seen as a sort of a nurse focused brand? No. And that's actually a great question. So when we first started the brand, my goal, my business goal was, was to sell our bras and underwear in every single scrub shop across America.

[37:27.7]

So we dove hard into that, dove hard into the nursing story. I went to my very first, first trade show that was a scrub trade show and didn't have much luck. So that I think that was. Must have been three years ago we did that. And the vibe and the comments that kept getting made was they were like, there's no way.

[37:48.6]

There's no way I'm gonna sell bras and underwear in my scrub shop. Like, this just isn't not aligned. And I will say it felt a little bit like the old old boys club because they kept saying, well, we want to see something new. And I'm like, well, this is new.

[38:04.6]

Like, you're not selling this kind of stuff. And it's like all in one. Right? A nurse is gonna walk in, they're gonna Buy their underwear, their bra, their scrub top, their scrub bottom, their socks, their shoes, their stethoscope, and walk out like it just felt like an all in one package.

[38:19.8]

So that was when I kind of pulled back from that story a little bit because I just felt belt. It wasn't really well received in that way. Yeah, understood. When I think about this and you think about uniform packages and you feel, you know, wellness programs, like, is there nursing associations that you're a part of, that you're able to speak directly, you know, as a nurse to nurses, that can help you spread your story?

[38:44.0]

Because it feels like it's a bit of a wellness story as well. Right. And that is actually something we haven't tapped into. And I mostly have stayed away because of the cost. But there are tons of different nursing organizations out there that have a lot of journals, so I could pay for some paid like printed advertising in a journal article or on their website.

[39:05.3]

It's just always surprising, even for nursing, like, how expensive they are. So that is something I have not tapped into. You mentioned trade shows, and I'm curious. I mean, you were reluctant to go to them in part because they're expensive, but at the same time, I mean, you're talking about trying to break into wholesale.

[39:26.5]

And it seems to me that that's an investment worth making, even if it's challenging. Even if it has been challenging because everyone's there. Yes, I mean, that was it. We did a lot of cold calling and emailing and hey, you know, we'll send you samples. Especially the tunics.

[39:42.6]

They're so soft. It's like you just have to touch it. But not like one store wanted a sample and we must have called well over 100 different places. I think Guy's right. I mean, Herschel's business, it was started in a different time. We launched in to retail in July 2010, but our whole strategy was definitely going to trade shows.

[40:02.7]

And it's where people congregate. It's where people after the trade shows have drinks at the bar, if they drink, or dinners. There's conferences around there. There's thought leaders in the space that usually you can go for extracurricular knowledge about what's going on in.

[40:19.1]

In the space. There's oftentimes vendors are there with, you know, new materials, new technology. They oftentimes, if everybody's there, the manufacturer is there, they. They show up as well. And I feel like it's coming back from some of the feedback you said from the trade show is like, oh, we're looking for what's new.

[40:37.4]

And you're like, we are new, look at us. But it's like, how do you even up your game a little bit more to when you show up at a trade show? People are like, oh, wow, what's this? The booth, the quality of the merchandise. So, like people are intrigued before you're even telling your very personal story about a problem you solved and how you want to solve this for, you know, surviving the 12 hour shift.

[41:02.5]

You know, again, I, I still love the, the nurse angle, especially at these kind of trade shows, obviously. But then your point of difference here, you know, where I see the Alaska part come in is like, we're really proud to be from Alaska and Anchorage in particular, where you're based.

[41:18.1]

Yeah, 100% agree. I do think it's worthwhile making the investment in doing that kind of travel because you've got a sustainable business here. You've got, you're getting regular steady orders in Alaska, but you're looking to expand outside of Alaska.

[41:34.2]

You're looking to get customers in the lower 48. So it seems to me that that's really where you want to be. You want to go to those places and you want to talk to those retailers. Right. The brand is called Swoop. Virginia Peterson, thanks so much for calling.

[41:50.9]

Good luck. Thank you. Thanks, Virginia. Great having you. Yeah, I think that's right. I mean, it's like a fine line, right, because it's a, it's an Alaska brand, just like you're a Vancouver brand. But it's at the central part of your identity. It's a universal. Herschel is right. It's universal.

[42:06.2]

Anybody can, you know, you can be in London or wherever and use it and wear it. But there's something about using Alaska effectively that could be interesting, especially around, around her story. I mean, I'm sure we didn't ask Virginia this point blank, but I can imagine she's done a lot of research on figs.

[42:26.0]

That brand obviously is doing incredibly well in relation to scrubs and having a point of differentiation and there's something there. I would say Alaska's probably, I would move it down to a secondary or third story and figure out what the story one and story two are and then have that as the foundation or background for it for sure.

[42:47.6]

Lyndon, I want to, before I let you go, I want to ask you a question that I've been asking all, all the founders come on the show, which is if you could go back to, you know, 2008, you know, nine, when you and Jamie started the brand. What piece of advice might have been helpful for you that would have maybe, I don't know, ease things a little bit or so just made your life a little bit easier at the time?

[43:08.5]

Well, you know, I think that the scars that we have, the learning experiences that we underwent ultimately built great character. And I love the, the failures we had as much as I love the wins because they taught us a lot.

[43:29.4]

And when we did something that didn't work or when something came in not as expected, we worked extra hard to get it right the next time. And so I think that embracing failures, embracing these struggles are something that I would probably tell that version of myself as we were starting, that it's part of the journey and it's going to make us better for it in the end.

[43:55.1]

I love that. It's great advice. It's great advice. That's Lyndon Cormack, co founder of Herschel Supply Company. Lyndon, thanks so much for coming back on the show. It's been a pleasure and good luck to all the young entrepreneurs who are having their new ideas brought to life. It's an exciting time indeed.

[44:10.2]

And by the way, if you haven't heard Lyndon's original episode of How I Built this, you've got to go back and check it out. It's so good. We'll put a link in the podcast description and here is one of my favorite moments from that interview. Jamie and I promised ourselves that we would be together for the first time.

[44:27.1]

We opened our first samples. We met in the outskirts of Calgary. It was a bit Mafioso style where the cars rolled in, trunks open, box pulled up, box cutter open. Jamie sliced the box open and we literally opened up the box and saw our first samples.

[44:46.7]

And to be very honest, they were pretty disappointed. Thanks so much for listening to the show this week. Please make sure to check out my newsletter. You can sign up for it for free@guyraz.com each week. It's packed with tons of insights from entrepreneurs and my own observations and experiences interviewing some of the greatest entrepreneurs ever.

[45:08.7]

And if you're working on a business and you'd like to be on this show, send us a one minute message that tells us about your business, the issues or questions you'd like help with, and hopefully we can help you with them. And make sure to tell us how to reach you.

[45:24.1]

You can send us a voice memo@hibtid.wondery.com or call us at 1-800-433-1298 and leave a message there and we'll put all this in the podcast description as well.

[45:39.2]

This episode was produced by Alex Chung, with music composed by Ramtin Arablouei. It was edited by John Isabella, and our audio engineer was Sina Lofredo. Our production staff also includes Carla estevez, Casey Herman, J.C. howard, Chris Massini, Sam Paulson, Kerry Thompson, Neva Grant, and Elaine Coates.

[45:57.5]

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