

Episode No. 116 So You Wanna Be A Social Media Influencer wi...

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SPEAKERS


Jessica Lauren, Michelle Thames

J Jessica Lauren 00:00
Hello and welcome to the Sunday jumpstart podcast, a weekly podcast helping goal getters, ditch the excuses, do the work and make it happen. My name is Jessica Lauren, and you are listening to Episode 116 Hey y'all. Hey, and welcome back to this week's episode of The SJS podcast. Happy Sunday, everybody. Thank you for spending just a few minutes with ya girl over here on the podcast. You could be doing a whole number of other things. But I really appreciate that you're just hanging out with me here on the podcast. So what are we doing today? Well, today we are continuing our " So you wanna.." series. Okay, last week we had Treasure Mallory, come on the show and talk about what it's like to be a full time creative entrepreneur. If you have not listened to the episode, be sure to go back because she dropped so many gems and was super vulnerable about the ins and outs of being a full time creative, right? So today, I was like, okay, who could come up next on the docket? What makes sense? And I was like, You know what, I think social media is another way that a lot of us break into entrepreneurship and who better than none other than Michelle Thames to come on the show and talk about how social media is a very viable and rear real career path that all of us can venture out on. And if you don't believe me, Listen, social media is a billion dollar industry and those billions of dollars isn't just reserved for people with a million followers or 100,000 followers, you can get in on a piece of that pie by just being your most authentic self, speaking to your audience, showing up keeping it real, and having a little bit of strategies to get brands to notice you

and to put some coins in your pocket. And Michelle is living proof of that. She did it and today she's going to guide you through how you can become a social media influencer. Now listen, I know sometimes we hear that we were influenced or we like "eww" right it has become kind of a cringy word but influencing is something that we all do when you call your girl like-- "girl you got to go to Marshall's they got these you know mugs on sale on for five dollars", you were just being an influencer right? You when you have your podcast or your art or the clothes that you sell or you know what you chillin at the park and you hanging out with other moms and you're talking about bottles and blankets and all that-- - all of us are influencers It does not have to be a bad thing. Like I said, influencers and social media has introduced a lot of us into the business world so it doesn't have to be a bad thing. So if you've been really wanting to learn more about it, but maybe a little bit shy or embarrassed because it's like-- "Who am I? You know, like that's not a real job." Trust me I know what that feels like. As a former actress, as you know somebody in the social media sphere, I get it. But today I'm giving you full permission to go all in and learn from Michelle on you know how you can become an influencer that is paid paid pretty well. So who is Michelle? Thanks. Okay. Michelle is a top rated social media expert, strategist, speaker, content creator and entrepreneur. Michelle has worked with one of the fastest growing beauty brands creating and implementing social media strategies that garnered sales in the millions. Baby girl know what she's doing okay? She's also the founder of Thames Media Solutions, a social media agency dedicated to helping creatives and brands thrive on social media. Michelle is the content creator behind happilyevernatural.com, a platform that inspires women to be confident, courageous and unique in every way. During her 11 year career as a content creator, she is partnered with brands such as Toyota, Olay, Subway, True Value and many more. Y'all, I'm so super excited about today's conversation, grab your popcorn, Your mimosa, your coffee, whatever it is, and let's take a listen to this conversation that I had with Michelle times about breaking into the social media influencer game. Hey Michelle.

 Michelle Thames 04:27
Hi Jessica.

 Jessica Lauren 04:29
How are you girlfriend?

 Michelle Thames 04:31
I am doing so so good. Today is 60 degrees in Chicago and we all know that that's a rarity.



Jessica Lauren 04:38

Come on somebody I got on a tank top. I got on cut off jeans. I am here for the 60 degree weather. So I know all about you. I know I have Tea because we met years ago, right but why don't you introduce yourself to those of us in the audience that don't know who you are and what it is that you do?



Michelle Thames 04:56

Yes, we did meet years ago and I remember we are We went out to the promontory and we got so busy and never got to meet up again but for having me on your podcast. So I am Michelle, I am a social media strategist and a digital content creator and influencer. I have been in this game 11 years and every time I says I'm like--Dang it's been 11 years. So I started off as a natural hair influencer in the natural hair industry created a YouTube channel and also a blog. And then I had a really great opportunity to work for natural hair brand in their social media and digital marketing department. And from there, I pivoted to being my own boss and opening up my own social media agency. So it's really been an amazing journey. But being an influencer has definitely been a large part of my journey. And it's been fun. And it's been exciting. And I know so many people have questions about being an influencer. So I'm like, Yes. I'm excited to get into our chat today. Because you can anybody can be an influencer!



Jessica Lauren 06:07

Can we?



Michelle Thames 06:08

Yes,



Jessica Lauren 06:09

Girl. So okay, let's start demystifying stuff right now. Right. So I don't know about you. But in my mind, you have to have a million followers to start making some good money on social media. Is that a myth? Or is that real deal? Holyfield?



