

EEP Ep 164 - Brigette Iarrusso...ess Models in the Online Space

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SPEAKERS

Maria Ross, Brigette Iarrusso

Brigette Iarrusso 00:01

canceled culture is complicated because when you cancel a company, for example, it might be warranted if that company has been called in, and the harm that they have caused, or continue to cause has been pointed out. And if they dig in their heels and deny any wrongdoing, deny, causing harm and continue to perpetuate harm, and multiple attempts to call in to correct to give a restorative justice approach to fix the problem. That's where you get canceled. So like a coach that has been harming people for a long time, and has been called out multiple times. And then people call this person in and have a dialogue and all kinds of people have expended excruciating amounts of emotional labor, to talk with this person about the harm and give them constructive feedback and how to do better and they're just like, No, I didn't do anything wrong.

Maria Ross 01:00

Welcome to the empathy edge podcast the show that proves why cash flow, creativity and compassion are not mutually exclusive. I'm your host, Maria Ross. I'm a speaker, author, mom, facilitator and empathy advocate. And here you'll meet trailblazing leaders and executives, authors and experts who embrace empathy to achieve radical success. We discuss all facets of empathy from trends and research to the future of work to how to heal societal divisions and collaborate more effectively. Our goal is to redefine success and prove that empathy isn't just good for society, it's great for business. We are not tied to harmful business and workplace practices. In fact, history shows us that when we as humans work to improve things over time, it gets better look at laws against child labor, unsafe working conditions, and safety and truth in advertising regulations. And yes, capitalism and business have been rooted in toxic and inequitable practices for a long time, because people can make a lot of money. But we're in a new era of converging trends, more transparency, higher ethical customer demands, and much more marketing savvy consumers. My guest today is Bridgette ire Russo international speaker social impact business coach and CEO of disruptive business coaching. And she's on a mission to help coaches, healers, experts and even companies who care about racial and social justice to scale their sales and impact with integrity, equity and inclusion. We both believe organizations can be successful

and profitable, while still disrupting harmful practices that disproportionately affect people of color and other marginalized groups. Today, Bridgette shares her unique journey and how she booked a major higher ed institution by pushing to teach a new model of business success. We talk about raising awareness of coercive business and sales practices, especially in the wild west of the coaching and online business space. We discuss leading in ways not rooted in dominant cultures, how to shift your sales and marketing to be more consent based, when canceled culture is and is not effective, and how to unlearn toxic and patriarchal leadership and sales approaches to create more sustainable models. This was an eye opener. Take a listen. Hello, Bridgette I are so welcome to the empathy edge podcast, my friend, it's so good to see you.

Brigette Iarrusso 03:44

You too. Thank you so much for inviting me, buddy. I'm really excited.

Maria Ross 03:47

So you are so much you have done so much. And I would love to give listeners a taste of your story and how you came to this work of being a disruptive business coach and helping to disrupt the coaching industry. So tell us how you got here. And why is this your passion?

Brigette Iarrusso 04:08

Okay, well, I'll try to do it in a way that doesn't take too long. I have a mixed identity, and I'm half Puerto Rican and half Italian American. And I was always drawn to explore other cultures. And so during grad school, I took a good chunk of time off for my degree program. And I went to Guatemala, and I worked with indigenous communities around microcredit lending initiatives, and I just saw so much disruption, innovation and resilience among people who had very scarce resources. And I really began to see that my worldview was flawed that I wasn't going to be going to Guatemala to save these kinds of poor, marginalized impoverished people. If anything, they were there to teach me a lot. And they were just simply lacking in resources. That's where things kind of started. And it started to disrupt my worldview and my perspective of the US and how we frame ourselves as kind of being this global Savior that's going on doing all this good in the world, I started to really see that there were a lot of holes in these narratives that were taught about the United States and financial aid to developing countries. And then I wound up working in bedroo, doing work with extractive corporations, mining companies, and looking at the impact of multinational businesses, on the environment, on the society on the culture in Begu, very much an ongoing reflection of colonization, and a continuation of colonization in a new global economic format. And so again, I wound up learning a lot more than I actually think I contributed, being on the ground with these kinds of local groups, and really learning to listen and tune into what people were already working on, and unlearning the desire to come in and fix and save, which is very much a symptom of people like myself and many other people in my community who are wanting to do good in the world. So full circle, I wound up coming back to the US after those experiences working in a couple of nonprofits in a way that was really misaligned for my new worldview. And then I wound up teaching business, UC Berkeley change management, and cross cultural communication, and then entrepreneurial leadership. And then I kept disrupting and inserting ideas around sustainable green marketing, triple bottom line, ethics, sustainability, and they were okay. They kept saying, okay, Bersia, and I would bend the rules, and I'd get instructors in that we're not quite fitting the standards. And then I started to talk about systemic oppression and racism, in business, and institutionally. And that's where I

