

EP107

Elaine Lou Cartas: The news, the noise, and non stop content. It's a lot right now. 2025. What is up? So how do you make your personal brand stand out in a world of chaos and balance being empathetic when people are going through a lot of things? Well, I got you. And this episode is a replay from my talk at Soho House on personal branding.

We had an amazing discussion with a diverse group of 35 leaders. And in this talk, I share the stage with Ted Bernard, a business strategist, Bernadette Marcin Nik, a friend, brand photographer and videographer, and Brando Murphy, a crypto coach. All right. Let's drop the beat.

Hi, everybody. My name is Elaine. Also, I'm loving how this looks like the United Nations. I feel safe. So great job everyone for showing up and driving because that is a risk in itself in LA. So I do business and executive career coaching. I appreciate it. I graduated the recession of 2010. Does anyone remember that?

Born in the 1900s like all of you, or at least all of you seem like it. If you're in the 2000s, I feel old. But when I graduated, the first job I did after that was working in grassroots campaigns, making 500 a month. I am a daughter of of a farmer who immigrated to Central California to work in the farm fields.

So I'm really grateful, I know there's a lot of like political discourse, but I'm really grateful for the opportunities that was given to me. So because of that, I helped elected officials go into office. I was getting paid 500 a month doing 12 hours of phone calls. So I learned rejection real fast. I knocked on doors, and I lived in Iowa, Indiana, Montana, New Mexico, Massachusetts, born and raised in California.

So I know the privilege of living here because of diversity and how safe I felt. And then, when I got into grassroots campaigning, someone said, Hey, I just told them, I'm tired. I'm dealing with crazy people. What can I do instead? Oh, be a fundraiser. You deal with the rich. I'm like, that's cool. So then within seven years, I raised 11 million.

I got out of campaigns because it's toxic if you haven't noticed. And I did non profit fundraising. So I lived in Pasadena. I, my donors were like generational wealth. Like the heir of LA Times, the founders of Trader Joe's. You all don't know me. That's, I love telling people that. I don't have a big following, but I raised 11 million dollars in 7 years.

With like a small list, and that's what I feel like personal branding is. So I went to Pasadena City College. I raised 8.5 million dollars there in community college scholarships. And I love that because I was like with single moms who had 5 kids. Like they had like the American dream. And, Throughout my career people always came to me for advice or wanted to get my advice for my career So I started executive career coaching it blew off and then I did business coaching So I work with fortune 500 executives from like coca cola Starbucks I have online courses the Duke Penn USC like I'm really grateful for the opportunities given to me But that's because I was willing to connect with the right people and not necessarily amass And Bernadette and I have known each other since pre COVID.

I used to do events like this. So when we were thinking about like, Oh, I'm looking for a photographer. It's all about relationship building. I was like, Oh, Bernadette, even though I haven't talked to you in five years.

Panel Speaker: I know that was an interesting email to get. I was like, hey, how's it going? Hi everybody, I'm Bernadette.

I am the founder of Sol House Media. We are a photo and a video agency for mission driven and impact driven small business owners, entrepreneurs, and nonprofits. While I can talk about the currency that I have helped my clients get, the biggest currency is visibility. And making their message appear unique and having the widest impact.

And that does result in hundreds of thousands of dollars for my clients. So, I'm also a former journalist, former photojournalist, and videojournalist. I'm originally from New Jersey. Cool, nobody. You don't judge in L. A. Listen, the first question I get is, Jersey Shore, and I'm like, No, but my claim to fame is that I actually used to work for the newspaper that Tony Soprano picks up at the end of his driveway in the Sopranos.

And what that boils down to, though, is that I know how to tell stories across a lot of different mediums, and I know how to tell them very well. And what I was doing when I was a photojournalist was being immersed into all of our local communities. And I know we, like, I love hearing all the big brands and the big numbers, but the local hyper, like, hyper local communities that you can insert yourself into are going to be just as important for your personal brands as the, the bigger picture.

So, yeah. Sweet. Good morning. My name is Brando Murphy. I, do a lot of different things, but mainly these days, after my journey in Hollywood, comedian, actor, I have founded a company called Bigger Than Race. Which is a community built up of people from all over the world. We get together, invest through our VC that I've also founded with the community called BTR.

