

Building a Brand and Building Trust

Claudine Land:

Hello, and welcome to the Virtual Ingenuity Business Podcast. Today, we're going to talk about building a brand and building trust. Let me take a few moments to talk about our guest today.

Claudine Land:

Melissa Forziat is a Southern California-based marketer, speaker, consultant, and author. She teaches small businesses how to market on a budget and helps them execute their marketing strategies. In addition to working with business organizations to train their trainers, she offers keynotes, presentations, workshops, and webinars, and her national and international speaking schedule has taken her as far as New Zealand. To date, she has delivered over 180 workshops and webinars to thousands of attendees. Before starting Melissa Forziat Events and Marketing, Melissa's career involved roles with the Olympic Winter Games, Rugby World Cup, and the US Olympic Committee. In addition, Melissa is the author of the free e-book entitled Small Business Marketing on a Budget. So let's dive right in.

Claudine Land:

Melissa, we know that for many businesses... First of all, welcome to the podcast.

Melissa Forziat:

Thank you for having me.

Claudine Land:

You're welcome. So for many businesses, this is such a challenge because building a brand we know is the result of a long organic process, and with the right intentions, from developing the right concept to creating your logo, you can jumpstart your brand. Let's dive into how you can build your brand in just some simple steps. Let's start with these questions first. Tell us, what exactly is a brand?

Melissa Forziat:

I guess that's an important place to start. I think that we often confuse brand and branding. Sometimes people say, "Oh, I think I'm just going to create a logo and then I'll have a brand," but I think the best way to understand what a brand is is to think about the personality of a person. Your brand is basically the personality of your business. Now it may be that a business owner is a solo entrepreneur. They're working by themselves and it feels like they are their business, and so their personality equals their business's personality. That's not necessarily the case. You make different decisions in your business than you would make for yourself. And if you've got more than one person in the business, it's especially important that everybody be on the same page, especially everybody who's customer-facing.

Melissa Forziat:

So I really think of a brand as being, how are you going to show up to people? Not just in your marketing, but in how you're going to carry out your business day in and day out. When they see you in whatever form they see you, however, you're facing that customer, they need to kind of have an understanding of what it's going to be like to do business with you. And so how you're doing what you're doing is really all folded into this idea of brand.

Claudine Land:

Excellent answer. I think you touched on something really great. You said, making sure that everyone on the team knows your brand and is on one accord. That is so important.

Melissa Forziat:

I think it's so valuable to have that in mind. When people come to me and they're talking about it, sometimes they're thinking, "Oh, I wish I could just outsource this piece of my marketing or delegate this piece of my marketing, but is it really possible for somebody else to know your voice?" I get that question a lot from a place of fear because people are afraid if they try to delegate, their business is going to lose something. And I often ask them, "Well, do you know what your business's voice is?" And they have a hard time articulating that. It just is... how they write. It's something that I'll say to them. "Okay, well, why don't you sit down and come up with some language to explain how your business sounds and what it does and what your values are, and then you can potentially explain that to somebody else so they can replicate it."

Melissa Forziat:

So having those conversations when you've got more than one person on the team is absolutely critical, because you don't want everybody to show up representing your brand totally differently.

Claudine Land:

That's right. It's really important too, to even practice in front of a mirror. Write down your values, as you said, and practice how you communicate what your values are by looking in the mirror and just talking. That's really important.

Claudine Land:

So tell us, Melissa, why does having a brand matter?

Melissa Forziat:

Well, having a brand matters because most of us have competitors, and most of us have others in our industry who are doing something similar to what we're doing, if not exactly the same thing. In this marketplace, consumers have so many choices typically. Even if you're the only person in your industry, it's still part of the process for a customer to decide that they trust you, that they know you, and that they want to do business with you. Especially for small businesses where you don't have a whole national name brand and recognizable logo behind you for people to just automatically have an impression, they have to build an impression of you and decide what would this experience be for me if I buy your product or service. And people need validation when they're making those choices. We see it all the time. It's why people ask for reviews. It's why people look for testimonials. It's why people look for volumes of reviews and testimonials because they want to know what they're getting into before they get into it.