crossed the line as a disrupter, right? That's where I threatened that institutional status quo and triggered something that there was a lot of shame and suppressed history around. And so that's when I became just way too much for that institution. And realized after I was released from my role, which a lot of people say, Oh, things happen for you, not to you. That's not true when it comes to like genocide and rape, like, we should never say that. But when it comes to this situation of me as like a white presenting woman of privilege being released from this role, it really was one of those, like hidden gifts. The universe was really like, here, I'm gonna do you a solid, you don't see it quite that way. But the thing was, at this time in my life, I was available for that. I saw this as like, this is your out, like, you don't belong here anymore. You've reached the maximum level of disruption, you can, you've done some great things. In fact, I think I tried to hire you, you were one of my most amazing people that I met through those years of like seeking out and stalking, you know, marketing experts online. That's how I found Maria. I was looking for awesome women leaders in marketing, that were doing cool shit. And that's how I found her. And I like invited her to coffee. So I did this great work at the University. And I disrupted where I could, and I shifted the curriculum to the extent that I could, and then I like, let it go. And I said to the universe, on the day, I was released from that role, the day I was laid off, I said, I'm ready for something better. And that's when someone came into my life that was in the entrepreneurial coaching industry, and invited me to work on a collaboration and it just took off from there, I just got really excited about the possibility of doing things my own way and creating my own business, even though I had originally been scared about entrepreneurship and business leadership, because there's so many narratives in the work I was doing in Silicon Valley about failure rates, and everyone's destined to fail, and that everyone's cut out. And there's so many failure narratives that are deeply rooted. And so I had to like, do the work to unlearn those narratives and trust that I was going to succeed on my terms, and that I was ultimately, always an entrepreneur and an innovator. It's just I didn't know that that's what you called it, I always thought I was just breaking rules, getting in trouble for trying to do things more efficiently, trying to take risks, trying to make things more efficient, trying to deconstruct things from traditional power sources, right. All those things I was doing was social innovation, social entrepreneurship, but I had no idea until after I taught it and learned about it and Silicon Valley and then started my own company. It all started to connect. I was like, Oh, I'm an entrepreneur, but I'm not a regular entrepreneur, and I'm never going to be right, right. Right.

Maria Ross 09:44

What I love about that is you've taken all the concepts that you were trying to help entrepreneurs building these quote unquote, big ideas and big systems and big companies and, you know, tech darlings and all that kind of thing, and you've brought it to an industry that is way overdue for disruption, and for sort of cleaning house, which is the coaching industry. So tell us about how you decided to focus there. And what are the toxic business models you see in the coaching industry today?

Brigette Iarrusso 10:17

Yeah, so I found out that I was a coach, through a mentor that I invited to speak in my classroom, Hans Kurdi. I remember talking with him after I got laid off, and he was the person that came to me with a project. And he's an amazing business mentor, and coach and mindset coach. And I was like, I don't even know what this coaching stuff is. And he's like, Yeah, Bridgette, you're just a coach. You're like a natural coach. And he's like, I've witnessed you in your classroom, you ask more questions than you do tell, and you facilitate the students taking risks and making mistakes. And that's what coaches do it.

