

Note from Designers Hack Funnels:

I know that my previous notes have run quite long but most of the interviews have been at least an hour long. So for those that don't have the time to really read through all the notes I will now have a preview section with the key points and quotes. You then have the option of reading the stories that give this advice context afterwards if you have the time.

Swan Sit has got one of the biggest followings on the new social media app, Clubhouse. It's a very dynamic platform, and she's daily on this platform, and she's one of the 15 most followed thought leaders on there. She was one of Brand Innovator's 40 under 40 in Marketing Women to Watch. She's an independent board director for two publicly traded companies and operating partner at AF Ventures. She's the former head of digital at Nike, Revlon, and Estée Lauder. The CMO of Ani Energy and a new energy drink company by Tik Tok stars Josh Richard and Bryce Hall. Swan Sit's experience is primarily in the corporate world but she felt that because of synergy there are actionable items from that world that can be implemented by entrepreneurs.

Key Takeaways from Swan Sit:

"So that's what you guys can take home tomorrow as you think about your businesses right. Social is about people. Know your customer. Know what values they have and what you connect on. Don't worry about the glossy logo or the brands. Know your customer and talk to their values."

Don't be afraid to shake up the industry. Don't do what everyone else is doing.

Take risks.

Diversify and be inclusive.

"It's about understanding our customers and back to the values, because logos are great, products are great, but what keeps a customer loyal, is the values that you and they share."

Talk to your customers and understand them and their values.

Understand who you are and your values and make sure your team is behind you.

"You've got to have vision with your customers. But you have to have the execution...if your team's not behind you then you don't have anything either. So you've got to lead that vision with both your customers and your internal team and then you might have a chance."

"It's about understanding our customers and back to the values, because logos are great, products are great, but what keeps a customer loyal, is the values that you and they share."

Lead with Kindness

"And the regret that I had with not lead with kindness...business is business, but they're built by people. So if you treat people right, you can go to bed every night feeling good about yourself."

On branding:

Take it back to basics.

We can only remember three things at a time. So what are the three things about your brand?

Decide if it's your personal brand or your business brand

Validate your three things by asking others (those who know you well and those who don't) what three things come to mind when they think of you or your brand. Are they the same? Typically, you'll find blind spots.

On marketing and the pivot to digital:

*"I think with marketing, people always think of commercials, advertisements, and the creative, but marketing actually is about **product market fit. It's making a product or service that fits the need of customers.** That's the basic part of marketing. So once you get that, then you can create the logo or the commercial or the ad campaign that fits it."*

Digital marketing is fairly technical and data driven.

Knowing, not just what they are now, but what they might want so you can serve the needs that they don't even know they have yet.

What does 10X mean:

*"Impact. It's about results. We can work hard, we can work smart. We can do it, we can leverage our network. **But what matters at the end of the day is the impact.**"*

The Full Interview:

Lessons from her time at Elizabeth Arden, a 120 yo company that needed to modernize:

"It's your grandmother's luxury, so we thought how do we modernize this company and make people think it's cool again. We thought about the power of social media."

"And now, if you guys think about when we scroll through Instagram, it's ad upon ad upon ad, but remember when it started, that's where we went to see what our family and friends were doing. So what we thought we'd do with Arden is to take it back to a **personal relationship**, not ads, not corporate speak, but real life. So we said, Elizabeth Arden has been around for 120 years. What people didn't know that Elizabeth Arden, over 100 years ago, was a modern woman that she was the first woman on the cover of *Time* magazine. She practiced clean living, yoga...she opened the country's first destination spa. She was so foreign to her time."

