

Growing a Product Lifestyle Brand Where Your Personality is the Star with Katie Seller

THRIVE BY DESIGN WITH TRACY MATTHEWS

"Yeah, I started with the jewelry and that was the once I stopped the other stuff, that was the easiest thing to segue into also great margins. So like that was like, figure that out first, and then it's sort of branched out into parallax."

Welcome to Thrive by Design, the podcast for ambitious independent jewelry brands, looking to profit from their products, get ready to make more and sell more doing what you love, without spending every single waking minute doing it. Hey, and if you're a creative fashion or product based business, I want to welcome you to the show. I'll be dropping big tips on launching, growing and scaling your business. Spend more of your precious time using your creativity to make you ready. All right, let's do this.

Tracy: Welcome to the Thrive by Design podcast episode 305. Hey there, it's Tracy Matthews, Chief Visionary Officer of Flourish and Thrive Academy and I am beyond thrilled to be here today to talk about one of my favorite topics, cuss words. Well, I'm joking a little bit, but not really. In a way. My guest today is [Katie Seller](#), and I'm super excited to have her on the show today because Katie is has been someone I've kind of been cyberstalking for a long time found out about her through one of our coaches and former students and over the years, I've been watching Katie grow her business and do some amazing things by being authentically herself and so I was really excited to get her on this interview, you're gonna see her share some interesting things about her life. It is actually part of a it's a short snippet from a longer interview that we did with our insider community for our Momentum program over here at Flourish and Thrive Academy and Katie is also going to be one of our speakers and panelists at our event that we are hosting here on [June 15, called Expand Your Audience, Grow Your Sales](#), just like it sounds and I think expansion really starts with being yourself.

But I know that a lot of people when they come to us for help, especially established business owners, say that they've done a lot of things to get to the success that they have in their current situation, right? They done all the work, they are growing, growing, growing, and then they hit this

plateau, where no matter what they do, it seems like their growth kind of stops and so they're not necessarily making more sales or meeting more of the people that already know like and love and trust them in and are buying from them on a regular basis and so the idea is that if you have a consistent strategy to continually expand your audience, then your sales will always continue growing. Case in point of how this works. You hear me talk about her all the time on this podcast because she's one of our superstar graduates over here.

Her name is Alex Camacho. We worked with her for a couple of years in our Momentum program and the thing that really exploded her business to that next level was that she was doing well, you know, she came to us she was at about \$65,000 in annual revenue. Within a few months after working with us, she had crossed the six figure marker, the next year she did \$150,000 kind of selling to that same group of people. It wasn't until she actually started doing things to reach more people outside of her current situation that our business exploded and then that next year, she went from \$150k in annual revenue to \$330k a year in annual revenue, which was insane growth and this was during the pandemic and all the stuff but it really started with her reaching more of the people that already love what she does and so this works and so I'm bringing this amazing event to you in a virtual setting. It's called [Expand Your Audience. Grow Your Sales](#), as I mentioned and the idea behind this is to really pick the brains of brands that are doing it right already. So we're going to be filled with keynote speakers, panelists and on topics from PR to list building, to advertising and audience expansion, and so, so much more.

So if you're interested in joining us, it is super affordable and I say that because it's only \$97 for the entire day and there's an amazing lineup, you're going to love it. If you're interested in learning more about it, head on over to flourishthriveacademy.com/expandyouraudience and check out the offer right there. You're going to love it and make sure that you get in now and join us for this amazing event and if you're wondering who it's for, it's great for people who already have established online businesses and they're selling to customers online. It is great for brick and mortar retailers who want to become the best in their local area and beyond that and be able to have a client acquisition formula where people are actually finding them online. Either walking into their store or buying from them. It's great for people who have built their business on in person events, retail pop ups, or any sort of art show who want a more sustainable

business model that's making money all year long and it's also fantastic for people who are already selling wholesale, who wants to have a more profitable business model by reaching direct to consumer and increasing their profit margins. So it's great for all types of brands. So I hope to see you there.

So let me dive into today's episode with Katie, but before I do, I want to do a quick intro of her after years in retail. She started Metal Marvels in 2012. She rebranded in 2016 to put her heart, soul and personality into the brand. She creates items to empower women to be themselves give the finger to societal ideals, and this idea of having to be lady like all the time, she makes a living saying fuck a lot with Metal Marvels and Fucking Good Coffee. Sorry for the expletives today, but we're just going for it. Alright, let's dive into this episode.

Tracy: I am super excited to have [Katie sellers of Metal Marvels](#) on the show today, Katie, welcome.

Katie: Thank you so much for having me. I am so excited to be here.

Tracy: Well, Okay, so I've been a fan girl of yours for a long time. We did. I asked you to get in our Clubhouse room a couple of weeks ago. I think it was. So if you guys are on clubhouse, and you're listening to the podcast, make sure that you go follow Katie, you're at @KatieSeller, right?