So we invest in a lot of, emerging technology within the crypto and blockchain space. Over the last year, we've probably invested in about 30 projects and you know, this is what we do. We continue to invest in. The world of crypto could go on and on, but this is just an intro, but there is a lot to look forward to in this space.

I'm sure you hear all the narratives about it's fake internet money. It's a scam. Run for the hills. But if you've been paying attention, Trump just signed an executive order for crypto. You're gonna have start to see regulations, the lay, the landscape, and the layout be released this year. And, they also, him and his wife just also released a, meme coin.

Trump coin in millennia, so it's as real as it gets and we're just here to help people Try to understand the big picture and how you can really take a hold of the future because the future is now and if you're able To own a piece of that like they did in the 1900s by owning the infrastructure I think you're able to tap into something that's monumental.

That's gonna touch many different sectors globally So, yeah, I'm glad to be here. Thank you for inviting me. Of course, of course. Yeah, I definitely think that there's like a diverse group of experiences up here that I think we can all like lean on. And, of course, most important, I think, is you all, right?

I want to be able to like tap into like what your pain points are and kind of see who in the room can support you. So, just, I'm trying to figure out the best way of doing this. Like, who do we have in the

room? Like, are we entrepreneurs? Are we like actors and actresses? Like, who do we have in the room so far?

And you could just shout, like, entrepreneur. Who else do we have? I'm gonna start calling people out that I know, what's up? Can

Elaine Lou Cartas: I pass the mic? You want me to go pass the

Panel Speaker: mic? Yeah, sure, sure, that'd be, that's awesome. I know Kelly, you could, you know.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Okay, I'm gonna just go around. Name. No, no? Also, you know what, you know what?

I'm gonna respect that. I'm proud of you. I'm proud of you, Oscar. Okay. Well, I also, like, to, to what Ted was saying, like, we're all here and we could all support one another. I'm not necessarily saying, oh my god, there's a possible client, but like, who can you also refer?

Audience Speaker: Hi, everyone. my name is Oscar. This is my partner, Doug.

We're both, small business owners and actors here in L. A. Elaine is our business coach. that's why we're here. And, I'm curious and excited to be here. What's your business? we have Anito Cleaning, which is a residential cleaning business. Super dope. Yeah.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Also gonna brag about them. They just increased the revenue by 50 percent last year and projected by 30 percent They're based here in this area.

If you're looking.

Audience Speaker: I'm Doug. He said everything already

Elaine Lou Cartas: Great partner. Do you want to okay,

Audience Speaker: feel free to say no to me Yeah, I was like, please come to me. Hi everyone, I'm Chow. I spoke to Eileen before and I am a small business owner and in mental health business. Anyone here? Okay, no. I'm alone here. yeah, excited to be here.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So Chowy met on Instagram, so she's a therapist. I don't know if you know, but this year has been crazy. So if you need someone

Panel Speaker: How about back there? Like, all the way over there.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Did you want intro?

Audience Speaker: Hey everybody, Austin. Wow, I didn't, this does not feel like it's on, but I'm a, yeah, I'm a tech entrepreneur in both artificial intelligence and crypto, as well as emerging

companies and small business lawyers, so if anybody needs free legal advice, I can give that to you, because I don't practice regularly, so I like giving it for free, so.

Hi everyone, my name is Alicia, I am I guess I'm, I'm experimenting with my entrepreneurial journey, but I'm also in marketing, digital marketing and I'm also a producer. Hi everybody. My name is Bailey. I'm a small business owner and a creative. I have a vintage BMW shop where we restore vintage BMWs, sell parts and do creative community style events.

so I'm a partner in a creative space downtown in the arts district. We have a 30,000 square foot creative space and we do art creative events. Hi, everyone. My name is Tricia. I'm in account management and I'm also a wardrobe stylist. I'm here today, trying to merge into fashion tech. Hi, everyone. My name is Ana.

I am a hair and makeup artist. I'm creating a brand with products from South America, raw materials from South America, and I'm very happy to be here learning from each other. Good morning. My name is Sachin. I've been a mindset coach for 10 years. And the reason I'm here is I'm pretty convinced that the personal brand thing isn't, there's, there's a lot of stuff that I don't see being aligned with me.

And then I met Ted a few months ago and I just got the impression that I could learn a lot from him and he doesn't say much. And that kind of made me want to be here even more. I was like, damn, what does he know that I don't, and to give it some color, like what I want to get from this is most of them, 99 percent of my business is referral word of mouth.