And I thought to myself, Wow, is that true. And then my mother had this massive stroke while I was three months pregnant. And I got laid off, pretty much right after I came back from maternity leave, while I was in this medical crisis, trauma crisis, caring for my mother, who lost 40% of her right brain and became severely disabled overnight. And this is an indigenous Puerto Rican woman who's obese, the system does not, is not set up to care for her. But I'm set up to disrupt that system and make sure she gets cared for. So I was in the midst of all of that. And my traditional therapist, I was just sitting and complaining to her for years, throughout my mom's condition and care. And I got in touch with all my feelings toward my mom, over and over processing feelings. And finally, one day, I just asked her, when are you going to tell me to just shut the fuck up? When are you going to ask me? What do I want to do about any of this? How much longer are you going to let me sit here repeating the same bullshit stories over and over and over? This is like, not at all helpful anymore. And so that's when my mentor Hans began coaching me around the situation with my mother. And in a very short period of time, I realized that I had the power to shift my stories and beliefs around the situation of my mother's condition and what it meant for my life. And it wasn't like overnight, it wasn't like a magic wand, which is one of the problems in the coaching industry, right? This narrative that you just need this one mindset shift, and it's so easy. And then overnight, your whole life, no, deep mindset coaching, is rooted in first unlearning to rewrite and relearn your stories and and there's a pretty significant, deeply rooted process. And that that work also has to be trauma informed, and trauma aware for it to actually be safe and sustainable. And not just be a short term mindset tweak. So I had this beautiful experience of unfuck Ng, my own mindset about this truly fucked up situation truly bad. Like, I'm an only child. financially. My mother's care was like extraordinarily overwhelming. And I went from like, there's no out it's hopeless. There's no solutions to like, Fuck this. I'm building her cottage, I'm taking over. I'm bringing in caregivers, I'm taking her out of the care system. I'm doing this I'm advocating I'm making it work and all kinds of shit went wrong all the time. And my mindset throughout all this was like, Okay, now what? So that's not working. Now, what do we do? And I just shifted my entire, my entire way of being in the world from like, focusing on the problems to looking at okay, what's the next possibility? How do I move from this stuck place? And so that is where the intersection with the coaching?

Maria Ross 13:47

Yeah. And so what do you see as some of the issues though, with the coaching industry, as it is

Brigette Iarrusso 13:53

one of the biggest Well, I mentioned that there's this lack of awareness around trauma and its impact on the body and the brain. And this is particularly relevant for people who hold a marginalized identity, whose bodies and brains have been ultimately assaulted systemically with higher levels of trauma than many of us have ever experienced. And the two largest traumas that have impacted people are colonization, the the destruction and decimation of indigenous culture and the westernization and colonization of those cultures, and slavery, and ongoing systemic racism that came out of the creation of the narrative that people who are melanated are lesser humans. And so these two constructs produce a great deal of trauma, global collective trauma, individual trauma, cerebral trauma, epigenetic trauma that gets passed on generationally. And so a lot of what coaching attempts to do is to skirt over deeper issues with mindset tweaks, and shifts in beliefs. Yeah, and you can shift your belief which I hate that word. Yeah, you can shift your beliefs. But, and I did that initially and shifting my beliefs got me far, it got me pretty far in terms of taking action. But what shifting my beliefs did not get me is