Katie: Yes. :

Tracy: And you can follow me @TracyMatthews on clubhouse because clubhouse is this new audio app, you can like listen to it while you're working at your bench or whatever you're doing and it's an amazing resource to get access to people like people who you'd never have access to, like, super big entrepreneurs on there who who have like multi kajillion dollar companies. So it's super cool because you get to be in rooms and listen to them speak and nothing's recorded. So you have to be there alive. So I asked Katie to be in a room. Little did she know, I was like fangirling on her for like many years, because I love what she's doing with her brand and it's not for everyone, but it is for some people, and or a lot of people I should say, and she's just crushing it. So before I keep like, geeking out on you. I just want to give a little backstory are you cool with that?

Katie: Of course. I think everybody needs to get on to clubhouse

Tracy: like yesterday,

Katie: Like yesterday, because it's just like you said, There's literally people assemble a jury with that you're like, this person is taking that because you think like, especially as you're making gazillions of dollars, you're like they don't have time to sit in a Clubhouse, and then you open this app, and they're like talking to people and you're like what is happening? and they share so much like knowledge that you wouldn't get otherwise because you typically don't have access to these people and it's, it is crazy and everybody needs to be on it.

Tracy: So I'd love to hear a little bit more about like, how did you get started, like why jewelry, why lifestyle brand? Why products?

Katie: Well, my legacy feel like my like, my journey is kind of weird. Like I growing up, I always Well, I feel like my like, my journey is kind of weird. Like growing up, I always wanted to be a makeup artist. It was like my thing, it was just a skill that I naturally had. And I of course had the mostly the father who was like, you're not gonna make money, you need to go to college, blah, blah, blah, all those things and I was like, fine, fuck it. I'm gonna go to interior design school because it's still creative. I'm still good at that And I can get a degree like he can be pleased, and I can still do something that I would enjoy.

So I did, I went to fit up in LA, and then when I graduated, they I was, you know, job hunting, and everything that I was seeing was that they wanted a bachelor's degree to be an assistant and to me, I was like, you want a bachelor's degree for me to grab your coffee and severed genitals? That's insane. So I was, you know, I'm trying to think of like, well, that's not gonna work, because I'm not gonna fit them is not cheap. I'm like, I'm not gonna go through the bachelors program to like to start there. I have there. I'm an overachiever.

So I'm like, I'd rather not start there, for you know, the cost of this bachelor's degree and so I kind of decided to, like switch things up and I have thus far worked solely in retail, my entire life thus far, that's all I did. I worked. Like I have very lofty goals. So I was like, I'm gonna be a store manager tomorrow. And so I was like, I managed a children's store for a long time in Newport and then I ended up moving to target. and I was in management there. And, you know, it was like the, I was talking about, like the constant dangling of promotions, especially if anybody's familiar with

big box retail. Like, that's all that happens. If you do this will give you this, if you do this, you'll get this if you do this will give you this position, and then it never happens, no matter what you do, how much you bust your ass anything and I was getting very frustrated, of course, because your your upper management, they want to keep their job, so they're not super inclined to give you that position and I was getting super, super frustrated and so I you know, it was in business school. And I was sitting in my accounting class and I had, there was at the time I was blogging about weight loss and I saw this girl who was a blogger, also, she opened up a boutique and she seemed to be killing it. I was like, well, that if she can do that, like, why can't I? and also I'm like, you know, clicked in my head at that moment. I'm like, Hello. I grew up with a father. My dad started his business.

Six months before I was born. He always says he went broke in 86 because he paid for a business and he paid for me and so I'm like, I've been around this, you know, it can't be that hard and so I literally was sitting in accounting, which I never paid attention in that class anyways, that's why I have a CPA

Tracy: Oh, you have a CPA? Yeah. Accounting,

Katie: No, no, oh, no, I slept through accounting, there's no way they would give me a degree in that. So I was like, sitting in this class, and I'm like, why can't I do that? And so literally, while sitting there, I kind of wrote out, you know, I thought I could do jewelry because it's small at the time I was living at home and I didn't want to like overrun my parents house with inventory. So like cool jewelry small. I love jewelry. Like, I have things my earrings right, like things that never come off of me. I love jewelry. So that seems feasible and, you know, it's it's smaller I can I can manage that without taking over their house ad literally in that class. By the end of the day, I had everything written out that I wanted to like, do what I thought I could do. I have a list of names that I was like, thinking of and I kind of planned it all out. I mean, I didn't do like all, you know, to the tiny, tiny details, but I kind of had just an idea of what I wanted to do. And that was in August, I believe and by December I had it launched.

Tracy: That's great.

Katie: I don't, I don't. So I didn't learn patience as a child.

Tracy: I didn't either.