I'm offline. I don't have a website. I don't really use Instagram except to show my mom what I'm eating, but really what I want to get from this is to see what aspects of personal branding can help me with where I'm going next. Awesome. Thank you. Hello. Hello. Hello. We're a mother and daughter. And, And my mom has been in the textile business for, I don't know, since I was born.

And she had her own factory in Estonia. So she produced fabrics. And now we're making, yeah, for brands. And now we're making a bamboo clothing line. And I'm going to school to study like marketing and business. And so we came here. To get more knowledge about everything so we have to hire less people if we get this business bigger.

No, I'm kidding. We just want to learn. I don't know what we're doing yet.

She said everything, so thank you. Hi there, I'm Amanda, I work in events, and I'm sort of in a place where I want to transition into something else, or maybe develop the events even more, but I find that I have so many interests and so many different directions that I could go that I'm I wanted to come here to figure out what direction that would be and how I use personal branding to tap into it.

Hi, I am Juliet. I own an AI startup. It's a performance coach and it's for influencers, actors, public speakers, hosts, and all of that fun stuff. So that's what I do. Hi, everyone. My name is Maria. I'm an early stage startup investor advisor. I work with founders in the tech world and also with funds on fundraising.

So if anybody's raising any money, let me know. I'd be happy to help. I'm also a founder and a soon to be mom. So I'm kind of exploring what like motherhood could look like and where it's taking me. So

that's kind of why I'm here. Kind of a rebrand new era. My name is Edward. I'm a real estate agent. I love Instagram.

So I came for Ted for that. I love connecting and a lot of times, you know, people ask me all the time. Do you know anyone doing fashion or You know cleaning business anything so consider myself a big connector in this space. I'm happy to be here to meet everyone. Awesome Hi, I'm Darian and I own a business called marijuana meditations where I promote conscious cannabis consumption And I usually host a lot of events in LA San Diego Long Beach but I also have tangible products like other smokable herbs and I'm really looking to Find new ways to expand my business and going more into the online space, hosting on like private sessions and just different platforms.

So I'm looking to network with people and make more connections to find more venues, more brands to align with and just new collaborations in general. Hi y'all, I'm Lauren. I am an actress and producer. I also recently launched my production company. We specialize in film as well as marketing and I'm starting my non profit.

So I'm really trying to figure out how to make all those things work together as well as with personal branding. I think in your entertainment, you know, personal branding is a huge part of that. So I'm just excited to collaborate and learn from all of you guys and be here. Thank you.

I was trying to skip it. Hi, everyone. My name is Blanca. I work in the tech space and sometimes the fashion space. And right now I'm really just focusing on getting back into philanthropy. So really just came here today to just figure out my whole rebrand and connect with other people in L. A. Hey, everyone.

I'm Kelly. I have a company called Ocean AI. We teach a fundamentals and workshop and trainings to small businesses and higher education. And I'm also in the a I fashion space as well. Next. Mhm. Okay, my name is Sparkle. my background. I've been in experiential events for almost 20 years. I think now I'm still probably doing marketing, but trying to figure out what the next step, but I've been doing project management for the past five years.

Hi everybody. Good morning. My name is Sarah. I'm a talent agent and excited to be here and meet everybody. personal branding. to grow and connect with clients and brands and talent and stuff like that. So excited to be here. Hi, everyone. My name is Candice. I'm currently a freelance consultant for startups specializing in supply chain and project management as well as customer experience.

Trying to kind of segue into tech, so nice to meet you all.

Panel Speaker: I mean, you guys did so well. Can you guys give yourselves a round of applause? No, seriously, why are you guys even here? Like, everyone had such great elevator pitches. I'm like, I gotta go home and work on mine. So, what I found very fascinating is like, alright, I'm getting a sense in the room there's a lot of solopreneurs, and there's also people that work for companies, but also have their own thing, and they're trying to branch out.

I think that I'm also seeing that like a lot of people are interested in understanding to hone in on their direction. And that's actually the same way that, same reason I'm here. It's easy enough for me to talk to a crowd, but like I haven't posted on LinkedIn in like five years. So I think that it's important to just like really get thought partnership to understand is this the right thing to do?