Michelle Thames 06:24

That's a myth, you don't have 5000 followers. What do need though, is good, valuable content. That is what you do need. Um, people think like, you need a new camera, you got

to have a Canon 50 D or whatever, you don't need none of that. You don't need 10,000 followers to work with brands, you can start working with brands at 1000. followers. I think it really comes down to the community that you have built online. And also your content that let's just be honest, brands want to work with people who create good content. I think a lot of people want to be influencers, because they think it's a get rich, quick thing, and they just make money. But I'm here to tell you that being an influencer in the content creator is a whole lot of work. And then if you're not willing to put in that work, to create great content and to do all the work that it takes to be an influencer, that this is not for you is not get rich quick, you won't be... I didn't even start making 1000s of dollars until like years. So it's definitely not something that you can get rich quick, but you don't need 10,000 followers, you don't need to have a large following. You can work with what you have. And there are brands that want to work with nano influencers. And that means if you have less than 10,000 followers,

J

Jessica Lauren 07:39

So take us, just take us through the whole process, right? Let's say I'm new to the game one day, I just woke up and I was like, You know what, I need a creative outlet. I want it to be a blog or YouTube. Where do you start? Should you start with the blog? Or should you go straight to social media? You and I are OGs You know, I'm saying like, we've been in the game for a minute. Back in the day, all you kind of have was a blog, you might have had Myspace and maybe Twitter. But now, should people just fast track it straight to social media? Or should you have a home for all your content? Where do you start?

M

Michelle Thames 08:16

you should definitely have a home for your content. I'm the one that's gonna say you should have something that's your own social media isn't ours, my blog, that is my domain, nobody can come and take it unless you don't pay for it can come and take my blog away from me. So I think you really have to be strategic and sit down first and say, Okay, do I want to start a podcast? Or do I want to start a blog? And what's that going to look like in Google University is going to be your best friend. Because that's exactly what I did. When I started, I had no idea what a blog even was, I didn't even know people were making money. I didn't know it was such this huge thing until I got into this world. So if you're like your family, or something's like not in this world, they're not going to understand what goes on being a creative because they just don't understand the world of creative people. And all that is in this world. So definitely, I will say, if you like to write, start with the blog, if you don't like to write a blog may not be for you. You can turn your Instagram into a mini blog. A lot of people don't have a blog, but they're still influencers, but they're just social media influencers there. They don't technically have a blog or

YouTube or whatever. But I would just say, start with whatever it is that you want to pursue first because you can't do it all at once. I started with the YouTube channel and then created a blog. And then years later created a podcast and all this other stuff. Like I wasn't trying to do all the things at once because if you try to do that you're going to be you're going to go crazy.

J Jessica Lauren 09:49

Yes, you are! Tell me how I know cuz I used to try to do things. Okay, so you brought up something that I want to talk about, and it's the word value, right? We hear that all the time, "make sure your content is valuable. Make sure your content is valuable, right". But and I think that makes sense for people that are self help gurus or for coaches or for people that actually teach somebody else how to do something. How do you create value when maybe you are a comic, Instagram person, or someone that just eat food or review it? You know what I mean? Like, what does value mean? Exactly?

M Michelle Thames 10:29

I think when it comes to value, just something that someone else is going to get something out of, I think, for food, like if you're a food blogger, and you go review all these restaurants, that's great, because you're helping me to decide if I'm going to go to this restaurant, and I know there's a there's a guy, Jeremy, he has @blackpeopleeats. And like, because of him, I've learned so much about different food places. And it may not even be like he's like, you know, teaching people, anything in particular, but he's helping people to understand about the different restaurants in Chicago or wherever there are black owned, that people can go to let me know what they have. So that's providing valuable content because he is doing the research for you and letting you know what's hot, what restaurant you should go to what restaurants are Black own. So I think when it comes to being value, just something that somebody else is going to get something out of even if you're a fitness, even if you're like a fitness influencer and you share, you know your meals every day, you're still helping people figure out what meals that they should be eating if they want to be healthy and fit.

J Jessica Lauren 11:37

I love that. Michelle, here's another quick question. How do you find your people? Like, let's say, I'm like, you know what, I'm a baker, I want to just bake and I want more business. I want to get my eyes on there. I'm not necessarily teaching people how to bake but but maybe I'm showing my behind the scenes, how do I start attracting my ideal audience? And we could say, is it helpful to talk about on Instagram versus on Twitter versus on

Pinterest? Or do you want to stick to one vein, which is easier?

M

Michelle Thames 12:05

I can go through a few of them on the platforms that I'm most active on. So I'll say for Instagram for me. When I pivoted from natural hair to this more of a marketing lifestyle space, I had to go find these people. And when I say go find the people search through hashtags. I do a lot of hashtag searching on people who I think that are interested in that that may be interested in my comments. I mean, not my comments, my content

J

Jessica Lauren 12:30

Yep

M

Michelle Thames 12:31

So what I would do is I will go through the hashtags that I use and follow people or leave comments on their page to something meaningful and valuable not and it will be somebody that I will be interested in following me because I will follow them back. But by doing that I led people back to my page. And when I say that, that's a lot of work. It's a lot of work. Who months of the pandemic when it first started really going heavy at this because I saw opportunity. I'm like, Oh, we about to be at home, I need to attract all the people who I think are going to be interested in learning more about social media. For me, even though I had a lot of those people already in my audience. I probably grew like I don't know. 8000 followers or something 5000 like from March till now or something that's slow growth. I mean, I know there's people out here going quick on Instagram, but not me.