Katie: Yeah, which I'm finding out especially in going through IVF it's something I am learning, I really did not learn as a child because I am so impatient and so I tend to do things pretty quickly. So like, when I had the idea for Fucking Good Coffee, I had it launched in like a month. Like, I just don't like waiting around and if I have an idea, I want to like, make it happen. So yeah, I had it launched by December 12. No, December 16. of 2012. That is, have been here since.

Tracy: That is amazing, I bet if you check the call, but you probably would have been a nine or a 10 on the Quickstart

Katie: What is that?

Tracy: Entrepreneurial assessment, I highly recommend that everyone takes it it's called the Kolbe A you can buy it online for like, probably like \$20 or \$50 bucks or something and it just kind of shares with you your working style and so some people are really good at, like finding information other people are good at systems some people are good at, at like moving things into action, which I have a feeling we both do and some people are really good at like and then there's a way that it measures like how much information or how like much structure you need to move forward with something so I find it fascinating.

Katie: I should I should take that.

Tracy: Go take it. So when so Metal Marvels you launched in 2016 then?

Katie: I launched it 2012 and then what I with what I lovingly call boring jewelry and I know there's a ton of obviously jewelers here don't come at me. I don't mean that it's necessarily boring jewelry. It's just night and day compared to what I do now. It was more so while I call it boring is because it was generic. It was something you could get everywhere. It was nothing in the like unique in the slightest. It was just basic jewelry so I lovingly call it boring. So I lovingly call it boring and we were sort of talking about things and I can remember it like I could see her face till this day. She like gave me this look and I was terrified because I'm like that look mean something big like you are going to tell me something that is going to scare me. So I was like bracing myself for what she said.

And she was she said she's like I think you need to rebrand. You know you're she's like you're kind of dripping little bits and pieces of your personality. And when you do people are gravitating towards those posts. And she's like, but you're just you're not like fully putting it out there. But she's like, I get it, you're scared. And I was we had multiple conversations about the fact that in my rebranding and putting my personal personality in the brand, I was going to lose, you know, newsletter subscribers, I was going to lose buyers. And that's terrifying when this is like, your main source of income. And so yeah, I had, we had a couple conversations where I was like, I don't know about this, like, I don't I, it terrifies me, I don't want to lose these people that have thus far been really supportive. And I knew I could tell, like, I knew a handful of probably some of my best people, that would probably not shop with me anymore.

So that's scary to you know, be like, Well, I know that that incomes going to leave. And she made a good point of like, while Yes, you're gonna lose those people, you're also going to find the people who truly resonate like with you. And so that sort of helps me breathe. But I did, we rebranded it, and then I relaunched it, June, June of 2016. And it was, you know, at the time to cuz I brought out a test necklace, in October of 2015. to kind of see if she was right. And I brought it out in October, and then ended up being my best seller for the entire year. And I was like, I think she's onto something.

Tracy: What was the necklace?

Katie: The fuckity fuck necklace. Which I'm like, that's not really a test that's like in your face. But I was like, you know, we'll see how they how they feel about it and yeah, I ended up selling the most of those. Like it literally taught everything for the whole year and I was like, Oh, yeah, she's onto something and so I that's when we started probably like January, I think, started the whole process of rebranding and then he launched it in June of 2016 and so since then, it's been the same brand wise, of course, like the line has grown a ton. But yeah, it's like, night and day. Yes, I did. I lost some people, I still know their names to this day of people that don't shop with me anymore that were selling my best customers back then. But I found a lot of people thoroughly enjoyed cursing and when I rebranded to, like, there was nothing like this on the market.

Tracy: So what I want to kind of want to dive into this because like, one of the things that you mentioned was like, you knew that you people were going

to stop buying from you. When you went in this new direction. Like how did you get over the fear was just doing that test project, like seeing the resonance, cuz I know like, I always say like, the more polarizing you can be, the more successful you'll be and it's not about being a jerk necessarily, but it's about like really resonating with those people who love you and like repelling the people who are just like, that's not for me.

Katie: Yeah, um, yeah, the test the necklace helps obviously, like in seeing those numbers like that definitely helps kind of caught me a little bit. But it was I mean, it was an ongoing thing. I mean, even to like and it's something that I literally don't even look at anymore. But especially then I feel like we were so and they're so loud people are but we were so focused on like metrics of like what our follower count is or how many people are newsletter that I would literally get butthurt when people would unfollow me or unsubscribe from my newsletter.

Like, I tried to, like, say it to myself all the time. Because I feel like I, I also, I think I realized that in being like myself, and wanting this, this product out of the marketplace, that there had to be other people and like, it's sort of evolving in the faculty. At first I was like, Oh, I'm just gonna put out curse words were then it kind of turned into like, in finding out how many people didn't like it, I still occasionally get comments like, why would I wear those? I'm like, you don't have to, like, yeah, I'm not not shoving them on your ears. Or, like, you know, people will complain about the certain words.