And I think sometimes just that validation helps us go forward. So just like really finding your voice, right? So, I guess we'll start off with a, like, big, for me a big question. What is personal branding? So, Elaine, or anyone can go first, but Elaine, I think that you could, yeah. I can go first. Alright, let's go.

We just got our courage here, huh? I needed a warm up. I needed a warm up. So, to me, personal branding is all the parts of yourself that you want to hide because you think you need to for your professional business. I can tell you that the moment I started I mean, I'm an oversharer to begin with, but the moment I started sharing that with my audiences and stopped trying to show parts of myself that I thought like would be the right parts to share and and embraced the parts of me that I was kind of tucking away.

I feel like I'm awkward. I'm an Enneagram nine. I like to stay in the back and anybody, any Enneagram fans in here? Okay, so the Enneagram nine is known as the adaptive peacemaker and in in search of that We like to stay behind the scenes, which is usually while you why you'll find me behind the camera but the moment I put myself in front of the camera and started showing myself was When things started shifting in my business, so whatever you think you need to hide for professional reasons I'm going to invite you to put little, little tidbits, little crumbs of it out and see how your audience reacts to it.

Yeah, I kind of agree with what you said. You know, I know it's a struggle and I know by any means necessary. I'm not an expert in personal branding, but I can say this from what I learned on my journey because I've had to rebrand myself a lot of times probably about three to four. And. It took me to find a niche and go hard in it.

And once I did, like this last rebrand, which is what I'm doing now in the world of crypto, since 2016, I had found that Putting myself out there and to actually start to educate is what started to brand me as an influence or a thought leader in the space and I started just putting out information that I thought would benefit people, you know, and, it was, I've always wanted to be somebody that could be trusted blindly in this world of mistrust in crypto.

I wanted people to be able to understand the other side of the coin, but also be able to trust me blindly so that they can actually accelerate their learning curve and avoid the pitfalls that a lot of people make. So, you know, for me, it came with me putting myself out there, putting out content that was geared toward niche and.

promotion, promotion, promotion, you know, I did lives. I don't like doing lives, but I had to do, you know, and I, and I found that doing live streaming for me, like, cause I had to cultivate, I started with the YouTube channel and that cultivated and jumped into a Patreon community. And you know, we have a lot of things behind the scenes with the community, but I just found that promoting and, you know, doing live content, telling people where you are, the right people will gravitate towards you.

You know, you just have to be confident enough in yourself to put yourself out there. Like she just said, you know, the things you're hiding, you know, that's most of the times the stuff that you should be highlighting. You may feel insecure. You may feel like your face is crooked when the camera hits a certain angle, but that's your cricket face.

You got to own it. You know, So, personally for me, personal branding is putting yourself out there in your, your area of expertise. And I'm sure you can touch into, you know, other people who are

experts in that field to go more in depth, but put your crooked face out there. No, no, you go first. I think your thought, your

Elaine Lou Cartas: direction.

So yes to what everyone's mentioned, and I know it's personal, like, okay, I need to figure out who I am, but I also want to remind everyone that we learn about each other when we connect in community. And I'm not saying like, whatever someone tells me, I'm going to be exactly what they say, but coming from a place of curiosity.

So this is my second business, right? I was a fundraiser before, and then when I once changed, I became an executive career coach. When I worked in the nonprofit sector, and when I worked in campaigns, and we wanted to do donations, we put a list, we rolodex. If you, if you remember what rolodexing is, it's like the contacts in that big circle, do you know what I'm talking about?

If you don't know what it is, it's basically your iPhone now, or your Instagram, or your TikTok. But, I would work with board members, and we would look through contacts, like A through Z. When I started my business, I went A through Z, and I looked for two groups of people. One, who were people that always came to me for advice.

Or two, who probably meets my ideal client, but not that I'm going to sell to them, but come from a place of curiosity. And that's the key word. How can you come from a place of curiosity? So for the person that has. The event company business and you want to transition like I would say put a list of people that you love connecting with they come to you for advice and be like, hey, I'm really curious like you always come to me for this How would you describe me?

What are my strengths and even as I grow and scale my business? I have my own podcast like I've actually connected with a couple of my clients like, Hey, I want to do like five minute segments. I notice all of you always come to me for the exact way I script words. Like, what do you think if I do a five minute segment or less and do that?

Like, yeah, actually, that would be great. Because I think so often we think we need to be perfect. But the reality is, is that we could test it with people and ask them, Hey, what are your thoughts if I do a live? What are your thoughts if I show more of this on my photos or videos? So instead of like, I need to figure this out, ask them before you even do it.