nervous system regulation, healing internalized trauma in my family system. Like, that's work I'm still doing now, I'm playing catch up and doing that work in myself and in my family system and learning about how to integrate it into my coaching. Because mindset shifts alone are really helpful for people with very limited trauma and very limited challenges that the challenges that they're facing are relatively minor, like leaving a job that you don't like, if you're a person of privilege, and you have other opportunities, but you're kind of making out to be really scary. That might be something where mindset work can help a lot shifting the narrative around, there's many opportunities available for me, lots of people out there want to hire someone like me, I don't need to stay at this company, I don't need them. They're not a fit, like mindset work is really useful in that construct. But again, let's put that in the perspective of like, maybe this is a woman of color working in a company where she's experiencing microaggressions on the daily, and she's ignoring these behaviors, and this treatment in order to continue to function in her role. And all of that harm and toxicity of that organizational culture has been built up in her nervous system. Now, mindset work alone is not going to help that woman if she's afraid of going out looking for another job, because her fear of looking for another job has multiple levels. And it's including fear of being harmed again, in another toxic supremacist organizational culture where she as a woman of color, is not fully embraced or accepted for who she is. Right? So there's all these complexities that there are coaches in the industry that are acknowledging these nuances. And there is a certain percentage, I would say, 15%, maybe it's moving from 10%, maybe 15%, maybe we're stretching to 20%, of the coaching industry is starting to understand that we need to look at coaching through a lens of trauma, awareness of equity, true equity, diversity and inclusion. And not just equity, diversity, inclusion, for virtue signaling or for looking good. But for actual restorative racial justice to actually correct the imbalance in power and opportunity that has been impacting people marginalized identities, and these constructs of the inequity are really magnified in the coaching industry. And they're really prevalent. And because everybody is online, and everyone's sharing their perspectives openly, you can see these power dynamics around race and privilege and equity playing out. And I'm very blessed to be in a community of other disruptors, people of color, white people who are taking a stand around racial and social justice and conscious business and wanting to do things differently. And part of what we're all learning, and unlearning is to be more empathetic, and to have more self love and self compassion in this work, because it's really uncomfortable. It's complicated. And it's really messy to do this work well. And if the goal is to not make mistakes, because you're afraid of being canceled, or called out, then people don't do anything, right. And this is where a lot of conscious kind, white people consider themselves spiritual, who have positive intentions who want to do good in the world. They get stuck in well, I don't want to say the wrong thing or make a mistake. So I don't do anything. That's a problem. Right? You have to be willing. So deconstructing, or dismantling white supremacy requires white people should embrace discomfort, imperfection and making mistakes, because white supremacist culture is punitive. It's not forgiving. It's about incarcerating people. Three strikes, you're out. People are reprehensible people are, you cannot rehabilitate people that makes mistakes in society, they need to be shunned, locked away and punished. That is what white supremacist culture is. And that extends to everything, including business, and online social media, this idea that, like, if you say the wrong thing, or you make mistakes, or you cause harm, you're gonna get canceled, and you're gonna get ruined. Well, I

Maria Ross 19:34

want to talk about that, because you talked about that. There are certain situations where canceled culture is okay. But it's not as often as we think. So talk to us a little bit about that, because and I want to build I want to connect the dot here to leadership models that are rooted in dominant culture. But before I get there, since you brought it up, I do want to talk about the impact of Kancel culture on business. Yeah, and you What's your viewpoint on that?

Brigette Iarrusso 20:02

Yeah, so canceled culture is complicated because when you cancel a company, for example, it might be warranted if that company has been called in. And the harm that they have caused, or continue to cause has been pointed out. And if they dig in their heels and deny any wrongdoing, deny, causing harm, and continue to perpetuate harm, and multiple attempts to call in to correct to give a restorative justice approach to fix the problem. That's where you get canceled. So like a coach, that has been harming people for a long time, and has been called out multiple times. And then people call this person in and have a dialogue and all kinds of people have expended excruciating amounts of emotional labor, to talk with this person about the harm and give them constructive feedback and how to do better. And they're just like, No, I didn't do anything wrong, too fucking bad. That's where things are kind of complicated, right. But what Colin culture and constructive restorative justice culture looks like is, we all make mistakes. We're all capable of learning from our mistakes, we're capable of doing better. But when we shame other and cancel people, block them, take away their voice. It drives the behavior underground, they get put into a place of shame, and self criticism and self judgment, there's a lack of empathy for the mistake. The idea is that other people are better than them and don't make mistakes, which is absolute bullshit, because we all make mistakes, right? But that is what white supremacists culture is. And that's why women and people who hold marginalized identities, even men struggle and suffer so much in white supremacist culture, because there's no space to be imperfect humans that are in a duality of goodness and causing harm. Yeah.

Maria Ross 22:03

Well, and I think that impacts our leadership models, because it is a very, you know, even you know, I know you were talking about the criminal justice system, but there is that viewpoint of three strikes, you're out on the job. And, you know, and it's balancing, that I feel strongly that you can lead compassionately and in a humane way, and still expect excellence, and still make a profit, and still achieve your goals. Like, I think we've signed on for this binary thinking of you're either a compassionate leader, or you're a financially successful leader. Why can't we be both. And that's what I love about the slant on your coaching, where you're talking about helping people build profitable businesses, and make money so that money can then flow into their communities and into their causes, and to create a sustainable business that not only supports their lifestyle, but then also can give back to their communities. We don't talk enough about that, you know, there's either people who are scared of money, or think it's shameful to make a lot of money. And oh, I just want my business to do well, and just support my family. But I love that you are very bold about working with entrepreneurs and working with businesses that still care about the bottom line. But there's a way that they can do it that is compassionate, that is not oppressive. That is good to the environment, that we can have both of these things. And so I know you in the past, you've talked about leading in a way that's not rooted in the dominant culture. Is that what you're talking about? Is it that viewpoint that it has to be an either or?