But it's, it's more so pushed me to be even more like, hard pressed on the idea of, I literally just had someone yesterday, or two days ago and I and I also, again, this has been a long work in progress from caring about people unsubscribing to my newsletter to now I will literally respond to you and I am not being a dick. But I'm going to, like, I'm going to make my point, the you know, she kind of she commented about the C word earrings. What did she say something along the lines of a word that has been used against women for so long, like, in an oppressive way, or, you know, by abusers, things like that and I told her, I said, but the difference is that we use that word in the sense that like, how people for so long have been, you know, taking back the word bitch, I love that word. I love when you call me that, because it means that you are intimidated or bothered by me.

Tracy: That kind of makes me laugh.

Katie: And so you know, it's, it's the same thing. It's like, you know, it's a word. I said, it's, we empower people to use it, and people and I've sold thousands of those earrings. So clearly, there's people wearing them. But it's the sense that like, we're empowering people to wear them to use those words, like, against people like you not to mention, if it's a dude, it's a whole other conversation, but a woman who's tearing down other women for the words they choose to use. I'm like, that's exactly what I'm trying to empower people against, like, you know, that sort of thing.

Tracy: It's like, own the word and not, and not like, take offense to it, I totally get what you're saying. And I get why people would be offended by that to it. But also, once again, they have a choice of whether or not your brand they want to follow and this is why you This is how you create a cult following is by being super polarizing and I think what I would also like to say is that me Be careful with my words here is that with everything going on in the world today, like people are just so sensitive, I feel like you can't say anything, without offending someone, like oh, I've used something you're damned if you do damned if you don't like something or support something. Like, there's now it seems like the conversations becoming more one sided or limited in what can happen and so I think it's important for people who are courageous enough to just like, stand by what they value and what matters to them, even whether you agree with it or not. That, to me takes a lot of courage and it's, it's not an easy thing to do these days. So I just want to acknowledge you for that.

Katie: It's really not and it's it's kind of grown and like in a wrote a book called All the Fucks I Give. 90% of the book is blank. So if you buy it on Amazon, and you get it and it's blank, it's not a mistake. It's on purpose, because I don't give any fucks. Chapter 10, however, is a whole thing of my story of like how I got to this place, because I cared a lot before about everything. People thought about me about the brand, like the boring jewelry was because I wanted to be the thing for everyone and that's what she said, She's like, do you want to be like the Walmart of Georgia? Do you want to be the thing for every single person? Or do you want to do something that you actually give a shit about? and it took, it took years because obviously like it hurts when people will come in and attack your brand or the words that you're using or things like that, and I grew a very thick skin to where I like I said, I will respond.

And I'm never a dick about it. Because I don't I think you can like I always say I think you can be a badass, I think you can curse like a sailor and not be a dick. You can get, you can get by in business. You can do all these things without being rude to people, but you can still stand for what you believe in and I mean, I made a very, very strong stance against racism when everything was happening and kind of at the peak of everything, and I literally put out a read before you shop with me and I put a whole paragraph and I literally, I was texting my community manager. I was like I'm holding my breath. I can't breathe.

I am I'm holding my breath while this post goes out because I don't know what it's gonna do. Yeah, I'm gonna lose people or I'm not and I literally said, This is what we stand for, like, I believe, and I am part of the LGBTQ I believe in the quality and women's equality and racial equality and like all of these things that I just heard a whole thing and I literally, like sat there like, this is gonna be ending or not and I don't know, because it is if things are especially right now extremely polarizing, and it's, it's kind of one way or the other. If you're gonna lose people, I had people comment that they were no longer going to shop with me because of that and I said, that's fine.

Because what you're saying is that you aren't shopping with me because I'm standing against racism and that's not the side I want to be on. Like, I would much rather be over here and then I also on the flip side, again, I got there were so many comments, and so many follows and things from that. That like, there wasn't my intention. I just think I found people that resonated with the message that also wanted a brand to stand up and say something. Because there's a lot of brands that remain silent during a lot of things and it is it takes who it takes a lot of balls.

Tracy: It takes courage. Yeah, I definitely would say that. I also think One thing like I hope we can get to a place where like open dialogue becomes a thing, instead of being girling on the internet, like, something's happening right now, a friend of mine is involved in it with just like, people like, turning things into something that they're not. And it's like, you know, we'll leave it at that. But yeah, this I feel like, like, it'll be nice. Like, I'm looking forward to like, a year from now or two years from now, when like, things aren't like, as heated, we can actually like, talk about things. And yeah, I want to kind of go back to like, more like, when you started your business, like, what were so I know, so you're fast. You're fast mover, like I

am you like probably just for like, Okay, I'm going to do it. If it doesn't work, I'm not going to worry about it. I'll just do something else. Like, yeah, it's like, right. But what were some of the steps you took to kind of just move it forward?