"Who would [Elizabeth Arden] be if she were alive today? She'd probably go by Liz and not Elizabeth. She'd be in a cool downtown loft in New York. ***Let's rebrand the entire social media account to be if Liz were alive today. What would her Instagram look like. So it's not about products, it's about her friends, and her crew, and the cool events she goes to. Everything was shot in the first person.*** So we completely shook up the industry because everyone was doing lipstick on the counter or these impossibly gorgeous women. And we said, let's actually ***create a lifestyle that people are excited to be a part of***, let's have influencers as her tribe, her crew, instead of having them sell product and it crushed it. We also started diversifying the look at beauty. So we use influencers like Chelsea Handler, who definitely has a voice. We had Iris Apfel, you know, the woman who's 99 years old with a really big glasses. Gabi Fresh, a plus sized mixed race model. So, by changing up how we approach social, when everyone's zig zag, we did something different. We completely modernized the company where Gen Z was like 'who's this new company that Chelsea Handler is working with?'"

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Question: What's the process if someone wants to be out there building their brand from start? How do they get those innovative ideas to think differently when everyone's doing on thing. Where does the idea come from? Is there a certain formula that you use?

"It all starts with who you are. I didn't set out to diversify the beauty industry, but I mentioned that I came to the US when I was six. I grew up around Boston. [I had] big purple glasses which would be cool nowadays if you lived in Brooklyn, but back then I was just odd kid with no friends. And as I worked in beauty. I don't even think I realized that I wanted to be inclusive.

So when you have that passion and drive, then you started talking to customers and realize they feel the same thing right the beauty industry is so unfair.

It doesn't include all sizes and colors and shapes. When I realized in my heart some that *customers weren't feeling heard*, that's where the inspiration came from. So with all of my brands: Revlon, Nike, I went in stores, and customers will be delighted that someone is actually listening to them. Talk to them. What are they concerned about? What are their needs? And that's where I always start."

"So start talking to your customers, talk to a wide array of them lay it out, then think about your channels whether it's an e-commerce site, your sales team, social media...make sure those values are embedded in there."

Lessons from the Nike campaign:

"Well so for those who might remember, there was something called Dream Crazy with Colin Kaepernick a couple of years ago, and I was very fortunate to work on that campaign. When I came to the US, the brands I knew were McDonald's, Coca Cola, and Nike. So to be able to be the head of digital marketing globally for them was an honor. A couple years ago and still now, I think our country's in a tough place with understanding race relations. **Nike isn't even a sneaker company...I think it's a marketing company at its core. They happen to sell sneakers**, but they are some of the best marketers in the world. And what they realized was the country was torn. And so they created a commercial called Dream Crazy that featured many athletes: Serena Williams, Tiger Woods, LeBron, that ended with Colin Kaepernick and the sacrifice he made. **Now what's interesting is everyone assumes that Nike picked a side, and maybe in some ways they did, but all it did though was create a container for difficult conversation.** Race is a difficult conversation to have, because we all have one, we all have an identity so it's impossible to be completely unbiased because we're all part of our experiences. But Nike creating a commercial that was polarizing for the country, created a way for people to have a dialogue that wasn't about them. It wasn't about me versus you. It was about the commercial and once that content started getting out, hopefully, it created longer and better dialogues. So I don't even think it was a it was a stake in the road...it was, 'let's create a way for our country and our customers who are torn apart to have a conversation that's really difficult,' So it goes back to values, whether it's Elizabeth Arden and being more inclusive about beauty, or its Nike and helping this country get passed through a difficult place."

"It's about understanding our customers and back to the values, because logos are great, products are great, but what keeps a customer loyal, is the values that you and they share."

"So I mean I got as many compliments as we got hate mail about that campaign, and I would didn't measure success by how many likes, because we got just as many dislikes. It created a conversation that helped our country move forward."

Question: When you work with Estée Lauder, Nike, Revlon and you have hit campaign, and you win awards for them. When you are starting these projects do you know what it's going to turn into?

"Oh god no. In fact, when we did the beauty campaign and I asked Elizabeth Arden to use Chelsea Handler who is very provocative in the things she says we asked them to use Iris Apfel who's 99 years old. Why would you pick someone so old? We're trying to get younger? And I'm trying to help them understand it. Age is not literal. Like Betty White. Ruth Bader Ginsburg. These are icons for the next generation. I put my job on the line for that. I said if this doesn't work, you can fire me, and I was scared to death. I had no idea. I very easily could have lost my job and you know what that would have been a job worth losing if they didn't understand the value of inclusivity, but you never really know. But I go back to talking to your customers. Start with your customers and if they're all telling you, 'Hey the beauty industry is not inclusive. There's no products for my skin tone.' You already on the same pages and then you talk to your team."