Brigette Iarrusso 23:40

I mean, it's one thing and it's a very important thing, and it's probably one of the hardest things to unlearn. You know, I personally have a very dominant personality style, I've always had a lot of masculine energy. I've always been a leader. And I've always had strong ideas. And people have looked up to me and looked up to my ideas. And it's a challenge to unlearn, always needing to be the smartest person in the room, always needing to have all the answers. This is where burnout occurs among leaders and CEOs and companies, because they put this super pressure on themselves, to have it all figured out, to lead strongly to model everything perfectly to drive company excellence. And I do think there's something to be said for there is an inherent challenge in fast growth and fast scale. without replicating toxic and oppressive systems. It's actually almost impossible to do. And so this is where there is a little bit of a crux here because I did a lot of research in the conscious business space when I was on the board of conscious capitalism, which has now since disbanded and we had a very honest, open internal conversation about the lack of depth of our own commitment to doing the deeper anti racism work within the organization was really missing because that's really what it's about. And so when you're looking at the capitalist business model, the profit based business model, ultimately, it's still rooted in extraction, and extracting the most from people. And so to build a company culture in an organization that's counter to that requires greater output of expense, infrastructure time. And it's a low food business, it's not a fast food business. And so you're going to have higher upfront costs, you're going to need to build more foundation, more solid foundation invest more initially. And then you're going to be a long haul flow growth company, that sustainable over time, that doesn't get canceled, and you're gonna hit your lips, and you're gonna make your mistakes. But when you're available for learning and doing better, and you're available to be called in, and you're available to receive feedback from your employees, from your customers, from your followers, and you're listening, and you're doing better as a result of that feedback, then you're going to stay for the long haul. And there's only a slim margin of companies with this particular approach. And I know many of them. And it's a beautiful thing to witness because fast extractive growth is what toxic capitalism is. It's the epitome of toxic capitalism, right? It's about shareholder dividends, it's about profit only. And you really can't extract big, fast profits without causing harm. And so I think there are some constructs that are a hard pill for certain types of businesses to swallow, because they're not inherently designed will be that slow type of thing. And they

Maria Ross 26:44

have to do the work. That's the thing is you can't create that new model using old paradigms. Right, you know, you can part yeah. And it requires rethinking your organizational structure. It requires rethinking your investment strategy, your budgeting strategy within the organization, it requires you rethinking the skill sets you require to actually get the job done and where you're going to find them. And so

Brigette Iarrusso 27:13

because of fear and scarcity, that Yeah, I mean, don't do those things. Right. So because capitalism is rooted in competition and scarcity, we've coded from birth, to think that there's only a certain amount of resources and that we have to fight and compete and do certain things to access those resources. And there's some truth to that in some ways, but I think what companies fail to see is that a lot of the things that they consider extra nice to have, nice to have, like antiracism, or,

Maria Ross 27:46

like de IB, leaders are getting exactly left and right, because I don't understand recession. Yeah. If

Brigette Iarusso 27:52

your organization is truly deeply committed to unlearning toxic supremacist leadership approaches, whether through in sales, product development, creative design, customer service, user experience, whatever the area is, those tools to be trauma aware, equity informed, and to learn consent based collaborative coaching models of leadership, it's going to help every single type of department in your organization do better. But there's a lack of belief or buy in, because the leaders of those departments are under pressure and operating under scarcity that they have to get their teams to produce and perform. And so they put more pressure on and they will and then they don't necessarily realize how counter that is to people's wellness and productivity.

Maria Ross 28:44

So can you give us an example or two of companies that you see doing things in a new way? And trying to adopt some of these models?