J

Jessica Lauren 13:23

I mean, some people are praying for 5000 in a few months growth, you know, it's all relative.

M

Michelle Thames 13:30

Yeah, so I'm all about this slow, organic, real growth. So I'm not too concerned about like gaining 50,000 followers in a week. While it's good. I mean, that's just not my tactic. Um, I had to go and find those people on Instagram and bring them back to my page and just networking with other influencers. They share your stuff. So that's really how I started to develop a community I continue to create my community on Instagram. Now Twitter is a

whole nother whole nother game on Twitter is basically for experts and people who are giving advice in their field, right, so I'm a social media strategist. So at first I had just a regular, I mean regular Twitter, where I was just sharing natural hair. Regular tips,



Jessica Lauren 14:14

Mmmhmmm



Michelle Thames 14:14

I would say about last year was when I really started to get serious on Twitter. And I switched up my strategy, I started to share more strategic content that was geared towards being an expert in social media. And once I started to do that, I started to see more followers and more people being engaged with my content, and like resharing or retweeting my tweets. If a tweet does really really good, then I would just be like, Okay, I need to create something else like this. But going on Twitter too, and following people in your niche or different people is the same type of thing to bring them back to your page. Now Twitter may not be filled with just a bunch of everyday people, you know what I'm saying? But you if you use Twitter to gain a network of other people nationals, I think that that's a good way to use Twitter for because I think a lot of people that follow me on Twitter, they're probably professionals in their field too. And it's just a good conversation. And it's a good platform to be on, especially if you want to be known as an expert. A lot of people I've gotten clients from Twitter, I've gotten, I found my assistant from Twitter, somebody retweeted a tweet that I was hiring, and she applied and now she's my assistant. So his Twitter is still gold. So don't forget about Twitter is a testament to that, like, I met all of my business besties on there, I got my first target partnership on Twitter, like, Twitter is a real, like you said, a good place to find your network and like your, your peers, from your support, like I mean, support from your peers, and you're saying industry, I totally agree with that. What are you gonna say about Facebook, Facebook is like, well, Chow, Facebook is a different, a different beast in a different story. I will say like, on my personal Facebook page, I started to just open it up just to random people that want to follow me because I wanted to just not use my Facebook anymore, just for my family. And I think I did that about a year and a half ago and just started accepting everyday people. My Facebook profile is public anyway, because whatever I'm sharing on Facebook, I'll share on another platform. So it really don't have to be private. I don't use my Facebook, just for family. So Facebook is another beast, I created a Facebook group in November. And by doing so I was able to create a new community of people of bloggers and influencers. And now I think I have about 350 people in the group. But this that is again, I went to Instagram and found these people, a lot of the people that I found, I sent a personal message to them, asking them to join my group. And that was really a good

attack they because it just makes people feel more included. It makes them feel more like you're more personable. So that was my strategy of gaining a new community on Facebook through creating a Facebook group.

J Jessica Lauren 16:58

But what I am picking up is that it kind of took you took you a bit of time to figure out what's your messaging to pivot? Where do I want to show up and all of that I don't want people to get the message of like, you have to be everywhere all at once. Right?

M Michelle Thames 17:14

Where all at once you will go crazy. I say take a platform and learn that last month for two months before you move on to another platform because there's Pinterest. There's and you're the Pinterest Queen, so there's just Pinterest, there's Twitter, there's Snapchat now got clubhouse, and I got burnt out on clubhouse a headset? Oh, stop for me. Too much. Yeah, um, yeah, I really got burned. I was in club houses every week. I was like, Girl, if you don't sit.

J Jessica Lauren 17:44

But you know what your body will tell you when it's like, Okay, this is entirely too much. So we so basically you have to do work to build your community, they're out there, you just have to go dig, I call that going fishing, I would set a timer, like my timer is off for 20 minutes, because you won't be on social media anyway, right? But to be intentional about it, like let me go to this hashtag that I know people in my industry or people that want to follow me are and just go through the pictures like and leaving valuable content comments like you said. But I like the personal touch that you had a DM saying, "Hey, you know, why don't you come on over to my Facebook group" that's like really high touch connection, I feel like.

M Michelle Thames 18:25

Yeah, and I feel like the people that are in my facebook group, I'm more connected and they're just more involved because I searched for them and I knew they were creative. So it really helped and two once you create a Facebook group it'll just come up to and when people are searching for different Facebook groups, I know people have found me through that way too. But yeah, really finding those your people and finding your community and it is work. A lot of these girls that you all follow on social media on Instagram have built their communities but know that it takes time even Jackie somebody

like Jackie Aina know she had to build that so it's not like anybody is an overnight success. It just doesn't happen like that you have to go and build and find your community.