"You've got to have vision with your customers. But you have to have the execution...if your team's not behind you then you don't have anything either. So you've got to lead that vision with both your customers and your internal team and then you might have a chance."

"I mean the Colin Kaepernick campaign was so secret, literally, until we hit go. A tiny crew of people knew, and we just held our breath, and to be honest, the first few days were terrible. Our stock price tanked and people freaked out. But what I had to remind people is Wall Street doesn't reward, long term strategic bets, they reward predictability. So if any of you guys are investors, Wall Street analysts are paid to give good investment advice, and that is based on being predictable. That campaign was not predictable. So our stock price tanked and guess what, the next week, it shot up."

"So you never know, you have to trust your gut, trust your customers, and trust your team."

Question: So we all know about the successes and, but is there a time when you failed or had a big disappointment or you really wanted something and you lost it or you didn't handle it and how did you persevere?

"I was 23 years old when I was given a role that managed 12 people on a team. I went from managing nobody to 12 people overnight. And so I was pretty nervous and scared but obviously excited because you're young, and [now] I'm a manager of people. Managing people is really hard. If you guys started as a solo entrepreneur, you're building a small company...to go overnight from just doing [it yourself], to thinking about leading even a small team, and if your business is going towards a large team, **it's a completely different skill set**. So I came in, took over this team, and was given a mandate: they said out of these 12 people, one person is terrible, so just go fire him and move on. So I do. It was the worst conversation I've ever had. I only talk to this person twice. And we're on the phone because I'm remote, and he is crying because he's 21. And that's sat with me for years because I knew it wasn't right."

“And the regret that I had not lead with kindness, because what I could have done is given him the option, ‘I can put you on a three month performance plan. We can see if things get better, but if not, let’s part ways and we’ll give you a very great severance package so you can find what you love best.’ And I didn’t have the context of having those types of conversations. I did what my boss told me. Now, the silver lining is a few years later he found me on Facebook and thanked me for letting him go because now he was an entrepreneur. He hated the corporate environment and didn’t realize that that’s why he was always going around and networking with people and building stuff because the corporate structure sucked for him. But what I should have done is stood up for him. So I think that, when I was 23 years old, **let me realize that business is business, but they’re built by people. So if you treat people right, you can go to bed every night feeling good about yourself.”**

Question: What is one tip that you can give the people out there that want to start their brand or improve their brand or what can they do to take it to the next level?

“Take it back to basics. Now, humans are frustratingly simple, we can only remember three things at a time. So ask yourself, what are the three things about your brand? And you do have to decide if it’s your personal brand, or your business brand. Always asking why something is the way it is or how something works. I’m always eager to learn. And I’m adventurous, whether it is crazy extreme sports, or trying new business ventures. **So what are the three things you want to be known for.** Now here’s the kicker. Go ask three people what they think those three things about you are. It’d be really surprising to see what they say. So I would ask someone who knows you really well, like a family member, or a sibling, or a spouse or best friend, then somebody that you sort of know as a casual acquaintance, like maybe a friend you met at 10x, do you do business with, and see what they say. Now if you’ve been really good about personal branding, they’ll maybe say the same things that you said, but I’ve never seen that happen. What you’ll realize is not only might you find a blind spot that you didn’t realize that maybe we have to work on because some of those three things could be possibly negative, but it also shows you something you might be living without even being conscious of it. So I actually adjusted mine. Adventurous was not on my list. But people know I do crazy things like summit mountains and go to Antarctica. And they came up with adventure so I’m like wait, I didn’t realize that because I didn’t think of that as a business context, but they said you’re adventurous about everything. You had decades in the corporate world, you’re an executive at a public company and you left, that’s adventurous. **So ask people what those three things are and you might learn something about yourself.**

Question: What do you think is the next direction for digital marketing? Where do you think it’ll go?