Brigette Iarusso 28:54

Yeah, I mean, well, it's hard. I mean, they try to, I would say that in the B Corp. in the B Corp movement, Donna Karen is an interesting example. I met Donna Karen 25 years ago, and she was in a board room at the law firm where I was working as a paralegal crying, because her lawyers informed her that her products were still being made with sweat, children's sweatshop labor, and she authentically literally didn't know. And she did the white woman crocodile tears and it's like, okay, you're crying about this, but you're not the child working in the sweatshop and you're privileged person. But she worked through this over the years and became a B Corp and has done a lot in the garment industry and has made big changes, right. And so she's an example of someone that came out of the possibility of being utterly canceled. Like many companies that are exposed for harmful business practices, which many especially garment production, fashion industry companies, most Most are participating in child trafficking, child slave labor, unhealthy and unfair wages and factory conditions, right? And often it takes companies being put out on Front Street for leaders to realize, so there's this kind of push pull of like, do leaders fix these things? before they happen? That's the ideal, or do they address the wound once it's been exposed to the public, and they're bleeding out and they're losing their money, and they're at risk for losing their shareholders? Both are happening, right. But I'm really interested in the companies that are trying to get out ahead of it. And I don't know that many, I'll be perfectly honest with you. I actually did a, I did outreach. And I asked for examples. And it was really hard. People would come back to me and say, I did a lot of research. And this company is doing some cool stuff, but not quite right. But I would say looking at the B Corp roster, looking at companies that maybe call themselves conscious capitalist, but I would look into what their definition is of being a conscious capitalist, if that includes being anti oppressive, anti racist. Yeah, I

Maria Ross 31:07

think that's the thing, too. I mean, I think there's a few examples of companies like SAP or Patagonia or Unilever, who are actually proactively taking a look at their supply chain, for example, and making sure there's not harm being done to communities or to people along the way. Now, right? Have they solved all the problems? Probably not. But the point is, they're actually investing time and resources into

investigating the problem and into looking into it. Rather than saying, like, I'm sure there's nothing to see here. And waiting, you know, as long as we don't have a PR nightmare, everything's fine. Yeah, they're actually proactively doing some work in that area. As we wrap up, I do want to talk about this concept that you talk about a lot, which is how to lead with consent in sales, and unlearn supremacist and patriarchal sales models that have been passed down. I'm constantly impressed with your platform of saying there is a different way to sell and be successful. And it doesn't have to harm people, it doesn't have to fool them, especially given my long background in saying that marketing can be used for good not for evil. So tell us a little bit about what does that mean to lead with consent in sales? Can you give us some examples?

Brigette Iarrusso 32:27

Yeah, I think I mean, on a daily basis on LinkedIn, I'm bombarded with inbox messages. Oh, seriously. It's telling me to want to connect or, you know, but then they ultimately lead with an immediate pitch and there are asked, yeah, they aren't asking, or they're offering a solution to a problem that they don't actually know that I have, that they don't have my consent to help them solve. And they are making assumptions and kind of projecting onto you, the potential client that you need them. And that is really a hierarchical approach to sales, that is all about cold outreach and pushing onto people and getting them, wrangling them into fear around a problem and getting them to take the next step out of fear. And that's a very kind of old world white male dominant culture approach to selling. It's very interlaced with subtle or explicit coercion, a lot of manipulation, leading people into what the problem is and what they need, right. And it's, and then there's a completely inverse way of approaching sales, which is to look at people who are following you that might be potential clients as intelligent sovereign beings, who actually know what they need and what they're looking for. And you're there to facilitate them having a lightbulb moment that you're what they need. And the best way to lead to that is through curiosity and seeking consent at every step. So an example of how I do this online, is I'll share a post with a great deal of value and giving advice and explaining and breaking down consent, pay sales in the exact way that I would do in my paid course or program for free in a social post, lots of details, lots of explanations. And then let me know if this is helpful, like an actual request in the message, or if this is helpful. Do you want to attend my workshop next week where I'm going to go in greater detail into this. And then if someone comments, this is really helpful, then I would get their consent, the next step and say, may I send you a message about my upcoming workshop? Would you like me to send you information? I get their consent. They say yes. Now it's okay for me to send them a private message and say, Hey, thank you for engaging with my post. I'm glad you found it useful. My five steps for consent based selling, and here's the link for my workshop. I'd love to see you there in May I follow up with you after the workshop to see if it was helpful. third level of consent. So literally, the way that you approach sales when you are consensual and curious, and always giving the person the opportunity to decide if they want more, or if they're ready for the next step, you really can't go wrong. So it's leading with extreme value first, with no pressure to buy anything, consistently sharing value in ways that are scalable. And making sure that anytime anyone finds you on any platform, or whichever are your chosen platforms, when they land on your profile, they can absorb wisdom and understand exactly how you help them. And if it resonates with them, then you can have a next step in the customer journey, but that those steps all have to be taken with consent and with curiosity. Yeah, and if someone is interested in working with you, and says, Not right now, or I don't know if I have the money for that investment. But I'd really love to work with you. This is the next step, right? So traditional consultative selling gets really