Melissa Forziat:

Having a brand matters because we need to prove who we are to people to help them decide that they want to buy whatever it is we're selling. And the quicker you can help them to realize what it is they're getting, the more likely you're going to make those sales that you're looking for. So it's not just a nice-to-

have idea like, "Oh, wouldn't it be interesting if I knew what my brand was." It really is helping the customer to make their choices.

Claudine Land:

I've had entrepreneurs come to me and say, "I have a logo. I've got my brand. I'm good to go. I'll just go ahead and now market on social media." But really, Melissa, it's about building relationships first, and you touched on that. Anybody can build a brand, and anybody can have a logo, but if you don't build those relationships first, it's not going to be effective. So how do you gain trust?

Melissa Forziat:

I like that you made that point because I think it is a bit backward to come up with a logo before you figured out who you are, or who your business is. But I think that's how a lot of people do it. They do make the assumption that, okay, I've got the logo now. I know exactly what my business is and everybody will understand it. Logo is part of the branding. All the trappings that go around the look and feel of the business, you could put that into branding that represents what your brand actually is. But if you don't know what your brand is, how do you know that your logo is right?

Melissa Forziat:

If I'm ever working with somebody and they're thinking about having a logo created, we'll actually go through a series of questions first to say, "Okay, well, why don't you communicate some of these things to your graphic designer or whoever's going to be working on it so that they have a place to start from. Give us a sense of what this business is, and the chances are the logo's going to be a little bit more accurate." How do you know how to represent who you are if you haven't actually assessed who you are yet?

Melissa Forziat:

I think it's the same thing with your business. How would you come up with all the look and feel of your brand if you're not actually sure who you are yet as a business? If you can sit down and start putting some language to that and start thinking it through, then it'll help you get more accurate when it comes time to creating logos and websites and all those other things, slide decks, whatever it is you're using all day long.

Claudine Land:

Right, so defining your brand is key?

Melissa Forziat:

Absolutely.

Claudine Land:

So what happens now, Melissa? You've defined your brand. You've got your values. You know how you're going to present to your team what your brand is to get them to buy into what your values are in the brand. So what happens now when you have a team? Where do you go from there? Do they have their own brands as well? How do you talk to your team to make them come together and be cohesive in serving the same purpose that your brand portrays?

Melissa Forziat:

That's a good question. Even if you're by yourself, one of the things I'll do is really work with a business owner on what kind of tone of voice do you want to have? What kind of value system do you want to have? With something like that, it's not just about saying you want to be punctual; it's like, will you actually be punctual, because that'll speak for itself to some degree. So there are certain things that you can start figuring out what your brand is really about.

Melissa Forziat:

I'll often work with people on brand statements as well, and say, "Who are the different audiences you're trying to reach? How are you going to show up and serve them? What's in it for them, with these customers?" You'll often find that by separating out the different target markets, you might realize, "Okay, I'm going to show up a little differently to each of these, but what's the overarching hook that's true of my brand across all of them." Those are a few exercises I would do with somebody.

Melissa Forziat:

And if there's a team of people that needs to be part of that decision, I'll bring the team into it. It's especially easy to get teams looking over tone words or value words, and make their own choices about what they think the brand represents and then have them compare notes. I find that's really an interesting process because it helps crystallize, well these are the impressions we all had coming in, and you can find places where there's agreement. And the places where there's agreement, that's probably pretty close to what the brand is and you want people to cement that in their heads so that it's sort of at the forefront for them when they're dealing with customers. So I would make teammates part of that exercise.

Melissa Forziat:

If you hire somebody after that work has been done, show them. Make that part of their training. It's not hard to give them a one-pager with some tone words and some value words and some brand statements or whatever else you've come up with for what the business means, so that part of their onboarding is knowing who your business is.

Claudine Land:

Okay. That's great. I love that. Explain to me a little bit more about your brand statements and what exactly is that, because I know for some entrepreneurs that may be a new term for them.

