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Buck Rivzi

Buck Rizvi is the founder of RealDose Nutrition, a very ethical supplements company that has climbed to eight figures online, and continues to grow. Buck lives in Tennessee with his family, and in addition to his thriving business, he blogs regularly, and hosts his own podcast, Survival Dad.

Voiceover

This is Business Reimagined. Every week we talk with thought leaders and revolutionaries who are bringing innovation to their industries, like today's guest, Buck Rizvi.

Everything that we do has to pass this test.

If I wouldn't subject my mother to this offer, thank goodness she's still alive, she's eighty eight, and to this business practice, and let her ingest this product, then I wouldn't allow anyone else to do it.

This is Business Reimagined with Danny Iny.

DANNY

Buck Rizvi is a leader in the space of health supplements, having founded several companies, including the industry leading RealDose Nutrition. He's taken a different path from many of the hucksters who try to sell supplements online, and in the process, is leading the reimagination of this whole industry. That reimagination comes from unlikely sources, as Buck only turned to entrepreneurship later in life, but the roots of his journey began when he was nineteen years old when he joined the U.S. military and also a network marketing company.

BUCK

I was a young two-striper airman down in England Air Force Base. It was a place called Alexandria, Louisiana. I remember it vividly. The
people were wonderful there; they'd invite you into their home even if they didn't know you and feed you dinner. I really enjoyed that experience of camaraderie that we had with the network marketing organization and being taught to deliver a sales message.

In this case it was direct selling, it was person to person, but I think that was where I cut my teeth on this notion of having a compelling message, having a good value proposition, delivering a message to somebody, and getting them to say yes.

DANNY With that knowledge in hand and after a few years of active duty, Buck went on to work for a series of Fortune 500 companies. Buck tried to ensure his future by working his way up the ladder at these companies, but he wasn't convinced it was the best way.

BUCK This is still a lot of risk. When I was working for my Fortune 500 Company, Tektronix, they had their first layoff in forty years. My job was safe and they actually gave me a raise, but it was a wakeup call for me that there is no security working for somebody else. There's no guarantee working for a venture capital backed company, even if you have a pretty important job, that things are going to pan out.

DANNY Buck continued with his day jobs, but also began searching for new opportunities. In the early days of the internet, just as Google was releasing Androids, Buck and his wife began their first company, the Old Country Candle Company.

BUCK You always remember your first things, right? Your first kiss, your first date, your first child? I remember having my first e-commerce transaction, ringing the bell and it was this candle business. Seeing that first order come across the line - I had setup a simple cart that was plugged into PayPal. It came across and I'm like, "Wow, somebody actually bought something from us."

I went to my wife, Daiva and said, "Honey, we've got to go ship this thing." Lo and behold, we started getting consistently more and more
business. The business kind of caved in. The one mistake that I had made was my wife was production.

DANNY And that was another lesson learned for the lifelong learner. Buck's life was about to change, all the way back from when he was nineteen years old and first started thinking about being his own boss. It began with a four thousand dollar investment.

BUCK In the summer of 2005, I attended the Agora Conference in Baltimore and that was four thousand dollars. Most people think, four thousand dollars, no way can I make that work. I did it, and I'm glad I did it, because it did two things. One, it opened my eyes to this whole notion that you can have more control of your destiny. You can start a business. You can have an education on how to follow a model and be successful at it because we've done this before.

It also gave me an opportunity to meet some really interesting people. That, coupled with my experience that I'd had up to that point working for other people gave me this notion. I'd always been a fan of taking dietary supplements, since probably the late '80s. What I decided to do was combine this notion of high quality, condition specific formula leveraging an online medium. People had been very successful selling supplements through direct response mail, huge businesses, hundred-million dollar businesses.