J

Jessica Lauren 19:06

So once we start finding our community right let's talk a little bit about strategy which is confusing nowadays because Instagram has this algorithm and right now it's favoring reels over stories and if you share your in feed post to your story, it might not click back like it's it's all these ever changing rules right? How do you how many times a day should we be posting what what what call to action trigger should we be what the hell should we be doing on instagram? You feel me?! It's too much!

M

Michelle Thames 19:40

It is too much and but that's why you have me as your strategy so I can give you all the tips. But yes, if you are an influencer, this is what I'm gonna tell you. Treat being an influencer like a business. You need to have a strategy if you want to work with brands. You cannot be all over the place. You want people and brands To take him serious, so you need to have a strategy. And when I say strategy, I mean like, knowing what you're going to post, knowing what your content pillars are knowing what your themes are going to be not all over the place, because I go to a lot of Instagram pages. And I'm just like,

J

Jessica Lauren 20:16

what is what's going on?

M

Michelle Thames 20:18

Like, uninterrupted? So you want what you want people to stay on your page, you want people to share your content. So you have to have a strategy on how you're approaching that. So if you are a blogger or an influencer, and you are a mom blogger, are you sharing my Monday tips, or Tuesday terrible twos or something like that will terrific twos. I don't like saying terrible to my daughter or whatever. Like, just make sure that you have a plan when it comes to social media, because posting just to post is not going to help you. And yes, the algorithm is so tricky. There's always something going on with the algorithm, always something you're going to have to learn what I would say, with the algorithm, yes, you mentioned reels, use reels, to the best of your ability right now. Because it will definitely help you get noticed by more people and increase your reach. The truth is, is that the Instagram algorithm does change every day, it's working off of data every single day, it is analyzing everybody's accounts, and what's every what everybody is doing

online, so it's constantly changing. But if you want to be a business owner, you want to be successful on social media gonna have to keep up with the algorithm and what's going on. I mean, it's just to be honest, are people on social media, I'm just gonna have somebody else. But I mean, if you have somebody else, you don't have to pay the money. So if you want to figure it out on your own, and you want to be successful at it, you do have to pay attention to the algorithm and the different changes, especially with Instagram and the new things that they have coming out and be early adopters to them because I was an early adopter to reels. That's why most people know me as the Oh, the girl who started doing all the reels like because I got on it as it came out. I was like, This is what I need to do. Let me come up with a strategy for my reels and put it out there just like a clubhouse to when it was new. I don't know I have like 7000 followers on clubhouse how to I don't even know how but I jumped on it. It was like, I need to be a pioneer on this app. Because I need to be known and a lot of people know me from clubhouse. A lot of people know me from reels. So just stay focused, look at the algorithm and see what's happening. You got to kind of listen to what's going on if you really want to continue to build a successful brand on social media, especially Instagram.

J

Jessica Lauren 22:38

Yeah, so let's get back to these pillars, right. So when you were talking about mommy Monday, terrific Tuesday's um, what should the strategy be? Should it be like, Monday mom is going to be an in feed post, Tuesday is going to be my Reel, Wednesday I'm going to share on Instagram Stories three times, Thursday is IGTV, should you be touching every single part of Instagram?

M

Michelle Thames 23:06

Absolutely. So there was this new thing that came out. And I don't even remember where I saw that. But it was like, the new thing for Instagram is you got to share four to seven reels a week, one to two Instagram TV, sharing your stories, you should be sharing your stories every day, to be honest, right now, the story of you suck. And it's not just me because I thought it was just my like, why I love you so low. The views on Instagram Stories right now are so low that it's kind of frustrating. But don't let that frustrates you just keep posting Instagram stories. You should be posting stories every day. For the content pillars should be the categories that you're going to talk about. So for me, I talk about social media, I talk about family, I talk about lifestyle. So things in lifestyle could be, you know, my meditation, fitness, will fitness is another category, but you just want to make sure that you have four to five pillars of things that you continuously talk about so that you can go back to those buckets because some people call them content buckets. And when you're doing your strategy, then you'll be like, okay, today's Monday motivation. I'm going to do

a Monday motivation, quote post. Now, when I do my strategy, I don't have like everything planned out like so in my content plan because the content plan is different from the social media strategy. The strategy is how you're going to disseminate everything and what you're going to actually do on social media, your content plan, that is where the content comes in. You're like, Okay, I'm posting this on Monday. And it's gonna have I'm, this is gonna be the caption Tuesday, I'm gonna post this Tip Tuesday Reel, Wednesday on post wellness or something like that. So you see how it's easier for you to create content and think about the content when you already have those pillars set. You don't have to be like, what am I going to post today?



Jessica Lauren 24:50

Yep, it's not a mystery because you've already done the work.



Michelle Thames 24:53

Yes.



Jessica Lauren 24:54

Okay. So we got our pillars going. We found our people, right and let's say we are at, I don't know, 2000 followers, right? And our content is good. Let's say from those 2000 followers, we get 250 likes or, you know, 300 views on Insta stories, is now a good time to start pitching the brands?