Melissa Forziat:

Yeah. If you were to look up brand statements online, you'd probably see a lot of different formats. I use one that's pretty lengthy, and it really helps explain what your business is, who it serves, and how it helps those people. The format I use actually goes into a fair amount of additional prompting in terms of like, "Well, what's really in it for them?" Because a lot of times business owners will say, "Well, I sell makeup." It's like, "Okay, but why is the person buying the makeup? Yeah, that's what you're selling, but are you also selling something else beyond that, about how they feel about themselves or how they feel about the world?" So often there are many levels of why somebody wants what you sell, and it's the other levels, the non-obvious levels that we market.

Melissa Forziat:

So being able to work that out and say, "Okay, here's what I offer," but specifically, they're actually looking for this. And you'll find sometimes that if you break that down for different target markets within your audience, because a lot of us have more than one, there might be subtle differences

between what they're looking for. You can discover that by sort of pulling it apart and really looking at what each type of person wants. It helps you be more specific in the conversations with them as well because then you end up selling them the right thing and not just whatever.

Claudine Land:

That's a great point. That's a very, very good point. So what happens then when your team is not really cohesive?

Melissa Forziat:

Well, that would be a tricky place to be. First of all, if the team isn't cohesive, have you had the conversation because a lot of times people say, "Oh, I don't feel like we're on the same page," but the question is, have you done anything to try to get on the same page? If you haven't, have everybody sit in a room and start working through a few team-building exercises together to see if you can get some shared knowledge and shared experience, and agreement of what the business is. And if that's talking about your favorite customers and trying to turn that into, okay, well, is that a target market? If that's talking about some of these brand elements, great. Those are things that are core to the business that can really help you figure out what the next steps are.

Melissa Forziat:

If you've done all that work though, and you're still not getting agreement, then you might need to start looking at do you have the right team? Is what you think your business is and what your business actually is not in alignment? I think that's where important questions need to start being addressed around what's the piece of this that needs to be adjusted so there is alignment. Because if you don't have it, your customers will feel that. There will be uncertainty in what you're communicating to them. Or you'll communicate something with certainty and then they get something very different once they actually start working with you or buying something from you, and that's never a good outcome because then they feel like they've been sold something other than what they were marketed.

Melissa Forziat:

So it really does mean a lot to your customer to have that consistency between what you're saying you are and what you actually are. And at the end of the day, that's why we do this. We want to make sure that we're being forthright with them, that we're being consistent. And if they have a good experience with what you actually marketed, they're much more likely to talk about it with the other people in their lives.

Claudine Land:

That's right. I also want to bring up this point too. Having weekly team meetings is very important to keeping your team in alignment, not just having a meeting when issues arise. I think that one of the worst things that you can do is just to meet periodically when something comes up. You always want to keep your team in alignment. So thank you Melissa too, for bringing that up.

Claudine Land:

Are there any common misconceptions that businesses tend to have about creating their brand that you've seen?

Melissa Forziat:

Yeah. One of the things that I see is sometimes business owners or whoever's marketing the business, they'll have a good message and then they'll want to switch it up because they feel like, "Ah, people have heard me say this. Aren't they getting bored?" And that's really not the case at all. Nobody is thinking about your business anywhere near as much as you are. So the amount of time you spend pouring over a message, if they even saw it, they might have consumed it in two seconds and it might not have registered for them. It might not be in their long-term memory. And at the end of the day, this was something you spent a lot of time with, but they really didn't. So for me, good marketing is about creating patterns in people's heads, and we do that through consistency.

Melissa Forziat:

If you've got a brand, you might have different sales, you might have different themes that you have campaigns for. That's okay. But at the end of the day, people need to see that you're still who you are. If it looks like they can never really tell what your business is, that's going to be really hard for them to hook onto. But if they understand whatever you're talking about today, this is still the core of who you are, they're much more likely to get invested in that and want to pay attention to what you're saying.

Melissa Forziat:

So if you have really done the work to figure out what your brand is, or if your team has done the work to figure out what your brand is, don't throw that away just because you feel like it's getting boring to people. They honestly probably haven't even registered it that much. And by staying consistent, you're giving them a chance to remember who you are and maybe even helping them give that word of mouth to the next person.