I said, "I can do this." I did some homework. I was able to do some primary research and identify a market that I wanted to get into, which was digestive health. I saw a few companies. I'm listening to a great book on how to be a billionaire, I don't who the author is right at the top, but they're talking about the history of things like Ross Perot, John D. Rockefeller and Bill Gates, of course. One specific technique they talk about is copying is okay. You don't have to be the pioneer, right?

One thing I decided to do was not be the pioneer, in terms of which market I'd go into. I wanted to find a couple of companies that were having great success selling their products online. I found a couple
that were doing more than ten million dollars in sales online and that
gave me even more confidence. I said, "Hey, if they can do it, and
they're not doing a great job, maybe I can do this better." That was
back in December of 2009. I launched that company and it went on
to do several million dollars.

It became a multi-million dollar company in annual revenue within
about a two year period. It was November 2006 that I walked into my
boss' office, I was working in northern Virginia at the time. He had
actually been through a process where he was lucky, he had actually
taken a company public. He was a little younger than me, had taken a
company public and made a few million during the dot com era. So he
had made his “FU” money, and I hadn't.

I was like, "Okay, look I have a situation where I'm able to focus on
this. I don't need to do this day job anymore." He was actually very
gracious about it and the rest is kind of history. Since November 2006
I have been supporting myself and my own family with my businesses.

DANNY So this is almost ten years ago?

BUCK Yes.

DANNY What's happened since then? I mean you're not just running that one
company doing a few million dollars a year now.

BUCK No, now I run several companies and since then, Ultimate Lifespan
continues to run. In fact, I have a small team, an outsource team and
a general manager that runs it for me, so I can be more of a director
and chairman of the board for the company, which is great. I launched
another supplement company with a couple of business partners in
April of 2011 called RealDose Nutrition. That company went on to
generate in little under eighteen months. It hit a ten million dollar plus
run rate, so we were eight figures in eighteen months and never really looked back.

That has been a very successful business and I've developed and learned a lot from launching that company in terms of hiring more people. I was running Ultimate Lifespan more as a lifestyle business. Worked from home, had a couple of employees and that's about it. Now with RealDose we have a real company. We have employees. We have more than twenty people in the organization; a marketing department, a media buying department, operations group, finance, the whole thing, but we still run it virtually, so that's going along very well.

**DANNY** How large have you scaled that company?

**BUCK** We're an eight figure business. We don't really publish our figures. We don't brag about the figures, but we just say that we are a profitable eight figure business. We held ourselves up as being a lighthouse for how to build an ethical health business online, because there's so many direct response health companies that are doing things the wrong way.

**DANNY** Likewise. There have been tons of failures. An idea that I've become very enamored with lately, it's that failure is only failure if it happens in the last chapter, otherwise it's a plot twist. People close the book. They close the book way too soon. Is it fair to say to summarize where we've been going with this, the landscape has changed. It's not a brave new world or a wide open market space where anybody can jump in and just be an overnight success by virtue of having a massive share of voice. If they keep at it, and they do the little crane and then the medium sized crane, then the bigger crane and when one of those cranes break, they don't close the book, they just keep on going. It's still eminently doable.

**BUCK** Well, I mean online marketing...some people refer to online marketing or internet marketing like it's a bad word. It's kind of like saying, "Okay, well parts of New York City used to be bad, used to be bad..."
neighbou100ds" or D.C. I used to live in northern Virginia for many years. It really is up to the individuals, the shopkeepers if you will, and the people that live here. It's not that particular area's fault. It's not the internet's fault that it's very convenient and high speed and you can go and discover a lot of things and do bad things.

People do bad things, it's not the internet doing the bad things. From that perspective, there are bad actors that will take advantage of people's ignorance, pardon my French, or maybe lack of understanding. Unfortunately people can put products out there, make claims that are not substantiated and take advantage of people, and people have been doing that for hundreds of years. This is nothing new, going back to snake oil salesmen of back in the 1800s. The medium just makes it easier for them to get the message out to a larger group of people. Instead of just a small group in a town, now I can potentially reach thousands.