coercive and aggressive around this, and what are you afraid of? And this is where you can, you have to lean into nervous system regulation, releasing the need to force a sale or make a sale. And also, again, get curious. And that's where you can get consent to ask further questions in the sale? Like, are you comfortable talking through that with me? Would it be helpful if we explored the financial investment? And what the fear is around the investment? Or is this something you feel like you're absolutely not at all available to make? If the person says, Well, yeah, let's talk about it. Because I really do want to work with you. Now you can begin to go back into curious coaching. And this is where true coaching that is consensual, and doesn't have a hierarchical power dynamic is how you can coach people through a sale, where you help them figure out what they need to know about the decision and make it for themselves. I've had people have conversations with me, where we coach through their money fears, and they say, You know what, I still, I'm still not able to make this financial investment with you right now. But I know I want to, and I want you to check back in with me in three months. And then I will write and then there's the follow up piece consent to follow up. I've had people also change their mind and say, you know, it's a really stretchy investment to work with you. But now that we've talked through it, I do understand the value, I understand how I'm going to get a result, I understand the risks, and I'm willing to do it now. Right? I like I feel much better. And but it takes deadlines selling

Maria Ross 37:29

with empathy, though, that's the whole thing is that it's you looking at it from their point of view and allowing, like you said, allowing them to be in control of the process, and respect them as a sovereign human being. And it's so much better than, you know, I'm going to admit, I mean, these folks on LinkedIn that you get these InMail messages from, it must work, because they're playing a numbers game. I don't know how I think it ruins your brand reputation. But you know, when you get those messages of like, I can help you do this set up some time on my calendar. I'm like, I'm not going to set up some time on your calendar, I listen to you. And yeah, don't even talk to me, I didn't reach out to you. So you know, just even that, you know, that's where I go in my mind is like it must be working, or people wouldn't be doing it. But it's a win by attrition. It's a win by just beating people down enough that they're like, Fine, I'll respond or take your call. Now I have responded to cold sales emails, because literally right at that moment in time, I was facing that problem. And it was like serendipitous that this person reached out to me. But that's a fluke, that that happened because they didn't know me. They didn't know what I was working on or what I was doing. I did get one of the best podcast placement pitches I've ever gotten in recent weeks, where the placement agent, listened to an episode of my podcast, quoted it back to me said why it resonated with her. And then gave me the information about her guest and an outline of what her guests could talk about on my show that was relevant to my audience. And I thought, oh my gosh, that's I said, I'm gonna heard about this on LinkedIn, and I promoted it on LinkedIn, but she wouldn't let me use her name. She said, You know, I just, I'd rather not, you can post it anonymously. And I thought interesting, that was so telling about who this person was. And her approach to marketing and selling. It was very bespoke, it was very customized. It was very conceptual. And I never felt pushed or pressured. And when you compare that to the 90%, of pitches that people get, I just don't know how it works for them. And I don't know what types of customers they're attracting. If it does work.