Claudine Land:

That's right. Being repetitive is also key. Being repetitive with your brand, with your logo, with your tagline is very important.

Melissa Forziat:

Absolutely. I mean it's why jingles get caught in our heads.

Claudine Land:

That's exactly right.

Melissa Forziat:

You can see the product of other businesses doing a good job with marketing. And think about those times when slogans get caught into everyday life, or the jingles from commercials get in your head, that was great marketing that got hooked into your brain. You don't see those companies just saying, "Okay, people got that jingle. Let's pick a new one for next time." No, they use it over and over and over, but for a reason, because they want people to really cement that pattern in their brains.

Claudine Land:

You are absolutely right. To just reiterate that, when you hear a great jingle, you don't forget it. It's just there. And you're right, companies keep that jingle for a long, long time. It just resonates really well in our minds, and it reminds us of that company.

Claudine Land:

What is something Melissa that someone can do to strengthen their brand further? We've got the jingle. We've got the logos and the taglines. How can we strengthen that from there?

Melissa Forziat:

Well, and to be fair, not everybody has a jingle. I find typically that'll often come from like larger companies that have more TV commercials or whatever else they have going on. I would say, once you know who your business is, and you figured out what that brand is, that's a really playful time for your business to be able to find other businesses that mesh with that.

Melissa Forziat:

One of my favorite types of marketing to talk about with business owners is partnership marketing. It's not about getting into legal agreements. It's really just saying we're going to support each other. We're going to help boost each other's voice however we can, whether that be through verbal referrals or because you're shouting each other out in newsletter features, or whatever options are available to you. But I think it's so valuable to find other businesses that seem to mesh with how you do business, the types of audiences that you're serving, and see if there are ways to support each other. Your messages can reinforce each other as well. But it would be hard to find good allies like that if you haven't really sat down and thought about the core of who you are, because then how do you know that another business really meshes? You want to make sure there's some amount of alignment between you and any other businesses that you collaborate with.

Melissa Forziat:

If you can find that alignment, it is an advantage that so many of us small business owners have that we're as nimble as we are to be able to make choices like this, like, "Oh, I love what this business is doing and who they're serving and I want to collaborate with them." You can make that choice in a moment as a business owner, where a larger corporation, for example, would have a lot more red tape to get through to figure out how to make that partnership work. For you, it's just about really looking for allies and collaborators out there in the world to help you get your message out to more people. It's an option that pretty much every business has access to. It's just who are the right partners for you to help you band together and help you all build your businesses a little bit more.

Melissa Forziat:

So that's something that I would look at. The first step of that, of course, really is sitting down and making sure you know who you are so that you can also communicate that to the person that you're talking to and trying to collaborate with. If you all know you're on the same page, it's a lot easier to come to some sort of an arrangement

Claudine Land:

Building those relationships is so key. When you collaborate with another business, it's not a competition, it really should not be. Like you said, it's just reinforcing each other.

Melissa Forziat:

Well, and I think that this podcast is the perfect example of that. You're representing Virtual Ingenuity, I'm representing Melissa Forziat Events and Marketing, and this conversation wouldn't work if you asked me questions, and I was giving you answers that were not related to how you want to talk to the people you're talking to. There is already a model happening right here on this podcast I think for people to understand what a partnership looks like, and what knowing your brand looks like, because you as a listener would really feel it if there was a mismatch here in this conversation and it would be uncomfortable. In the world of sales, that equals not getting a sale. So that's why it's so important. A conversation like this is perhaps more long-form than a lot of the marketing that you see, but this is still the essence of it. This sort of knowing who you are and finding the others who can mesh with that.

Claudine Land:

A lot of times too, Melissa, I've seen entrepreneurs, who may have an immediate goal and they will get into a former relationship with someone, another business specifically, just for that moment. To me, that's really not the way to conduct a good business and create a lasting relationship. We need to look at all collaborations as long-term relationships. It may not be a long-term relationship, but there's got to be some kind of fit there that would make it into a long-term relationship or collaboration. Would you agree?

