

Color Your Dreams Podcast - EP66

Elaine Lou Cartas: Hey, Legacy leaders, I am happy to have one of my former clients turned friend. And by the way, when we were coaching together, I didn't know. I already knew how amazing she was, but even more so. I want to introduce Claudia Rucker. So Claudia is a business consultant who is just known for her amazing financial strategy.

Elaine Lou Cartas: And did not know about these awards until reading her bio before this podcast episode, but Claudia's received three. Awards from the California Senate because of the economic growth that she's done for Santa Barbara, California. And for those of you that don't know Santa Barbara, California, and it's a very wealthy area.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So to know that she has helped create that, kudos to you. And also, Claudia has been acknowledged by the Pacific Coast Business Times with the Latino Business of the Year Award. But anyways, Claudia, welcome. I'm so happy to have you. I'm so excited

Claudia Rucker: to be here. Yeah. It was my dream to be on here, actually, so I'm living one of my little bucket list check marks.

Elaine Lou Cartas: And this podcast is called Color Your Dreams, so isn't that ironic? You're just coloring your dreams being here. Congrats. Absolutely. It is. It's the end of the year, as they're recording it, which is insane to think about. And normally, as financial trends, personally and professionally, people are spending a lot of money because they're about to see family, friends, buy gifts.

Elaine Lou Cartas: And to be transparent, even to be vulnerable, like we are scared of money. I know, actually, are you an immigrant or first gen immigrant? Remind me.

Claudia Rucker: I'm first gen.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Okay. Where did your parents come from?

Claudia Rucker: My

Elaine Lou Cartas: parents came from Mexico. So we have that relatability of our parents coming here and the money story that we grew up with has shaped us and has.

Elaine Lou Cartas: From a lot of first gen immigrants I've heard from and just talked to have a lot of fear with money. So I'm excited to hear your four steps about how people could build a healthy relationship with money. But before we go there, I would love to hear what made you get to this point where you wanted to help other people.

Elaine Lou Cartas: I would love for you to share your story before we go through the four steps.

Claudia Rucker: I think that's always been there that I wanted to help other people. I think back in 20, in 2021, when I sold my last business and I was transitioning into a new season of life, I really

wanted to create a new business that came from that was built on the foundation of my strengths and that I could still make an impact.

Claudia Rucker: So when we were working together, I was really exploring what could I, what kind of business could I create from my strengths and the impact that I wanted to make. And the vision, didn't arrive at me while we were working because I was still iterating on that. But since then it's become really clear that I want to use my strengths, my capacity, my time, my money, any kind of resource that I have to really help first gen entrepreneurs.

Claudia Rucker: create generational wealth. I used to say break, break cycles of generational poverty. And, today I don't want to focus on the poverty piece, but I want to focus more on build generational wealth. And I'm not just talking about money. I'm talking about wealth and All aspects that we have in life and so I, I really wanted to come out with a different narrative that success doesn't have to be tied just to money.

Claudia Rucker: It can be tied to living a, fulfilling life and that is different for everyone. But how do we do it in a way that's really smart, that's going to help give us peace of mind and is going to create generational wealth for future generations in our family. And I think that my parents, when they came here, they, gave us so much.

Claudia Rucker: They work 24 7 to really give us good values make make an education possible. And yet I think that for myself and my sisters, and we, come from an entrepreneurial family we took a lot of those money stories and it just seems like we've been on the perpetual wheel of making money. not having a network of people to really help us understand how to create a legacy with that money.

Claudia Rucker: So losing that money, making more money, and it just seemed like it was a cycle for me until I really stepped into community. And once I stepped into community and I really acknowledge the beautiful things that my parents did teach me with my life experience and, my education. I think when all that came together right at the tail end of us working together, that's when I was like, bingo, I know what I want to do.

Claudia Rucker: This is who I want to serve. This is how I want to serve. And I just, I have this strength that's called restorative. So I can get into like nitty gritty details and If you tell me the pain point, I can come back, get into nitty gritty details and say, okay, this is how we're going to find opportunity. This is how we're going to basically translate that vision that you have.

Claudia Rucker: And we're going to dream through financials and we're going to write a kick ass financial plan that is going to be the roadmap to creating this bigger legacy that you want. But we have to work from vision and then come back and plan. Yeah. And there's all the steps that are in between. So let's

Elaine Lou Cartas: go through the first steps and you talked about it.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Step one, tell us about it.

Claudia Rucker: this is called prosperity, planning as a practice. And it is a practice that's delivered through an arc of seasons. So winter would be, we would use our spiritual energy to tap into that. And what we're going to do is we're going to vision the life that we want to manifest and create.