Katie: Um, I am. I'm lucky that I have my dad that I could like, ask some questions to that. I'm like, I don't know what I'm doing and having been in business school helps although I don't think you need to go to college to be a business. I will put that out there and I To be honest, googled my ass off. Like, I literally googled anything that I could think of that I needed to do. I mean, the main questions from my dad was like, well, do I need to actually, like, form a business? Or can I be like sole proprietor until like, I, you know, I need to figure these things out or, you know, that sort of route, and then I googled anything and everything that I could, um, I feel like there's always like, in me being like this quick, like, I need to get it done. I feel like helps me to avoid it a little bit more. But I feel like a lot of people think that they need to have like, every single detail figured out before they launch and that's craziness.

Tracy: Yes.

Katie: Like, literally just launch whatever you're thinking of like, it doesn't matter, literally, especially in the beginning, like, do not form a big company. Don't do it. Like sole prop, whatever you can just, like, put shit out there and start working. Because I have seen so many people and I do like, some one on one coaching and people that I've talked to either they're thinking, well, I should do this, because it's actually like, what can make me money? But then I'm like, yeah, but what are you doing right now for free that you could make money doing? Just like, oh, building websites. I'm like, why aren't you doing? Yeah and it's like you're thinking, you overthink, and I am an over thinker to the max. But like, you overthink all these little things and literally, like, just started, so I did not have like, I would say that I did not have everything figured out. I have never once in my life written a formal business plan.

Tracy: So you have a unique kind of, Okay, so one thing about the businessman, but that I want to, I'm going to bring back in just a second. You have a unique kind of product line, because it's really like you come up with the phrases that you want on there and then you have it manufactured somewhere else. That's my understanding, right?

Katie: Yeah.

Tracy: Okay, perfect. So

Katie: I am not talented enough to make it?

Tracy: No, it's not like you're not talented. Or like the talent, right? It's like coming up with the things like I love this, if you're listening to the audio says IVF? IVF shots, tequila shots.

Katie: I'll take the IVF shots over the tequila shots right now.

Tracy: I'm sending you some good pregnancy vibes. But the businessman thing like when I first started out, I wrote freakin 35 page business plan and like, why would like I'm not looking for investors. Like, I never looked at it again. It sat in a drawer and then when I moved offices, like years later, I found it. I'm like, oh, amazing.

Katie: Like, why did I do that?

Tracy: So so true. Well, let's talk I want to pivot a little bit to the marketing stuff, because you mentioned product assortment and how you're like bringing in stuff from other people, you have your own product range. What what's your I'm gonna use the word philosophy for like, lack of a better word, but like I've been watching you, like, I've been, like secretly stalking you for years and I see what you're doing like you, you started with jewelry, then you brought in like lifestyle products, and you're bringing in other things, because you're building the sale. So let's talk about how you do that.

Katie: Yeah, we're like, well, I don't know. Really, it was just like, you know, I started with the jewelry. And that was the one site stopped the other stuff. That was the easiest thing to segue into. Also a great margin. So like, that was like, yeah, I'll figure that out first and then it sort of branched out into apparel next? Because I'm like, well, I like I would wear these phrases on things. So I imagine other people would, and I sort of did like a test run with those and they loved them and then it honestly it actually a lot of it comes from customers asking me to put it on things. I will get like I didn't have the drink where for a while and then I got a few customers that were like well, I would love to have that on like a mug or something.

I was like, oh, light bulb hello drinkware and so then I put it on drinker and I'm like, I will literally put I will put curse words on anything. Just because

like A.) I think it's funny that like, I don't have it yet, but like the printer that I use has bathmats I'm like, fuck it. I'll put it on there. You're just gonna step on him with Get out of the shower. Like I think that's hilarious. I haven't yet but you know, it's those little things. I'm like, A) I open it up anything and B) if you asked me for it, I will absolutely put it on something just because you I mean you want it so if you're gonna if there's a market for it then Sure. So it kind of like it all just really snowballed. I actually what I did was I opened up a page on the website that's like a suggestions page. So they can suggest phrases that they wanted. But then some people started leaving items suggestions. Oh, okay. So they're like mug or this or that. Luckily, none of them have been weird. Luckily.

Tracy: Personal, personal items.

Katie: I mean, I will put it again, I will put a curse word on anything. I also think it's very on brand. But no. I like that's well that's the thing. The thing to with be within like, an effort on it. From Yeah, with exactly with being like, the person I am and this personality and like the the words and like, it kind of opens things up a little bit more to what you can put stuff on because it is very adult. But I have done that. But yeah, I mean, a lot of the like the growth really stems from, you know, if like a customer asks for it, like, I'm definitely going to figure out how to make it happen, especially phrases like I have a running list of phrase suggestions.