That's been happening with info-products, that's been happening with dietary supplements and other types of products. It just so happens that finance, information products, health, all seem to be areas that people are really interested in. They've been interested in those areas for a long time, right? Personal development, finance and health seem to be all three areas that are very popular.

In the health space what I found is that a lot of these fly-by-nighters are putting out products that are low quality, they are making over-the-top claims that are not backed by human clinical studies, and they're using business practices that are taking advantage of people, using things like forced continuity, making it difficult for them to get a refund, things like that. It's not hard to change that. It's easy to try to take somebody's money and rip them off. Just like back in the Old West, when the snake oil salesman would roll into town, tell his stories and sell the snake oil and then it doesn't work. He's got to roll out of town, right?

The same thing happens with these fly-by-nighters. They have to fold up shop, they get their merchant accounts shut down, they get their ad accounts shut down with Google or Facebook and then they basically
have to reinvent a new brand. That's their version of folding up the wagon and heading out of town. What I've done, and what we've done at RealDose and Ultimate Lifespan, is create brands that have high quality products, that have ingredients that are backed by human clinical studies, and we use very, very consumer friendly business practices.

It's easy for you to get your money back. Just call us, email us, get on an online chat, we'll give you your money back immediately, and we have people that actually answer the phones. When you do those kinds of things you develop a great reputation. You know this Danny; reputation is everything with respect to your business. The fact that we've been doing this now at RealDose for four years, at Ultimate Lifespan going on ten years; people can Google us, they can look us up on the BBB; they can see that we have an A+ rating, for example, for RealDose. Those kind of companies are going to go the distance, and that's what I teach. We can talk about what I do with my coaching business, if you'd like.

DANNY I'd love to get into that, but help me understand. You know you've built this multi-eight figure, very successful company with decent, ethical business practices; producing good product, etc. Why don't other people do that? Do you think you've been successful because of that or in spite of that?

BUCK I think that we're mature enough that we knew that's what we wanted to do going in. We have something we call the mom test, some people call it the grandmother test, but everything that we do has to pass this test. If we would subject our ... My mom, thank goodness is still live, she's eighty-eight, if I wouldn't subject my mother to this offer and this business practice and let her ingest this product, then I wouldn't allow anyone else to do it. That has served us well and we talk about that in our marketing.

It's definitely been purposeful and it enables us to go into and talk about our business with pride. I mean who doesn't want to talk about their business and what they do with pride, right? I'm moving into a new neighborhood right now, here in Boulder, I'm meeting new
neighbors, when they ask me what I do I want to be able to stand tall and be excited about what I'm talking about. Being able to do that is pretty exciting.

Why don't more people do this? Maybe in their minds they think they have to mimic what they see a lot of the hucksters are doing. They think that's a shortcut to getting people to convert and become a customer and maybe they think they're going to make up for it later. There's a great story about the PT Cruiser. The PT Cruiser was put out by Chrysler, you remember that car?

DANNY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

BUCK The PT Cruiser was really ahead of its time. Incredible design, sleek, raked back design, a retro look. The quality of the materials that they had put into that car were exceptional. It got this huge following very fast; people were buying it like hotcakes. Unfortunately, the people at Chrysler were compensated to extract the greatest amount of profit. The second they saw the PT Cruiser be an incredibly successful car, they started to cheapen some of the materials.

Slowly, bit by bit, the materials became cheaper, flimsier, less expensive, and people, the buyers, started to notice that and then it started getting a bad reputation and that killed the PT Cruiser, unfortunately. The same thing can happen in the dietary supplement business. When people look at a product that they're formulating, they can select ingredients that are cheap, generic, and maybe sourced from questionable places.