So don't be scared and we learn through community because those people that have been there since day one They may be potential clients or referrals or just constantly praising you.

Panel Speaker: Yeah, I think that's great I think the what hits home for me is like the community aspect again megaphone and just talking at people with like what I'm doing or like Progress reports.

But I think when I show up in person, I could ask people for one on one feedback. I think Probably the only challenge that I've had with that is sometimes you could ask the wrong person and some of the feedback that you're getting may not be that valid. So I think that creating like community formats kind of can support how you do personal branding and I think just to like go on what is personal branding to me.

So I think that when we think about branding versus like let's say marketing. I think branding is like this big picture of, like, who you are. It's not meant to, like, sell people on, like, your exact services. It's more about, like, holistically telling them who you are. Whereas, like, marketing would be, like, you're actually trying to get someone to, to, to, or you're trying to close a sale.

And I, I think personal branding speaks larger about, like, who you are as a person versus, like, what you actually do. So, I think that, like, one of my biggest questions, and I think, Bernadette, maybe you could help answer this, is, like, when you think about translating that into, like, content, what's a strategy, because, I mean, I'm like a one per, one post per quarter person, like, what, like, what's your strategy for actually communicating that through, like, especially because, I mean, I'm still in I At the point where I only use Instagram a lot.

So how do we translate that into photography or like in content? First of all, I'd like to tell you that you're doing better than I am because the last post I made was like half a year ago and that's from somebody who Provides assets for business owners entrepreneurs and nonprofits to market with but that's a really great question And I would also just want to say I want to Put this, together, photo and video, and I'm going to say video because I think that you can Get your personal brand across a lot more with video now.

I mean not now It was always the case and now we're just starting to do it because you you can put your voice to your video You can talk about what you're you know, you're observing what you are Experiencing that invites your audience to know who you are as a person And I want to also just kind of make sure that You guys know, you don't have to be like super obvious about it.

You don't have to be like, I stand for this and this is where I'm planting my flag. You can talk about it in more indirect ways of like, hey, this is what I was observing today in this environment that I was in and this is how it made me feel and you are going to attract all the people that feel the same way.

As far as photos, I like to say that I am a storytelling photographer so there's always going to be elements that I'm looking for when I am telling somebody's personal brand. That's the location that I'm taking the photos. That's what somebody is wearing. You know, your, your clothes are a reflection of you and, and the statements that you want to make.

Today, I am making the statement that I want to be a zookeeper, I guess. But, no, I'm really, I wanted to be bold. That was the statement that I was going with today. And, and the poses that I use for my clients. You know, if my clients are going to be sitting like this. This in their photos, and that's not going to be probably the personal brand that they want to be putting forward for their audience to see.

I want to pose them in a way that they feel empowered, that they feel confident and, and that invites people in, at the same time. Dope. Dope. Quick question. has anyone hired a photographer to like create content for their socials? I I'm trying to like get a good experience and like a not so great experience.

Who wants to share?

Audience Speaker: Hello, everybody. My name is Tim. So for personal branding. Okay, so I'm a DJ music producer. I hired Rachel for my, yeah, so this is, well, well, let's see. I don't know. it's, it was a

great experience. She, well, so I have no like photography, modeling experience, none of that stuff. So when I get in there, I'm like, what do I do with my hands?

How do I stand? How do I do my face? And she was pretty good about basically helping me pick out clothes for the shoot. What message am I trying to convey to my audience? Like, what kind of gigs am I trying to book? Who is my target audience? All of these things. What kind of colors do I want to wear? So, she helped me with all those things.

And then, she also brought up the idea of putting it into an EPK. So, this EPK I'm using to send out to like booking agents, managers, anybody that is basically helping me get gigs. So she helped me with that process, my look, all that stuff. So I had a pretty good experience and I'm also repurposing that for my content.

So I have a ton of photos that I'm using for like my socials, for like any kind of flyers, anything like that. And the cool thing about it, actually, we were just talking about it on the way here is that. Those photos are actually timeless, right? As long as I don't like cut my hair off or go bald or something like that or change my look.

I can use those photos in like one year, two years. I'm still using photos from like two years ago. So this is stuff that helps establish my brand and kind of just give that like that polished look so that when I'm submitting my photos for potential events, they're looking at me and saying like, oh wow, like It looks like he has this stuff together.