Michelle Thames 25:16

Anytime it's a good time to buy, I will say before you pitch to brands, you do want to somewhat develop a relationship with these brands start talking about the brands that you like and love. I think there's a lot of misconception, especially with a lot of people sharing, influencer marketing tips and how to work with brands that they missed a part of telling people that you probably should develop a relationship. Most of the long term partnerships that I have, I've developed relationships with them, I've already started to talk about the brand before I even approached them. Most of a lot of the brand deals that I do get, they do approach me but when I pitch brands, I have already talked about that brand, because it's kind of awkward going into a situation like-- "Hey, hey, pay me. And you haven't even really popped on anything, right?"



Jessica Lauren 26:01

Can we be friends yet? Can we get to know each other before you ask me out on a date? That's how I think of it with brands like, can you woo them? Court them a little bit before you just come in at "A yo here go my contract, give me the money! Bye!



Michelle Thames 26:16

Yeah, start tagging the brands, I mean, I still tag brands that I want to work with that I think you know, they're a good fit for my brand as well. And I'll slide in them dms and say, "Hey, you know, I love the brand or whatever". And then when you tagged the brands, especially in your stories, and now you send them a DM asking for the contact information, if you can't find it, or whatever, they're gonna see that you've already been talking about them. I had a brand new that last week, and they gave me the contact person information to send to send the pitch. I'm like, "hey, do you guys work with influencers? I love this, blah, blah, blah, can you know, do you have a contact?" They're like, Oh, sure, we would love to work with you and sent me the information. So that's that's it could be as simple as that.



Jessica Lauren 26:57

You know what? So building relationships, I do the same thing. I'm like, whether you pay me or not Marshall's, I'm still tagging you. Because I'm always there target all of that. Those things, and you really do get their attention is, is I have so many dams, just key-keying with brands, and eventually they'll start sending you stuff and all that jazz. There's this rhetoric going around on social media, like--pay your worth, get your coins don't work for free. When you are first starting off, Michelle, and you all have no social proof that you can handle a campaign or any of that. What are your views on that? Should you be charging or let's say a brand you love? Let's say Dove, for instance, is like, Hey, you know, we see you tagged us a million times we want to send you some free products. Do you take the free products? And then maybe ask like, Can I get some money? Like, what are you supposed to do when you're new? You? Do you get what I'm saying?



Michelle Thames 27:51

Oh, yeah, I've definitely done my fair share of free products. And I definitely think that if you are first starting out, and you don't have any brand deals under your belt, if Dove wants to send you some product, you better take it and create the most bomb content ever. And send it to them and say, my audience love this content. This is what they have to say send them, send them the messages that people leave under your post that is

meaningful. Like, I don't think that people forget about that. Like if, like I just did a campaign with Pantene, and like people have some really good comments. So I'm sending to the brand. Like they were saying this like they love, they had no idea you had these products, they tried it and they loved it. So I definitely think that when you first start out, you cannot just come out the gate and be like, you're going to pay me 50 grand for this campaign. It's just not gonna work like that. You do have to develop that relationship and understand that like you said, it's courting, but taking products for free doesn't make you any less of an influencer. Everybody has taken free products. Everybody gets free products. Do I still get free products like don't stop sending me the free products because yeah, I still look at that as money and I don't have to buy that stuff. You know, Dove approaches you and they want to see some product and it's a brand that you really want to work with. Now if it's a brand that you don't want to work with, don't pursue it but if you want to work with them, and they want to send you free product, do it because if Old Navy say I'm gonna send you some clothes, I'm gonna tell bad



29:19

listening. Oh,



Michelle Thames 29:21

I would love to partner with you,



Jessica Lauren 29:23

Michelle and Riley. That's our baby girl. They are ready for you.



Michelle Thames 29:27

and Randy my husband he ready to.



Jessica Lauren 29:30

I know. That's your dream brand right there!



Michelle Thames 29:33

I love Old Navy so much!



Jessica Lauren 29:36

Let's switch gears a little bit. Let's say that you you know, after a while, I want you to start producing a lot of content. You have that email in your bio. Brands will start emailing you and be like, Hey, we have this product. What do you do when they offer you the whole like, we'll give you an affiliate link and you'll get 20% off the product. What should you do?



Michelle Thames 30:03

Y'all are all asleep, whoever's listening your sleep on affiliate programs, I think though, first started out, I wouldn't necessarily do an affiliate because I will feel like my audience may not be as in get like, if you're just starting out, you may not have developed a relationship with your audience for an affiliate program. But to be quite honest, a lot of people do affiliate programs and are making bank especially the girls who do like to like to know it, they have 100,000 followers, and always share night outfits because I used to be like-- "Why are they always sharing these outfits" , but people are clicking and buying do not get it twisted, they are making money. I know a girl who made 1000s offer like to know that link. So you just have to really, again, build your community. And if the brand approaches you, and you know that it's something that you can sale, then I will do it I've made, I've made hundreds of dollars off affiliates, and not even going at it real hard. But I'm about to because almost every app that you use to has an affiliate program and if you're using it like dubsado, for example, I use that for my CRM,



Jessica Lauren 31:06

Client Retention Management



Michelle Thames 31:08

For that, I use it for my invoicing and all that and but they have an affiliate. So if I want to start sharing that, hey, I use them sign Oh, here's my call use it. That's free money. I mean, you can make a blog post about it. Put it on Pinterest, and you know that Pinterest affiliate, like through the roof, they can girl, I think her name is @makingsenseofcents you know her?