Brigette Iarrusso 39:48

They're attracting customers who are in a place of victimhood, who want to be saved, who are not strong in their own beliefs that are easily bullied, right? So these are going to be folks that probably are going to need deeper work. So whatever they're doing with that person that's reaching out to them to help them with their business, you know that because again, they might not be the best clients either. They are not customers, clients. I mean, yeah, it's a done for you service and they're offering to do it for you. The reality is that 90% of us marketers out there doing lead generation are selling you exactly what they're doing to you. So they're selling you that they're going to go cold message other people on your behalf. And they're going to do it in the same icky way. And they're going to bring you clients that you're going to then try to coerce into working with you. And it's unfortunately, quite a strong trend and it's staying but I don't know if it I questioned if it's working as well as it used to I think it's gotten to a frenzy of desperation. It is a numbers game, I think people are really fried from it. I mean, I worked in cold calling when I was a teenager, I remember working at a call center. And that was my first experience with sales and my nervous system had to like unlearn that gross feeling of like interrupting people at dinnertime and being hung up on and then having like my gross old boss, like breathing over my shoulder and asking me if I'd made any sales right and never making any sales. And like I literally went in the bathroom one day and had like a rum and coke in my purse. I guess I was like, How can I get through another day of doing? Yeah, I did. I did a vlog like maybe a month or two?

Maria Ross 41:19

Well, I nobody wants that to be their career, like this is the thing. And so

Brigette Iarrusso 41:23

you know, what it becomes in the industry when you don't have the other approach, which is you have something that is truly worthwhile of bringing intentionality to the free value, you create the days of like my three quick tricks to make \$100,000 a month PDF thing. You know, buyers in the online coaching industry and expert consulting industry are more savvy than ever. Lots of people have been burned and harmed and spent a lot of money on what I call magical marketing solutions that are not rooted in actual strategic frameworks and support that are going to produce results that don't take into account the behavior and actions of the actual client. That is significant. And people are have learned a lot. And so there's still kind of a smaller group of people who you can still get away with this. But I think it's changing. There's been a lot of awakening and awareness building

Maria Ross 42:21

it consumers are more savvy than they have been in the past. And especially when you look at the younger generations and their buying habits and their buying preferences. They're not having it.

Brigette Iarrusso 42:30

Now, you know, they're just not. So knowing this. Let us talk to people like they're smart. Let's talk to people like they know what the problem is. They know what they need. We don't have to beat them over the head with it. Let's keep showing them relevant options and solutions, viable ways of doing things. Let's keep modeling good stuff. And then if they bite, and they like it, let's ask for their permission to continue the conversation and do sales in a way that feels good for everybody. I love that results in making money.

Maria Ross 43:01

Yeah, exactly. I love it so much. Great insight Rajat, thank you so much for sharing your disruption with us. We need more disruptors like you and the world. Because I really believe that these business models are created by us and they can be changed by us. So we need to meet after we have, we have to and

Brigette Iarrusso 43:21

more good people making more money, they spend their money differently. Yeah. And so the kinds of people that I'm talking to, and the kinds of people that you're talking to that are out there trying to build more conscious businesses, when you make more money, you're going to redistribute that money, that wealth and that opportunity in ways that are radically different than our predecessors in business, who are a bunch of old men that didn't really care about anybody else except themselves and their shareholders. And so if we also have to get over our bullshit, and our fears of selling, and embrace selling as relationship building, and in many ways, get back to something more authentic and more intimate. And yeah, and there's vulnerability in selling authentically an athlete or the work and we can get to that place and feel comfortable with selling, you will make more money, and you'll have more opportunities. And you'll have more flexibility to do the kinds of great things that you want to do inside your own family, inside your own leadership, investing in yourself and your own personal development. And then if you're in an organization, investing in initiatives that you care about, love it, love it. So

Maria Ross 44:24

we will have all the links to get in touch with you in the show notes. But for folks on the go, where's one of the best places they can connect with you or find out more about your work?

Brigette Iarrusso 44:34

I would say I'm most active on Facebook at Virginia Russo's Soto and on Instagram at embrace change us now disruptive business coaching, but you can still find me. All right,

Maria Ross 44:46

awesome. Thank you so much for your time today and thank you everyone for listening to another episode of the empathy edge podcast. If you liked what you heard, you know what to do, please rate or review and share with a colleague or friend and in the meantime until our next wonderful guest. Always remember that cash flow creativity and compassion are not mutually exclusive. Take care and be kind. For more on how to achieve radical success through empathy, visit the [empathy edge.com](https://empathyedge.com). There you can listen to past episodes, access shownotes and free resources, book me for a Keynote or workshop and sign up for our email list to get new episodes, insights, news and events. Please follow me on Instagram at Red slice Maria. Never forget empathy is your superpower. Use it to make your work and the world a better place.