Okay, so we should see more what he's about and we feel comfortable putting his his photos on, you know, on a flyer or whatever to represent our brand because it looks like it's together. So it's a lot of it is perception. a lot of it is like marketing and It's also how I set myself apart from a lot of other people that are doing the same thing, is by my photography.

So, bad things, I can't really think of them yet, because she's sitting right here. But, no. No bad things. Yeah. And you said you're a DJ and producer.

Panel Speaker: Yeah, producer. Super dope, super dope. Does anyone have an experience they want to share that wasn't amazing? Oh, alright, cool. Experience

Audience Speaker: is, you want to be kind of clear with the photographer beforehand.

Letting them know that you want your raw photos. Because sometimes the photographer might pick his own photo or the photographer pick their own photos for you, and you want to see all of them. And also you wanna be clear with the photographers, hey, when it, when they come out, sometimes the photographer might post on Instagram doing previews before, and, you know, so just have more clear, clear communication with your photographer and like get exactly what you need.

Hi, everyone. My name is Amber Ashley. I'm a fashion consultant. So I support startup apparel brands launch their line. But in regards to our photographer, I've worked with various, I think one of the bad experiences I've had is not connecting with them, them not really understanding your brand resonance and what you stand for.

So I've had someone shoot me and I'm like, He doesn't know how to tell me how to pose, just the way that he did the lighting. So, when I got my pictures, and I spent a pretty penny, and I wasn't happy with it. So, I think when you invest into a photographer, it's important to know, like, do they understand your brand?

Do they really understand what you're trying to put out there? Because you don't want to be upset and see your photos, and like, this did not work. So, my next photographer that I worked with, we met before. It was important for, for me to like say this is what's important to my brand, this is what I want it to look like, and we did test shoots, and I ended up loving it, and so back to your comment about being able to have it timeless and use it again, I mean these are photos that I could use again and again, and I feel good about it, so it's important to pick a photographer that really understands your brand.

Panel Speaker: I do have a response to that. Let's go. Something that I think everybody here who is going to be using photos for marketing should keep in the back of their mind is that if you are going to be using these assets to market your business with, you need to hire a personal brand or a branding photographer because they are going to take the time to strategize with you about where your photos are going, what you're going to be wearing, what messages you want to convey.

If you're going out there and hiring a personal brand. A photographer who, you know, says that they do everything, then they don't know what they need to capture for personal branding, most of the time. A headshot photographer, same thing. They might take beautiful portraits that you can use on one place on your website, but those photos aren't going to be telling the stories that you need to be telling when you are marketing and using them to on like social media awesome So Rachel, I might want to if you don't mind chime in on like your process Just to like enlighten everyone because I feel like Tim got like a really good experience.

So maybe that might be good education for everyone else. But before that, I think that the content or the photos are caught before the horse. Maybe Elaine, you could talk about like from a business coaching perspective, like, I mean, in some cases you don't need like certain types of photos or consistency of photos.

Can you talk about like, when do you need content or like what to get clear on before? Before you even go seek out a photographer and then like the, I mean, I don't know if this is a good, if this is helpful for folks, but like, I like to know, like, how many times should I be shooting content? How much should I be paying for shooting content?

Like at what levels should I be at, you know? So if you guys have any questions on that to chime in, but let's let Elaine talk about what you need and why you need it.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So we go just way back to basics. What's your goal? So, for example, are there any speakers here? Like, you want to get paid for speaking?

Anyone? Paid for your thought leadership? You can say no, like, you don't need to raise your hand. So, for me, like, I get paid for speaking, so I go to conferences. I was just in Chicago speaking to Fortune 500 executives. They had their own photographer. They had their own videographer. The event planner I was talking to was like, Hey, we have a photographer videographer for you to use.

And I'm like, I want to hire my own. And here's the reason why. They have their own goals. Right? They want to show a lot of people. The focus is not on me. So I hired my own. I spent 1,500 for the one hour for shooting, but I gave my shot list. My goal is, I want more corporations and businesses to hire me to speak.

So, in my website, I was like, I want more horizontal, so I'm very specific. So I don't use Instagram a lot. I use more so LinkedIn and my website. My website has a lot of videos in it, a lot of small segments. I talked about community before and feedback. The feedback I get when people hire me is, I love that you don't show you, just you.