Jessica Lauren 31:32

Oh, no, I don't. But that's a cute name.



Michelle Thames 31:34

She's been doing this for years. And like, you know how bloggers used to share the income reports. I don't know if people still do that. But right, share her income report, it will be like 20,000 from an affiliate. Yep.



Jessica Lauren 31:46

And just to be clear, if you're new to the game, affiliate marketing is when a company basically gives you a commission for sharing the product that you're already using with your audience. Like Michelle said, sometimes you might have to write a blog post. Sometimes it's as simple as like literally sharing the link. But it is some good money out there in affiliate marketing. So get on it. And it's pretty simple. Sometimes you have to dm them, hey, do you guys have an affiliate program? Or you could literally Google, you know, fabulous affiliate program and sign up for the stuff that you use the most?



Michelle Thames 32:20

Yes.



Jessica Lauren 32:21

So share it, share it, please share all the things. So let's go back a little bit. We talked about how you started blogging, your career path was completely different when you first started off, right? You were in the healthcare field, right?



Michelle Thames 32:37

Yes. So I have a degree in healthcare administration, a bachelor's and a Master's, I was actually working, I worked for several hospitals, I used to work for the University of Chicago, I used to work for Chamberlain College of Nursing and also Cook County Hospital, which is where I got fired from in 2016. And then that led me to be a freelancer, which led me to work for Mielle Organics. So I definitely am not the traditional I don't have the traditional career path. And when I was in all of this, like when I got fired, I'm like, dang, I'm a failure. I had never gotten fired from any job before. But to be honest with you being fired was the best thing that happened to me because if I wasn't fired, I wouldn't have got the job in Mielle. And I would not have got that real life experience working for a beauty brands to be able to do their social media, like that's huge. And Mielle is such a huge brand and to be part of that I just look back and be like, wow, like, I was the first person in that role. She was doing the social media herself.

J Jessica Lauren 33:40
Oh, my God. Mo

M Michelle Thames 33:41
Can you imagine? So it was was crazy. And yeah, I don't have a traditional career path. But it's okay. Like, if you feel like you have a degree in something that you don't love, it is okay to pivot. I felt like, I felt like that I felt like a fairy like that. I got \$80,000 in student loan debt. How am I gonna tell my family this, but then I was just like, you know what, I'm gonna follow my dreams. And I'm going to I knew that I eventually wanted to be a full time entrepreneur. But I just knew that that time of my life just wasn't the right time for me to do that. So I'm working that Mielle just definitely helped me to learn more about the industry and to get real hands on experience. And it was a great opportunity. I mean, people thought I was actually crazy for leaving my job because it was a dream job. But ultimately, God told me that there was something bigger for me.

J Jessica Lauren 34:33
And here we are with our own agency, we still influenceing. I love it. I really do how you just pivoted. The reason I asked you that question is because in your role at Mielle, I always say Mielle, Jesus, Mary Joseph. You were the person that we're working with influencers right and in getting pitches, and all of that jazz. Tell us some of your do's and don'ts for pitching brands.

M Michelle Thames 35:04
Phew, yes, so I managed to influence a marketing program. Some of my do's and don'ts for pitching brands is do your research number one, because if you just approach a brand, and you're not even following them, like, I used to look at that, like if somebody would dm the brand page and be like-- "I want to work with my Mielle," I will be like--"but you're not even following the brand. So how do you want to work with them?" Like, I don't get that

J Jessica Lauren 35:27
That is a pet peeve of mine, when people pitch the podcast or me like you don't even follow me. That simple.

M Michelle Thames 35:35

So make sure you're following them first. And another thing is to make sure that you can tell the brand, what you're going to do for them, don't just be like asking everything that you want, I think people forget that you're approaching the brand. So you want to let them know, what is the benefit going to be of the partnership. Um, another thing would be if you want to work with a specific brand, I would just say for natural hair, since there's so many natural hair brands out here, like I used to look at people's profiles and be like, well, girl, you just worked with 75 other natural hair brands. So what makes what makes this one different? And, um, what is what's another another don't, I will say another do is to make sure that you are ready to work with brands, again, professional business. I cannot tell you how many times I've worked with influencers like that didn't send me the invoice, that you know, we're not professional. Please be professional, even if even if you know the person. Of course, I worked with a lot of people that I know. But it's like sis just because you know me doesn't mean that you don't have to be professional, I may have to forward this email to my boss. So you need to be professional in these emails, when you are approaching brands. Don't be like, Hey, girl, I would love to work with Mielle you have to be professional still no matter what.

J

Jessica Lauren 36:55

So what, from my knowledge is that when you're pitching a brand, you should keep it short and sweet. And like you said, Tell them your deliverables. So what I want you to talk about is that and like what do you say in that short, concise way that'll get people to stop and look at your work? What's the subject line looking like? And then Am I including my media kit and all that stuff on the first email or later on?