Claudia Rucker: And that would happen around this time, like right at winter. Solstice, we're going to step into that visioning process. And then from there in spring, what we're going to do is we're going to tap into our mental

Elaine Lou Cartas: energy. And Claudia, can we go back to just because everyone is in that winter, what questions should they ask about?

Elaine Lou Cartas: As they're in this season right now.

Claudia Rucker: Oh, yeah. as they're in winter, they're really deeply trying to understand themselves and their values and how that's going to translate into a vision that they want to have for how they live

Elaine Lou Cartas: their year. Yeah. So what I'm hearing is okay, what are your intentions and goals for the next year?

Elaine Lou Cartas: Like what are your top three and what's really important to you? Okay.

Claudia Rucker: That's exactly

Elaine Lou Cartas: it. Okay. And then spring, walk us through. Yes.

Claudia Rucker: Spring, what we're going to do is we're going to tap into our mental energy. And this is where we're really going to start to put the numbers to our dream. We're going to forecast sales month to month.

Claudia Rucker: And this is just our best guess. It's based on our experience this is, forecasting is not, and budgeting is not like accounting where, it's a closed loop and things have to match. These are just our best guesses and they're broken down by month. And then after that, we're going to write a conscious spending plan that shows profitability that we're going to basically work throughout the next season, which is summer.

Claudia Rucker: And in summer, we're just. iterating. We're taking information, we're looking at the plan, we're interacting with it. And then we're coming back and basically we're writing commitments. And this should sound very familiar to you because we both were we both coached with accountability works. So there's a lot of accountability that's built into this practice.

Claudia Rucker: Yeah.

Elaine Lou Cartas: It's the accountability and the reflection. It's not just so often people say, I want to make a million dollars. Okay. What does that mean? Like, how are you going to spend it? And I'm not saying spend it like by a materialistic thing, but like. How much of it do you want to probably max out on your Roth IRA or whatever retirement account you want to use or okay, you want to go to Spain, so how much do you need to set aside?

Elaine Lou Cartas: And even something I've learned this past year, so often we do our monthly expenses like okay, this is my monthly for using Netflix, this is my monthly for using Zoom, but people

forget those one time purchases. Yes. Where you need to actually divide by 12 and that's where I was caught up like, oh my gosh, I didn't account for it.

Elaine Lou Cartas: I thought I did. But you have to add that in. Yes.

Claudia Rucker: Absolutely. So that's where last time we spoke, we were talking a lot about keeping the numbers. And that can be scary because sometimes when we're not familiar with the numbers, they can be very scary. But once we're interacting with them on a, at the very beginning, I suggest interacting with them on a weekly basis.

Claudia Rucker: But then we get to the point where we're interacting with them for very short periods of time, like maybe 30, 45 minutes once a month. It is just in the very beginning as we're starting to really understand the nuances and the cadence of money coming in and coming out of our business. And really the levers that we have to move to make sure that money keeps coming in. That, that's just, this is all just a practice that we have to be in with our most valuable resources.

Elaine Lou Cartas: It's a routine and actually that happened. There was one service I was spending a lot of money on and then I was talking to colleagues. I had a hunch, right? So don't ignore intuition, but I was like, I think I'm spending a lot on this specific service.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Then I started talking to colleagues. I spend X amount, does this make sense? oh my God, that should just be like this amount. And so because I talked to my colleagues, I followed my intuition, talked to my colleagues who do research. And mind you, I also had to be vulnerable. So that's another thing.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Being vulnerable, having conversations about money to other people that you feel safe with. And then from there I found another service provider for that specific service and I cut costs by 75%. in that specific service. I'm like, why didn't I do this earlier? Because ego gets in the way. So anyways, I know you were talking about first step visioning, work life integration.

Elaine Lou Cartas: What is the second step?

Claudia Rucker: So the second step is the forecasting. where we actually gather data. And this is the scariest step because when I'm working with clients, the visioning is the fun part, right? Where we really can tap into our conceptual creativity. But when we're actually coming back in the second step and putting a little bit more concreteness to the numbers.

Claudia Rucker: It's not, what overwhelms most entrepreneurs that I work with is actually, Oh my gosh, where am I going to go get the information? How am I going to get it? How am I going to organize it? And that's where I think working with someone like me is really beautiful because I've done this before for myself.

Claudia Rucker: I've done this with other clients and I'm walking alongside with you, showing you my best tips and tricks to make this really easy and, actually I hope fun. There was not a word that is associated with money and numbers, but my goal is to make it fun.