“I think with marketing, people always think of commercials, advertisements, and the creative, but marketing actually is about **product market fit. It’s making a product or service that fits the need of customers.** That’s the basic part of marketing. So once you get that, then you can create the logo or the commercial or the ad campaign that fits it.”

“Digital marketing is fairly technical. I mean how many of you guys are buying Facebook and Google ads. Yeah, a bunch of you guys. This didn’t exist 15 years ago...targeting. **So, the new age of marketing is actually being a little bit more data driven. Knowing who your customers are. Owning the information about them. Knowing, not just what they are now, but what they might want so you can serve the needs that they don’t even know they have yet.”**

“Marketing is all about the aha moment where you feel like a brand gets you. And so if I’m serving somebody who’s a fan who wants to know about the All Star game and jerseys, all this stuff about ankle support...they’re going to be, delete, delete, unsubscribe.”

“So the new age of marketing is really about understanding your customer and the data.

And the good news is there’s tons of agencies that are now focused on small businesses that specifically help entrepreneurs figure this out. Facebook has tools. Google has tools. So you can start learning this yourself. If not, there’s a lot of freelancers that are college students, and you know, first few years out of college people who will do this on this site because they grew up in this, they understand this in a way that I never will. So I basically take some of those as interns or freelancers and I have them work on it, to let them help you guys figure out the technical side of digital marketing. **You guys don’t have to learn it yourself.** I don’t think it’s the right skill set for entrepreneurs to always own”

Question: And so how have you had to pivot and adjust during this whole last year?

“Part of being an entrepreneur is resilience and grit when something changes on you, you adapt. Entrepreneurs have been doing this forever. The rest of the world had to learn how to do it this year.

So you would just write when you talk to your customers, you get really good at things like zoom or phone calls, etc. You get creative. Clubhouse, this odd thing that’s popped up...It’s a social media app...I don’t even want to call it social because it’s not like the other stuff, it’s voice only. You jump on and it’s like a podcast with audience participation. There’s somebody, there’s a group of people speaking at the top, there’s a bunch of listeners. And when I say audience participation, you can raise your hand and be brought up to speak. *It’s about human connectivity* and that’s how I adjusted because I love people, right, I just want to be around people all the time and I was sequestered with my parents for a year. So clubhouse became the way for me to meet amazing people. You pivot. So for me it’s actually understanding the power of digital, video, motion. All the time. Sometimes reducing it to the intimacy of voice is really cool and that’s how I have adapted. I mean, my work, friendships and relationships I’ve moved into this space. And I think even when we go back to the real world, Clubhouse will still be a really big part of our lives because **those connections are real.** No clubhouse is a great space to be on. Listen, it is another social media app so you have to watch.”

Question: so lastly, what does 10X mean to you?

“Impact. It’s about results. We can work hard, we can work smart. We can do it, we can leverage our network. But what matters at the end of the day is the impact.”

“So keep your eye on that prize because all that social media storytelling I gave to you guys about Elizabeth Arden being modern and we shot it from the first person, what it resulted in was **ringing the cash register that company went from being in a turnaround in the red to ten quarters of consecutive growth and being acquired by Revlon. Real results.** I sometimes work with growth stage companies as an advisor. So my last client that I worked with from October to January. Last year they were 3 million in sales then they jumped to \$13 million and they had a \$40 million goal this year. It’s nearly impossible to go from \$13 [million] to \$40 [million] during a pandemic. And we did it in three months, we actually jumped. They were supposed to do a million and a half to 2 million in November. We closed November at \$7 million. **Roll up your sleeves. Get it done right.** You guys are learning so much from every speaker. Here, write this down, take it home, but as you lay out your plans, your 10X is about the impact. It’s great that we have the effort, sometimes, you know, we hit speed bumps, we might have some excuses but keep your eye on that prize that 10x is your impact. So all those things are components and go into this melting pot, but **if you don’t have the impact of 10x then what was all that effort for?**”