Melissa Forziat:

I would agree. I think that's part of what happens a lot of times with small business owners when they don't have a strategy. You often look at the shiny object in front of you. And a lot of times in marketing, that's a campaign. They'll think, "Oh, okay, I'm going to do this, this month." And then I'll say, "Okay, well, then what happens after that?" And a lot of times people are planning something completely different - completely, has nothing to do with the first thing they executed. And they'll be doing that two months later and I'll be thinking, "Did you really squeeze every last drop out of what you built that first time around?" And usually, the answer is no.

Melissa Forziat:

So I think having a strategy is so important to be able to really be more efficient and effective with the time that you're spending. Especially in marketing. I often say, if you have an event coming up, for example, for your business, you can stretch that into six months at least of good marketing. But people will mention it and they'll shorten that window and then they'll be on to the next thing, and you really miss all the opportunity that you have to build into something and to tease it and then to have follow-up after.

Melissa Forziat:

So a good partnership is exactly the same thing, where if you executed something, how do you continue that relationship? How do you keep it moving forward? Because if there truly is alignment, then your target market may very well be well served by knowing this other business in a deeper way. So what are the options there to really build on that connection that you created?

Claudine Land:

Just to add to that, I think that reviewing your strategy is very important. Don't ever have a one-time strategy and say, okay, this is what I want to do, and that's it. It's going to keep changing. Your values may change. It's really important, Melissa, for entrepreneurs to reevaluate that periodically, whether it's every six months, whether it's every year, because your target audience also may change, it may grow. It's just really important to reevaluate your strategy and your values.

Melissa Forziat:

Absolutely.

Claudine Land:

Is there anything else you'd like to add? We had a great conversation today.

Melissa Forziat:

Yeah. I have enjoyed this. I'm just glad we had a chance to chat about it. I think brand is an overwhelming topic for a lot of people. It feels like this really nebulous thing that they don't understand. And I think when you just boil it down to who is your business, how are you doing business, what does your audience need to know about you, and how will that help them understand what to expect when they buy something from you or sign that contract or work with you, whatever that looks like. If it's a mystery to you, it's a mystery to them, and that means you're hooking in fewer people. So it's worth taking a minute to start to figure out and find little ways to define who you are and who your business is.

Claudine Land:

I agree with you 100%. It's important that we live and breathe our brand. I had to say that again because it's so important. And everything from your logo to your communication with your clients should tie back to your company's mission. Infuse your brand's personality and values into everything you do. That is really important. You've got to get a base of loyal customers that come back for more. You have to find out why are they coming back and feed on that and expand that. It could be you have branded merchandise from mugs to tote bags, to stickers, or even your business cards. It's usually one of those popular methods that are used to strengthen your brand, outside of the web, that is.

Claudine Land:

Just keep those things in mind and build those relationships. It's so important to build on those relationships. When you come in contact with someone, you don't just reply with an email or a phone call and say, "Hey, I enjoyed meeting you," and it ends there. It shouldn't end there. Build on those relationships. Make sure you find out how you all can work together?

Claudine Land:

Melissa, where can my listening audience find you?

Melissa Forziat:

Well, you can find me on my website at melissaforziatevents.com. I know the spelling of that may feel a little foreign to you, so hopefully, you can check out the transcript for this show to just be able to go

straight over to the website. And while you're there, one of the first things that you'll see is a pop-up for a free ebook. I encourage anybody who's thinking about small business marketing to check that out. It's called *Small Business Marketing on a Budget*. It's 25 pages worth of marketing advice about different things that you can do when you have no budget or even a low budget to be able to market your business. There's a range of ideas there to help get you started if you're looking for inspiration or new angles. That's where people can find me.

Claudine Land:

Great. Thank you, Melissa. Please check out Melissa's e-book. It's a free e-book. Not everything free is good, but this is really great. Again, it is called *Small Business Marketing on a Budget*. I will have that on the transcript of this podcast where you can find Melissa, and the spelling of her name, so you can find her easily.

Claudine Land:

Thank you all. Thank you, Melissa, again for tuning in and being a guest on the Virtual Ingenuity Business Podcast.

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Let's impact together!