Elaine Lou Cartas: And for those of you that want to try it on your own, like when I was looking through my numbers, you could get, you could look at Spotify, but like I would put myself in the mood as you would when you go get intimate with your partner, right?

Elaine Lou Cartas: Like light a candle, pulse onto it up play music in the background if you don't get distracted. So I have my Mr. Bear's budget bangers. I can share the Spotify play playlist. So often like our body becomes Oh my God, I'm about to do this. But just open up and just see, okay. What's coming?

Elaine Lou Cartas: And just remember, the numbers and money doesn't define you. They tell you where you're at. And guess what? You could always edit and adjust and adapt from the information you receive.

Claudia Rucker: Absolutely. I think that's, that, if I could share just a couple of things, it's... This is not about perfection, right?

Claudia Rucker: It's about making progress. It's about understanding the numbers so that you can use the numbers to support investing in what you value. I think one thing that makes my work a little bit different than maybe some of my colleagues is when we're writing forecasts and conscious spending plans, we're not just looking at the numbers, we're also looking at the numbers in, relationship to our capacity and our time.

Claudia Rucker: Because I think so many times we can write financial forecasts and budgets, but they're really built not acknowledging the time that we actually have available to us or the capacity to grow our businesses. And to give a just quick example, I had a lot of time, I had capacity, I had a plan, and then my dad had a major Brain injury.

Claudia Rucker: He fell from the ceiling at our spot and that just shifted everything. So all of a sudden where I had a, I had the time, I had the capacity and the plan to hit my financial numbers. I now have zero capacity and time because it really took the whole family to help him. Yet, because I had the plan, I knew how to shape, I knew how to pivot and I knew where I could still invest my time and money and capacity to support the team that was working in the business so that they could keep moving forward our, financial initiatives.

Elaine Lou Cartas: And. For those listening to what you could think of, obviously, you can't plan for an emergency while at the same time, that's why it's great to have money set aside for that. But what you can do is even look at patterns in your own business, right? for example, In the summer, it tends to be slow in terms of revenue, so what do I do?

Elaine Lou Cartas: I plan a trip to Tanzania for two weeks, completely off, and it just matched. And sure, I was freaking out, oh my gosh, why is there not money coming in? Wait, hold on, that's the pattern that happens. And then what happened the next month? I had my best month in business for the year. Just even understanding that flow.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So what is your third step that you want to share? So

Claudia Rucker: the third step is setting up meetings and these are the, meetings that we were talking about. Like they start weekly and then they go to monthly meetings. And to have an agenda already set up that is very much in alignment with the way that you work.

Claudia Rucker: So for me, I love to look at numbers really early in the morning. If I'm working on plans, I love to rock out to Tina Turner and David Bowie. And, yet, That's a Gen

Elaine Lou Cartas: X er response, by the way.

Claudia Rucker: I know, right? But everybody's different. And so what I love to create with my clients is what is going to put you at ease?

Claudia Rucker: What's going to make you really look forward? To me, it really is that cup of coffee. And again, rocking out to Tina Turner and David Bowie. For some reason, I can write, look at numbers. And really understand the, see the patterns and get really creative if I'm, it's maybe five, six in the morning, have my coffee and have this music playing in the background.

Claudia Rucker: For you I heard that it was the Palo Santo, the candles. Yeah, I do it on Monday. Were you

Elaine Lou Cartas: traveling with them? Yeah, and I do it on Mondays in the first day of the week and I look at that, I look at leads, like I just. So that's another thing too, don't just look at what's coming in but what's potential in the future.

Elaine Lou Cartas: It's it's a routine. It's like brushing our teeth. We don't think about it. And then it becomes easier. It,

Claudia Rucker: it definitely, does. I, know like it starts usually once a week and then basically it comes down to okay, I can do this once a month because I just really have all of that information.

Claudia Rucker: I understand it. I know how to actually take the data and then implement the changes in the business. for us, you were talking about those Senate awards that we got for the economic growth. I can truly tell you that I attribute every piece of success and actually living through two fires, one mudslide, and a labor code change thanks to this process that I created for myself.

Claudia Rucker: I, would not have stayed in business and definitely not have helped many of our employees buy their home in Santa Barbara if we didn't have really good planning process in place that had to do with growth and the financial piece. I just added the capacity and the time piece later on because I realized they were important resources that we should also be tracking and making sure that we're building businesses that are sustainable to the amount of capacity and time we have in our life.

Claudia Rucker: Yeah. Yeah.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So what is the fourth step you want to share with folks?