Tracy: So I want to talk about you've been in business now for a while, and I'm sure that you've had some setbacks or roadblocks or failures is there what is like one big like setback or failure that you've had that you learned from that helps you do something differently in business?

Katie: Um, I feel like I've had a few. Like, being in business I feel like you have them all the time whether they're like huge or you know, tiny ones that you're just like I don't even know what to do. I'm somewhere like I actually had to deal with that has affected still affects my business that I had, I basically had to like get over which sucks in a long run is actually I deal a lot with like the nice thing if whoever is watching listening that if you are creating jewelry, most of your things are like protected the minute you make them mine or not. Unless it is a full blown design and like I don't have anything with you right now. But unless it's like a full blown design, I cannot copyright it.

So like even this text that I have laid out, etc the copyright office would tell me to take a hike. So unless it's like an actual artwork that I have like some mugs t-shirt designs with me art that I've had a girl literally like drop and design because again, that is not my wheelhouse and those are protected. But all the phrases on my jewelry, and I hate telling you this because then I'm like, it just opens the door more. But the phrases on my jewelry most of the time were things like that are not protectable, which is super frustrating and I have had to deal with people knocking off my stuff and one in particular that it is, unfortunately very large. She has a large meme page behind her and so she makes a lot of sales. Even though most of her stuff is stolen literally from me, she had straight up, copied and pasted a mug, which was interesting . Oh, like legit, you could tell that she like took the picture and you're like,

Tracy: Her core value is integrity.

Katie: 100% and I actually like I had to approach her like, Hello, this is my baby. Like I've had some issues luckily with things that are like trademarked like my name or I have expletives trademarked because it's the name of the collection as a whole and I have had to deal with some people that like use that as their company name and had, you know, get them to change that. So there's some protections but yeah, it's it's been an ongoing thing. Still to this day, and I can't do much of anything. I'm like, I'm waiting for the day, she takes one of the designs that I have actually copyrighted. But I have approached her because again, this is my baby, and I'm going to defend it as need be and she basically told me that it was just business and it didn't matter. And she was going to continue stealing it and taking what she wants, basically and so that was I mean, that's, I would say that's been the biggest thing I've had to deal with because it is it's you know, it's someone taking these things that you've worked so hard to create, whether it's just text on a bangle or whatever, you know, I took the time to come up with the phrase and it's also like your livelihood. So that is like, it literally feels like someone's like stabbing you and you're like, and then you also can't do anything.

Tracy: Yeah.

Katie: So it's been an ongoing thing. I've had to basically start, like ignoring it. Like, I will occasionally check. Of course, if there's anything that like, is protectable that, like I can, you know, be like, hey, by the way, I'm still here, this is still my stuff. This is still what I'm creating. But mostly, I've had to

kind of like, put my head down and Melissa and I talked about it too. Like she's like the the you're you're doing yourself a disservice if you continue to focus on it too much. Because you're focusing on this other thing instead of what you need to be focusing on. So there's a lot of like me putting my head in the sand and just like working, and like moving forward. I don't know that it'll be something that I'll ever be done with because, yeah, well, you have integrity is her number one thing.

Tracy: You have a very, like a brand that resonates with a lot of people and people are like, Oh, I wish I would have come up with that idea. So why don't I just steal it? Like I don't, I have a really like high level of integrity and so for me like that it's just unimaginable that someone would actually think that's okay, like, I don't I don't doubt that.

Katie: But it irks you to the court because you're like, Why? What you, you can do the similar thing, there's plenty of cases out there, you can figure out,

Tracy: Choose a different mug shape and a slightly different phrase, like it doesn't have to be exactly the same like, and people can tell. And that's the thing, it's like copycats will always be copycats, they're not gonna ever have original ideas and so visionaries like you are the ones who will always win, because you're always going to be coming up, like you're always going to be innovating and I yeah, this is a really good lesson for people because a lot of times, first of all, like Robin and I from the beginning, Robin is my co founder over here at Flourish and Thrive and she helps businesses more with wholesale now and we're focused at Flourish and Thrive primarily on online sales and like, operational optimization. But we used to say like all the time, because he will be like, what do you do when someone knocks you off? and you see like all these people on Etsy selling jewelry, and they're all doing the hammered circles, like the hammered circles was a thing for like 10 years or whatever. Oh my gosh, that person knocked me off.

I'm like, you did not invent the circle, honey, like I'm sorry? and like, if you're worried about people doing the same thing as you maybe you should create a new idea. And so there are it's really I feel like a lot of time to iteration and the design process is about your version of whatever it is that you want to create your take on it, maybe. But I do know that it's challenging because I've been knocked off before I've been accused of not being knocked off by someone who I'd never even heard of and so this was like way back in the day when I was selling in the Sundance catalog. A

brand reached out to me and sent me a cease and desist letter saying that you ripped off my design and I'm like, I don't even know who you are like and so, this if you look at my body of work it like it's been in it for like, five years. So I think it's weird because it's this very fine line, but blatant plagiarism is terrible. In fact, it's funny that you brought that up, because we're having having a couple of designers on the show, I'll probably do it on my batch recording date sometime in May, to talk about plagiarism.