M

Michelle Thames 37:24

I will not include your media kit or rate sheet in the first email, you definitely want to get an intro first. I would go in keep it short and sweet, like you said, but just really let them know what benefit is going to be for the brand working with you like what are you able to provide? Do you have a unique idea, say you want to jump on a call with the brand I'm telling you influencers are not pitching, saying I want to jump on a call with you to discuss my ideas, I think that that will get you way far ahead than most people who are not wanting to jump on calls with brands. As far as the subject line, I usually when I'm pitching to brands, I usually just do like my name x brand, or potential brand collaboration. Um, I think that those, those get read. And there's and there's so many different people saying so many different things that are what you should put in the subject line, but you should just definitely have either like your name, your Instagram name x the brand, or, you know, would love to partner with the brand or something like that just something to really get their attention. Um, but definitely, you know, the simpler subject lines, the better. I don't

think that there's one that works best for anybody else. What I do is I will both like not bold will put in like the brackets, like a potential partnership, and then whatever it is, right?

J Jessica Lauren 38:41

And doing that just helps your job be a little bit easier, right? Like, I think a lot of times we're like, oh, no, I don't want to approach the brand because I don't want them to think I'm bad or being pushy, but it's like actually the person on the other end is looking for talent and for content and people get products in the hands of so go ahead and say, Hey, this is a potential partnership and hopes a perk and a ears up like okay, yeah, listen.

M Michelle Thames 39:06

Yes, yes. And don't be afraid to pitch your brand, the least they could say is no, but don't just pitch one brand. Like you should be pitching 20 brands because you're gonna get no's. That's just what it's gonna be. But you're just gonna keep pitching. And again, please make sure that these brands resonate with your brand and who you are and your audience because it can go left feel like of course, I wouldn't be talking about flat tummy tea. I'm not trying to lose weight. Oh, you know, that's I just would never work with a brand that doesn't fit my brand.

J Jessica Lauren 39:37

Right, right. Right, right. So after you've sent that short and sweet, concise email, right? And you've pitched him for a call, how do you that and they're like, Alright, cool. We love your idea. What's your price? How do you come up with a price that you know values your work, but you won't offend anybody? How do you come up with rates?

M Michelle Thames 40:01

But don't worry about offending the brand because you have to charge what you think. So I get this question a lot. And I think that the whole rate situation is just a topic that a lot of people bypass and they don't want to talk about. But there's a page called @influencerpaygap on Instagram that you can go on and see like, what people are charging. But for me, I always start, I always will start with a base price. Okay? If I was working a nine to five, what would be amount I would make in a day? Okay, I'll start there, then do I got to buy a new outfit? How long? Is this going to take me to do this? Am I gonna have to edit the content? Am I gonna have to hire a photographer? Am I gonna have to buy props? Am I gonna have to rent a space, I put all of that into what my rate would be. So I have a base price. And then everything else is like, Okay, if it's two

Instagram posts, that's more money because now you want to in feed posts, you want to videos, like I seen, I got some pitch today about some a brand, it was one of those things that you could apply to I don't, I don't really apply to those anymore, but it looked enticing. But then there was like, two videos, I was like for this. Right? Right. Um, so just base your price off of everything that you know, that you're gonna have to do. And again, I always start with, okay, if I was a nine to five, if my rate that I was going to make in a day would be \$100 \$125. I'm gonna start there. If it's \$500 start there. I mean, that's still you know, but start there. And if you look at your numbers, too, because sometimes we'd be like, Oh, I'm just gonna charge this brand 20 \$500 when you have 100 followers, I mean, you have to make it make sense to for the brand. Just do know that while we have people are talking about chargerw your wotrth ond charge charge charge, you still have to go off of what your value is going to be on social media with your following with your engagement. That all still matters.



Jessica Lauren 42:00

I totally agree. That's what I love. I love the idea of charging your worth. But it's like let's be realistic. You know what I mean? You can't come out the gate charger fastex with 200 followers, but you can maybe ask for 300 bucks and that'll take your phone bill off your plate. That's how I used to do it. I'm like, what Bill do I need? Me like what do I need to get off my my hands? Um, okay, cool. So we we've done all of work, right? We are here we started make a little bit of money from social media. We feeling good feeling great. One thing you don't hear influencers talk a lot about is the burnout, the different opinions that come in your comments when you know you post a cute hairstyle on a blog? Well, I like to hear it is we had like, how do you deal with just I'm just not the glitzy part of being an influencer? Like maybe some of the criticism or not getting the pitch that you want it? It's a stressful job. How do you cope with all of that?