Claudia Rucker: So the fourth step comes back to I would say it's almost like a retreat with whoever is accompanying you. So that might be your team members, or it might be if you're a solo printer, it might be your CPA. and your bookkeeper, whoever is on your financial well being team.

Claudia Rucker: And this is where we're really going to look at what did we do really well this year? What do we, what can we learn from what we didn't do well and what we did? And how do we iterate this plan? But for the following year, and I really love doing it in the fall because when you get it knocked out and then you can go on holiday and go through the holiday season and know that you're going to come back in January and you're just going to fine tune that plan.

Claudia Rucker: Maybe something, you got an epiphany, you know how when we rest, we get epiphanies. So usually when I come back in January, I have had some sort of insight. That I come back and iterate the plan on the planning

part.

Elaine Lou Cartas: it goes back to what you were saying in step one, the visioning part, right? So like playfully vision.

Elaine Lou Cartas: It's also that time of year where I tend to reflect. Yeah. And be okay if the vision that you used to have that past year or even a decade ago has changed and then constantly make changes and tweaks. I would love to, I know you went through all the four steps, but what advice would you have for folks?

Elaine Lou Cartas: Yeah. Where they're looking at their money, but it's so easy to judge or to feel bad or to have that number define themselves.

Claudia Rucker: Yeah, I really think that's valid. I want to normalize that, that is how most of us feel when we start looking at the numbers and really being in relationship to them.

Claudia Rucker: That's why I don't work alone. I want to say that I work in partnership with a woman by the name of Jen Shundell. She's a business consultant and a life coach. And so what I found is I'm really good at the more practical piece of it. Jen comes in and supports our clients with the radical transitions that sometimes are worth looking at the money.

Claudia Rucker: We're going to have to make and that brings up a lot of, a lot of emotions, a lot of they could be positive. They could be sometimes they're not as, they're, yeah, they're, grateful. But I think being courageous and being accompanied through that, being vulnerable and really being supported, that's what I think is the most important piece of this really. Because if we just put our head in the sand and we don't face the information that we're getting from the numbers. I think that's, we do ourselves a disservice and especially like first gen, it's like we have been conditioned to work really, hard to try to find solutions and I know I was there.

Claudia Rucker: I drove sales. I sacrificed everything in my life for it, for sales and growing the business where after looking at the numbers with a with my coach in 45 minutes, I knew that my business model had a major flaw. Then I had to come back and tweak and change the business model so that it could be profitable.

Claudia Rucker: I want to share that. But that only became because I was vulnerable to be and I wanted to be supported. It didn't want to do this alone.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Yeah. That vulnerable piece. vulnerability, I'll share. When I got out of college, I was 55K in debt from loans. And also I want to also share that debt is not negative, right?

Elaine Lou Cartas: I know so often it's seen as negative, but it's very fascinating when we put a label to it, Oh my gosh, I'm in debt from undergrad, but it's, actually works out. But anyways. Going back to my story, I was 55K in debt and I got obsessed. I started listening to the Dave Ramsey podcast even before podcasts were really huge.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So I think that was 2012, 2014, around that time. I was listening to it every day. I was reading his books. There was a little search thing and it was like, find a financial advisor by Ramsey and I didn't have to pay for it. I just spoke to someone. And they gave me a game plan, and I remember everything was automated to pay except for the last monthly payment for my loan that I extended, I called.

Elaine Lou Cartas: I was like, I'm making a call for paying off my loan, here's the last 1, 000. They're like, congratulations, and I was in my office, and I jumped up and down because I created that game plan, but I know not everybody have resources to probably hire someone, but there are free resources out there, whether it's a book or a podcast, episode, like listening to this, for example.

Elaine Lou Cartas: But. Even to your, Santa Barbara and Pasadena are very similar communities where there's very old money, a lot of wealth. And when I was a fundraiser, I was around very wealthy people. Think heirs of big media companies that if I said their name, you would know them. Owners of grocery stores, if I said the name, you would know it.

Elaine Lou Cartas: But the way they would talk about money Not necessarily how they spent it, but even how they invested in it. And then even seeing the cars that they would drive, it wasn't new money, flashy money, like we see with the Kardashians. It was like stealth wealth. Like you just see one statement ring that they basically chose what they want to spend money on that was important to them, but it didn't have to be everything.

Claudia Rucker: Yeah. And that's, really important to name also, because what I share with my clients is we're trying to move away from the. idea that success is only measured by the financially, right? That we have money and money is going to buy us happiness. No. What I like to look at, the way that I like to look at money is money's a resource.