For example, we have a very high quality of rhodiola rosea, which is an adaptogen in one of our products. It's literally wild crafted from Siberia. It's difficult to source, it's expensive, but it actually has all the components that yield the clinically proven benefits. You can actually source that ingredient, like Alibaba.com, from China for one-fifth the cost of what we pay for our Russian ingredient. They may say it passes
the test that shows that it has the same amount of the actives, but it's not going to work the same.

I can just tell you right now, it's not going to work the same. But, it's one-fifth the cost, so somebody just entering the market and thinking, gee, I want to maximize profit, just like that PT Cruiser product team, they might make the wrong decision and select the Chinese ingredient at one-fifth the cost versus the real stuff from Siberia. They'll put it out there and they'll make the claims as if it's really the Siberian ingredient. The customer gets the product, they don't have the outcome, and therein lies the problem; bad experience.

DANNY You speak about this with great authority, are you a doctor or a researcher?

BUCK I'm not, I'm a layman. I'm just somebody with a lot of passion and excitement about natural health and, going back to my first statement, I tell my son, ABL, always be learning, right? If you're not always learning and growing, and if you're doing a business and you're not curious about all aspects of that business; even if you're not the doctor, not the scientists, you don't have the PhD, then shame on you.

Steve Jobs was none of that; he wasn't the engineer. Maybe he took a little bit of college, but he was infinitely curious, so his self-education probably put him on PhD level or better, and everyone has the opportunity to do that. I'm not a PhD. I'm not a doctor. I have no special health credentials. I do work with scientists, and that's one of the other things about a business that is really an online business that's exciting. You can retain a PhD level formulator to help you formulate a product that delivers a health benefit.

You can work with expert writers, copywriters. You can work with people that are experts in logistics and they can help you save money and make sure that you get your products delivered on time. Like I did for twenty-one years, people are willing to trade their time for money,
their expertise to help you with your company. And that's the magic of this, I think, of starting an online business.

DANNY Yeah, I think that the tie in of you do work with scientists and doctors and researchers, I think that's an area where a lot of the hucksters also wouldn't; like they'll kind of look at the required ingredients list, the supplements from China kind of say that they meet the requirements, yeah, okay, good enough, you know this is what they told me.

BUCK Yes

DANNY They're not getting that third party scientific validation, which is interesting because if you think about it there is ... It kind of goes to, what is it, plausible deniability, like, look, this is what was on the label, so this is why I bought it; I didn't know I was doing anything wrong. Part of it is I think people want to ... How am I going to defend myself in court or whatever, but I think a lot of it is just it's rationalization to yourself. Nobody wants to think well I'm selling garbage that's making people sick.

BUCK No, I think you hit it on the head; they are rationalizing it. I think the newbies, many of the newbies getting into a health business and thinking they can just go and go to the lowest bidder and foist a product out there thinking it's going to work, believe that it's going to help the consumer. I believe that. There's a small percentage, we all know those five percent that are the nefarious types that really don't give a crap and will take advantage of people. I think generally I believe people are good and so if they make that kind of decision it's just ill-advised and ignorance, as I mentioned before.

DANNY Like you said, when people want to get into this space they kind of look around at what's going on and they mimic, because what do they know? Despite having multiple very successful businesses you're moving the direction of the health business education space, talk about that.

BUCK Yeah, so I've always loved teaching, so I enjoy presenting. I love teaching, whether it's a conference or talking in front of a group,
what have you, and so that part of me ... Maybe just because I come from a family ... My dad is a college professor, for example. Leveraging that is interesting to me and I saw an opportunity, a lot of people were asking me, "Hey, buck, how did you do this? Buck how did you get your product formulated? How did you manufacture? How are you selling this?"

I've been involved, as you are, with Masterminds, where people are asking for assistance or advice and I saw hey, there's a real opportunity here. People are getting into online businesses, and by the way, when I say people, some of these folks do have credentials. Some of them are nutritionists, medical doctors, chiropractors, holistic healers, that kind of thing and they would like to launch an ethical online health business.