Michelle Thames 42:59

Yeah, so fortunately, for me, I have not had very many, like, bad comments, or trolls or anything like that, um, I consider myself very lucky. Because I know it's a lot of influences that like, get that stuff. But girl, my blog game is strong. If you come in my dm, problem, I will block you because I don't do toxic people. So if you want to come in my dams or underneath my posts, I'll just delete it. I won't even go there with the person, I don't have time to go back and forth with people. As far as burnout, you have to schedule yourself vacations, even as an influencer content creator, it can get overwhelming. So make sure that you are scheduling time to like clear your mind. Because burnout is real. I remember, I was doing a campaign back to back to back and I'm like, the money's good. But this is a lot. I don't know if it was like last year, I had like five campaigns in like, June or July or

something that was like my highest grossing month ever. But it was like it was so much. And you have to remember these due dates, you have to remember when stuff is due. Because a lot of times with the brands, you got to send them the content before you can even post it and when I want an editor to do it all over. And I forget you have to do it all. Yeah. So definitely just make sure that you are keeping level headed. I meditate everyday. And I think that definitely helps me to clear my mind. And just yeah, make sure that you're being organized because that will help you to it's like you can get all these brand deals but if you're not organized and know what you're doing, it's gonna be a lot.

J

Jessica Lauren 44:31

And how do you stay organized? What what apps or calendars are you using to help you stay on top of all of that stuff?

M

Michelle Thames 44:37

Everything I can I google, I use Google Calendar and I also more recently started using clickup it's like a project management system. It's like Trello and Asana in one, but I use that for my clients and I also use it for myself and for my in my assistant like so we're all in there with different projects. I need to add some more stuff in there today. me but it is Keeps me It keeps me organized.

J

Jessica Lauren 45:03

Gotcha. And before we go, I think it would be a good note to end on with who can be an influencer. And like, what does it mean? I remember when we started using that word a lot. I used to shy away from it. Like it was kind of shameful I Oh, no, I'm just, this is little me, right? But it doesn't have to be a dirty word. Right?

M

Michelle Thames 45:25

Right. A lot of people don't like the term influencer, because it does have a bad rap. But anybody can be influenced. If you're influencing your family and friends to eat healthy, you're an influencer. If you're influencing your mama to buy some pants that you had on that she like, your influence. I just think that whatever meaning you put behind it, that's what it means. I feel like I'm an influence. And I love being influenced. Because I know I'm impacting people. I know I'm helping other people. I'm inspiring people by whatever it is that I'm doing. So you just have to think about it like that and not think about it as such as a bad thing because of the bad rap that it has. But anybody can be influenced. So your eight year old grandmother can be influenced if she wanted to. I mean, I don't think

there's any limits. I think that we just have to stop thinking of it as such a negative thing. It's just because it is so new and people are like, well, I thought it was only celebrities and Kim Kardashian who can be an influencer. But no, no, no, a regular everyday person like me and you can definitely be an influencer and make good money doing it.

J Jessica Lauren 46:24

Amen! thank you so much for Michelle, for joining us on the show. Now tell us where to find you and what services you offer to help us get on our social media game. I know I fell off completely I used to be in there with you like where I'm at the post every day. Now you'd be lucky if you found me on Instagram. So how can we get some of your help?

M Michelle Thames 46:44

So yes, you can follow me on Instagram. My Instagram name is @MichelleLThames which is my last name. My social media agency is Thames Media Solutions, and at Thames Media Solutions, we help creators so if you are influencer creator, entrepreneur or service provider, we help creators and also brands. Brands is more so focused on our social media management. We work with product based businesses to do their social media management. But if you are a creative, I do have services for you. I offer a strategy VIP intensive days. I also offer consulting calls and coaching programs. So definitely check out the website ThamesMediaSolutions.com and you can find out those services there.

J Jessica Lauren 47:30

All right, well, thank you so much for dropping all these gems. Be sure to follow Michelle on my Instagram and let her know you heard her on the podcast. Alright, thank you, Michelle.

M Michelle Thames 47:39

Thank you just this was so good.

J Jessica Lauren 47:43

Y'all, thank you so much for tuning into today's episode. I hope that today's conversation just helped demystify some of that social media Mystique, right? You can be an influencer, you're already doing it might as well get paid. Now, if Michelle and I mentioned anything in today's episode, like the affiliate links or Dubsado, and all that jazz, be sure to check out the show notes just go to the Sundayjumpstart.com and click on episode number 116 and

everything that we referenced will be there for you to get your click on and to sign up for and make some money off okkkurr these sorts of let Michelle know that you heard her over here on the podcast her Instagram handle is at Michelle L Thames. Michelle I the letter L okay. As always, thank you so much for tuning in. If you could do me a favor and go into Apple podcasts and leave a rating and review that really does help get our make ish happen message out there now you're like Jessica I don't listen to you on Apple podcasts. I'm over here on Spotify minding my business that's all good. Take a screenshot of today's episode tag Michelle tag at the Sunday jumpstart that helps us get the word out as well. Okay, I will be back here this Wednesday with a quick tip and this tip is about your Link in bio. When I go to people's link in bio, I see so many different things right? download my printable sign up for my newsletter do this do this, do that, do this. Well, there's a thing called decision fatigue and having all of those options can sometimes repel your audience. So this quick tip we're going to talk about how to make that a little bit more digestible and to get your audience to take action. So be sure to tune in this Wednesday is a quick five minute long episode that'll help you take action and finish the week strong as always, I love you. I'm praying for you. I'm rooting for you. Be blessed. Stay encouraged. Have an awesome week and I will see you here soon. Bye!