Claudia Rucker: That we can use to invest in what we value and we all value things differently. So success is going to look differently than it does for me, than it does for you. Although I, would say that we have similar goals and we see similar similar, we share values. So that's where I see that we're using money to invest in what we value.

Claudia Rucker: But yeah, it aligns with me because we, share values. You could

Elaine Lou Cartas: tell a lot about what's important and what's their priorities by looking at their calendar and their bank account. And the majority of my money, I'm just saying, is spent on business development, personal development. that's where I spend most of the money.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Like I saw, nothing wrong with people who love luxury bags, but my mom came back from London and she told me, Hey, guess what, I bought a new Louis Vuitton purse. You know what that means? I don't know what that means. You could have my old one. I'm like, I don't want it. Why don't you want it?

Elaine Lou Cartas: Because it's not important to me. But it's important to you. So that's great. Keep both of them. It's oh, but you always use that same purse. I was like, actually, the purse that I use all the time, it's actually Italian leather that I got from Italy. So even though it's not a brand name, it's actually a really nice one. That I just use all the time.

Claudia Rucker: So you value quality. Yeah. And there's

Elaine Lou Cartas: no right or wrong. There's no, Yeah, there's no right or wrong. There's no judgment. It's just what is important? What? What's important to you and what do you value? Claudia, if people are in love with you now, like, how can they find you and reach out to you?

Elaine Lou Cartas: Yeah,

Claudia Rucker: our website is [www. beyondordinary. business.](http://www.beyondordinary.business) We'll put in the show

Elaine Lou Cartas: notes just in case.

And

Claudia Rucker: You can schedule a chemistry call. I know, Elaine, you were saying that sometimes people don't have a lot of resources yet, I have that bigger vision that really it, is my life purpose.

Claudia Rucker: So I do this because I'm good at it and because it's the way that I choose to invest my time and my capacity. But I do want people to know that You can go reach out to me book a chemistry call and I can share resources. I will share resources because I think sometimes it's just that little bit of help to point you in the right direction that then can lead you to having an insight that might lead to different, a different

Elaine Lou Cartas: outcome.

Elaine Lou Cartas: And then what is one tip, one reflection question, reflective question you want to leave our listeners?

Claudia Rucker: I would really love for them to consider planning as a practice and because within the planning are the reflective, are the

Elaine Lou Cartas: reflective questions. And play it, actually have fun planning it, visionary planning as you're talking.

Claudia Rucker: Absolutely. I, would love to leave them with, it doesn't matter where you start in that planning process, as long as you keep on the process and keep an action because action is going

to bring you clarity. And like our coach would love to say, the magical is in the practical. Planning is very practical.

Elaine Lou Cartas: It's a balance of the masculine and the feminine, not one sided over the other. You need

Claudia Rucker: both. Absolutely. I, would say I'm a little woo for some people. I talk about dreaming through financials. I talk about all of this woo stuff that you and I love. But there is real practical, tactical strategy behind everything that I teach.

Claudia Rucker: I just want to, I want to make it approachable for people so they don't roll their eyes and Oh my God. Financial forecasting. Planning I'd, love for them to embrace it as part of just daily practices and habits Yeah. That they incorporated into their life. That will make a huge impact.

Elaine Lou Cartas: And also, I know there's some listeners here too that might be interested in wanting to work with me. So you've worked with me. Any insights or feedback you wanna give our listeners here if they are interested in working with me? I think

Claudia Rucker: that just making the first call, just to be curious on how, because I, didn't really have a plan and I remember someone just our coach actually referred me to you and she said, I think you'd really align with Elaine.

Claudia Rucker: And I wasn't ready, but I wasn't ready because I was scared because this was a huge life change for me and I was giving up something that I had, I had known I was known for to really follow my intuition and my life purpose. And you were just so kind. you just kept, you kept keeping in touch with me.

Claudia Rucker: So what I want to share with your listeners is you might not think that you're ready, but engaging with, you, Elaine, it, was the support that I needed to take that first step. And I never look back. I'm just, I wake up every day and I'm grateful that we work together, that you helped me build out the plan.

Claudia Rucker: I have my minimum viable product and that I just started. Yeah. you just started.

Elaine Lou Cartas: You, it was so funny when Claudia came to me, Claudia came with an idea and then there was just like clients coming to you left and right. It was just so easy. So congrats. And if you want to schedule that call, you could go to elainelou.

Elaine Lou Cartas: com forward slash call. But Claudia, thank you so much for providing the vision, the prosperity mapping, the Iterating and harvesting. So I hope our listeners here are ready to go harvest, make changes and first vision. So thank you, Claudia. You're

Claudia Rucker: welcome. Bye, Helene.