Because I think when you have a really good concept, like it's your, like, become this, like, expose to being ripped off, and I've heard and I think that you're taking the right approach, as annoying as it is, and as much as you want to, like stick it to that person and so many people spend all their energy pursuing prosecution for stuff like this and it's really hard to prosecute a case like this and yeah, I thought back in the day, some really well known designers who started the idea of like writing like quotes on jewelry, like more, like, reusing other people's quotes, but like, doing that sort of thing that started like 20 something years ago. they would, they would take these people to court and they lose and they spent so much money and energy on it. And it's instead they could have just come up with a new idea And so I want to, like commend you for your attitude is as hard as I know, it must be it's rough.

Katie:

It is, it's and it's it's so weird to like see, like, and the varying degrees of all this like, I mean, I'm, I'm I have great customers that will like comment on her things to show she advertises on a lot of the same like meme pages and things that I have done. And people comment, they're like, Ooh, that looks familiar. Or that looks like Metal Marvels . That's funny. Like, pretty sure Metal Marvels came out. That's I'm like, I have customers that are like, little warriors for me, which is nice. But I do, I'm like, you're my favorite. Thank you very much. Um, but like, it's also it's funny to see all the clips. I mean, there's a very well known jewelry company that puts words on things that are inspirational and I have watched from afar they have gone after we had a conversation because she tried to say that I copied her even that we launched like two months apart. We first and I've watched from afar, her take down a company in Australia. I'm a I'm such a weirdo that I like I'll browse USPTO sometimes just random things I'm looking I'm like cuz I do I have some trademarks. So I look at those or I'm like, like, if I brand new ideas, like I'll check those out to make sure that's not you know, trademarked and I keep an eye on this company of theirs and they literally I don't know, I haven't I haven't figured out if the like, attorney is part of

the company or a relative and that's how they like get away with like maybe a discount because of the way that they are trademarking things. I'm like, What is the point?

Tracy: Trademarks are expensive.

Katie: Oh, first of all, it's expensive. I would say 80% of the ones they've applied for are dead because they got denied and like and trying to one of them that like sent the handmade world into a tizzy when she tried to trademark I have cast. So if you heard her I don't know what she's doing back there. She tried to trademark engraved phrases on bracelets, And I was like, Well, first of all, no. Second of all, can we go back to like Cleopatra, like you didn't you did not go. I was like, I don't even understand what's happening and so I mean, it literally the for a while this like handmade like everybody just freaked out?

Because obviously if that goes through that affects a lot of people. Yeah, so there were a lot of people filing letters of protest against it, because obviously you didn't create that. But it's like to even watch from like this side, like, hey, I have the person on this hand who's like literally knocking off my stuff and then I have this person who I'm watching who is like, actively working to like, either protect themselves or corner the market on these little things that they don't have the ability to do that and like so it's so weird to watch, like, the both sides of it of how people are either hyper like trying to protect these things or whatever other than the other side where they're just like, screw it, I'm gonna take all your designs and get away with it because why not? and it's so it's so weird to just see like the both sides of you know, how people function in this. This world of business. It's very, very interesting. Very and annoying, but interesting.

Tracy: So what are you excited about, like moving forward with your business?

Katie: All sorts of things. Um, I am actually excited. We've had some obviously the craziness of the past 12 months there's been so many delays and things yeah, like we have been waiting I've been waiting on restock. Some things that I like it literally has taken so long. So that's coming, which I'm so excited about, because this is a giant restock of things that like so many people have been waiting for. So like, I feel like once I get that I can like breathe a little and then I'm excited for summer because I'm trying, I'm gonna bring out some like new things like I'm still balancing, most mostly, you know, the jewelry and things like that, that are in stock that, you know,



we create things like that with also some of the items that are still direct from printer because, again, with the way that the past few months have been, it allows me to bring in new stuff without shelling out the money for the inventory right now and so I am excited because they have some really, really great, like beach towels, and the people have been begging me for beach towels.

Tracy: Oh my gosh, I want to buy your beach towels. So I want to thank you so much for being here. But I just want to ask, like two more questions. The first one is is like where do you go when you need advice beyond your dad like I know you mentioned that before where do you go like when you need advice? If you're feeling stuck? do you like work with a coach or a mentor? Are you still doing that? Or is it just something that you get when you need when you need it?