I said, "Well why don't I put together ... Why don't I use my businesses, specifically RealDose Nutrition as a lighthouse of how to do a business the right way and kind of do what Toyota did, back, I think it was back in the '80s, when they even invited GM to come and visit their factories and see how they did their kaizen, if that's the right word, of constant and never ending improvement and allowing people at all levels in the organization to have input and stop the production line if they want to.

I wanted to have that kind of feeling, because, yes, this is a competitive industry, but you know I collaborate and I mastermind with a lot of "competitors" that are either in the same markets that we are or in ancillary markets or just in supplements in general, but we tend to cooperate. In fact many take cases where we're promoting each other's products. I launched this concept called Health Profits Academy, where I actually open up the kimono, invite you in to see how the sausage is made.

Everything from how the product gets formulated, how to select ingredients that are backed by human clinical studies. Current good manufacturing practice companies, and how to setup the logistics, because we can, unlike the mistake I made with my wife and us being on a first name basis with the UPS guy, now you can work with outsourced fulfillment and how to set this all up so you can work in your pajamas. I'm literally wearing my pajama bottoms right now as
I'm talking to you. You can work in your pajamas and run a fairly large business if you run things virtually, correctly.

DANNY Awesome, so you're on a mission here to empower people to build better health companies.

BUCK Yeah, two things; one is I think that people's health in the United States and in the western society in general is a train wreck. I live in Boulder, Colorado ... You know you can probably live in an area where people ... There's a farmers' market, you can go and get fresh organic vegetables and do all that kind of stuff and have your smoothies, but look, the bubbles that we live in, that's not the real world. The real world is when I get on an airplane and I get to see how people live, like my son lives in Baltimore. You know I've been to Baltimore. I've been to D.C. I've been to New York.

I've been to a variety of places that's not the Boulder bubble, for example, where I live now, and I recognize that people's choices and what they're being told and the options that they think that are available to them, it's just not conducive for them to live a long, healthy, happy life. I think there's an opportunity for ethical health businesses to deliver messages about ... Not just foist supplements in front of people for them to consume, but also educate them about lifestyle changes that people can make in conjunction with taking supplements so that they can look at alternatives to drugs and surgery.

For example, I'm coaching my dad right now, even though I'm not a doctor, in helping him through some health issues and getting him connected with resources that can help him resolve some issues naturally. I think we have this great opportunity to not only put out great products that are alternatives to traditional medicine, that can be as effective or even more effective, and to educate people about how they can improve their lifestyle and enjoy maybe the things that you and I have access to living in our communities, but maybe they don't.
DANNY That was Buck Rizvi reimagining the health supplement industry using the mom test. If you wouldn't subject your product or business practices to your mother don't do it to your customers either. This is particularly important with supplements that are meant to improve health and wellness, but it's a good rule for any business in any industry. To learn more about Buck's health companies visit realdose.com and ultimatelifespan.com. To learn about how you can follow in Buck's footsteps to create your own ethically driven health business, visit healthprofitsacademy.com.

Voiceover We love hearing from you; your feedback makes this podcast even better, so take a minute to rate us on iTunes and leave a review. Each week we'll share what one of our reviewers has to say.

DANNY Today's reviewer is Gary Greenfield, who says, "Imagine something you can't imagine as it relates to internet marketers. Now reimagine your thinking because Danny Iny and his Firepole Marketing are nothing like those people that usually come to your mind in the internet marketing world. They're everything they say they are on this podcast and just imagine much, much more." Well thank you so much Gary that means so much for me to hear and so much for me to know that you're enjoying this podcast.

Voiceover This has been Business Reimagined with Danny Iny. Join us next time as we talk with Jeff Goins.

JEFF GOINS The portfolio life is not a license to not commit to anything, it is the freedom to use your creativity in a way where you can take seemingly disparate or different activities and bring them together in what will hopefully be a beautiful intersection where they complement each other and they make the whole of the work better than it could be independently.

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