Katie: So I tend to go to people who are doing like what I'm doing. I have a really good friend. Her name's She owns Evil Queen candles. And she is like, blown up. And so I, you know, I'll go to her, or I have a few others that I'm just like, you know, they're they're doing what I'm doing and so they understand that like, the stress of things or like what it is and sort of why we like all sell different items. I feel like they have like, an outsider perspective, you know, in looking at my brand, you know, as a consumer or things like that. And so I love going to them just because they are, they're in the trenches of their own things, but they still understand and grasp, like, what I may be going through. So they're a really good sounding board. That's what I'm like, Oh my god, I'm so stressed help.

Tracy: I love that because basically what you're what I'm hearing you say is you have a group of friends who have businesses but you're all masterminding together because your strengths complement each other and you guys can learn from each other.

Katie: I love that because basically what you're what I'm hearing you say is you have a group of friends who have businesses but you're all masterminding together because your strengths complement each other and you guys can learn from each other.

Tracy: Okay, my final question. Are there any like books or resources or tools that you recommend for the people listening today that have helped you in business?

Katie: I am like, as you can see, I have like a lot of books back there. Um, I love Well, a recent one untamed by Glenn and Doyle.

Tracy: It's a great book.

Katie: I love it. I feel like her like take on things is is really, really good and like for being such a little person. She's so like cold about it, and I love it and then I do love, actually one of the books that like kind of changed some things for me was a Girl Code by Cara Alwill Leyba?

Tracy: I usually do the audio book thing, and I think I listened to that a while back.

Katie: Yeah, it was a while ago, it was actually like, when I read it, I was actually on my 30th birthday. Nobody could do anything like everyone was like busy, your kids are working or blah, blah, blah and I was like screw this. I am not staying here for my 30th birthday and I actually went to the Bahamas by myself. It was great. I highly recommend solo travel if anybody I mean, as restrictions ease, solo travel and I actually read it there on the beach, and I was like taking notes and I was like, Oh my god, like I had all these like epiphanies in my life. I was crazy. Um, so I love that trinsic well said I read um, I love Private First by Howard Schultz, CEO, I'm sorry, no, no, a call onward. I'm like, I just looked at it by Howard Schultz from Starbucks? and he talks about like, the roller coaster of the company and like what they did when they were at their low point, like all of these, like, changes they made and like, it was a really good read, like and I I had never read anything by him. I really didn't know a whole lot. I've just been like, I just love Starbucks until I created my own coffee and started drinking that. But I loved his book because it's It was nice to see like, I felt like a really like honest example from somebody in like a big company. I got big, they are big, a big company of what they did like when they hit that like kind of rock bottom point of their journey and reading how they like, bounce back from that it was actually really good. Like, I think I picked it up for like the airport. And I was just like, oh, whatever. I'll read it and I could not put it down. It was so good.

Tracy: Oh my gosh, I love it. Katie, thank you so much for being here. I'm gonna actually like I'm gonna get onward after I'm gonna listen to it. I can't wait. Where can everyone find you?

Katie: Yeah, personally, I'm @KatieSeller on Instagram. Um, I mean, I'm super open with like, everything I do in this life. So I talked about, you know, my personal life, obviously, and my IVF journey and all of those things and brand things and then I am @MetalMarvels on Instagram and @fuckinggoodcoffeeco if you like bold coffee with bold names. There's none of these, you know, boring names for our coffee. But I'm definitely like, easiest to connect with me is @KatieSeller on Instagram. I'm always there. My DMs are open to talk to everybody.

Tracy: Perfect, Katie, thanks for being here.

Katie: Thank you so much for having me.

Tracy: Wasn't that amazing? I just love Katie. She's awesome. Now, this is just a snippet of the whole interview that we did. We had an hour long plus interview with Katie when I interviewed her that I actually originally interviewed for our Momentum students and our momentum program. But if you'd like to get another taste of Katie and listen to more about what she has to offer and learn more about her expertise and wizardry in the industry, I'd love to invite you to join us for the [Expand Your Audience, Grow your Sales virtual live event](#) that is happening next week. and it's gonna be amazing. The ticket prices are super affordable. So you have no excuse not to go and I just really want to be able to support you in getting over any of the slumps or whatever you're having in reaching more of those perfect customers and that's exactly what this event is designed to do is to keep a consistent flow of customers coming into your business so that you can create a more financially stable and sustainable business model that makes money all your long. Sound good? All right, well, if so, head on over to flourishthriveacademy.com/expandyouraudience this is Tracy Matthews, signing off. Until next time, I'll see you next week.

Thank you so much for listening to today's episode. It's my mission to help thousands of creative businesses inside and outside the jewelry space use their creativity to make money. Make sure that you're subscribed to thrive by design on [iTunes](#), [Spotify](#), [Stitcher](#), and wherever podcasts are played. And we'd love to hear what you think. Please rate and review the show and if you're inspired, please share this with your friends. Cheers to Seeing you flourish and thrive.



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