Like it's not all about you. You show yourself with community and diversity. That's the feedback I'm getting when people are paying me. I want more money. I don't know about all of you, but I want more money. So if that's the feedback I'm getting, then I'm going to do those shots with, with people when I'm speaking.

So even when I'm speaking. I'm like, Hey, I don't want the focus on my face. I want you to show me with this panel. I want you to show me talking to the audience as well. So I give the shot list also a little tip. If like you're on a budget, like I got a lot of compliments on my outfit. This is from Etsy.

It's black owned designer Nemo fashion, but I got a tailored suit. For 120 from someone from Etsy, and I wanted it red and bold. So if you're like, like you need to think about that too, because if I want more corporate, then fine, I'll get a suit. I knew I was going to Soho work, so I'm going to wear this cute outfit that's been in my closet for three months.

So even thinking about the audience, thinking about what you want, so you could get more of that money and ideal clients.

Panel Speaker: So can you talk us through like if someone comes to you and say like, Hey, I'm trying to grow my business, I want to show it better online to get more leads. Like, where do you start with them?

Who's

Elaine Lou Cartas: your So first, who is your ideal client? So if you're working with more creatives, then obviously, it's going to be Instagram, it's going to be vertical, you're probably going to be doing more lives. If it's more corporations and businesses, then maybe it's more. So it's horizontal and showing pictures of you connecting.

So it just goes back. Who's your ideal client? What are they looking for? So that's where I would start.

Panel Speaker: Gotcha. Yeah. So like on my journey, I pretty much, and I'm like low key, like an overthinker, so I basically came up with like this, like 10 page about me. And then, I mean, it could have been a lot smaller, but I also created a brand guide and my goal is to utilize a brand guide as a way of making sure that my communication is always streamlined.

Juliette, you might be able to chime in on this part. So one of the reasons I did the extended about me and the brand guide is because I want to, or I started playing around with uploading that to chat GPT to create a, is it, not an AI agent, but a chat. Yeah, there you go. That one. do you, do you mind

talking a little bit about that, about how to use the tool and how it could be applicable before you actually hire a service provider?

Audience Speaker: Oh, yeah. any service provider? Well, I think, like if you're

Yeah, of course. I think that You can always endow a chatbot with, a particular, characteristics. So you can say, you know, I am looking for a photographer, or I'm looking for a coach, or I'm looking for a branding consultant. And you can say, you know, I would like for you to play the role of this branding consultant and ask it questions and see what answers it gives back.

And you can essentially interview the AI. And you can also do it reverse. And I would say that, you know, you can find a way to figure out how to phrase your questioning better, so then you can get the information that you're looking for. You can figure out, you know, maybe I'm just getting surface level information and this is not enough for me to figure out if this is the person that I'd like to hire.

And I would also say that You can use it for yourself because depending upon how much you use the chat bot, it actually is learning about you every second that you use it. So even if you're asking it, like, what does a 5 million valuation cap mean? Or how do I gain more followers on Instagram? Or, you know, what time is TikTok closing?

Like it, it's all learning something about you. And so then you can actually ask chat GBT or whatever other open resource that you're using. What do you know about me? If, if you would suggest that I'm creating a personal brand on Instagram and that I'd like to do more content creation based off of what I've been speaking to you about, what type of content do you see me making?

Where do you think I should be posting this content? Because there's a lot of other platforms other than Instagram and TikTok and YouTube, if you're interested in making a digital product. There's lots of places like Etsy, like dollar books on Amazon that a lot of people don't generally go and look at.

And so I would say, you know, these things not only learn about you, but then you can endow it so then you can learn about yourself and your process and what you're interested in exploring further. And so it's a free tool, you know, ChatGBT is free, DeepSeek is free. Use it, run it up, and then even then it's only 20 a month.

So yeah, that's what I would say.

Panel Speaker: Thank you so much. How is everyone? Or how many people are using a I in this room? Okay, let's go. So who's not just kidding? Kelly? I know you just did a panel discussion on this. Like, would you mind chiming in and letting us like talking through like how to leverage a I for a personal brand?

Audience Speaker: So I did a panel discussion during La Tech week last year with Forbes BLK, and it was on Brandon AI. And so how I pretty much talked to the audience was about three different categories of AI. So if you're using it, the different categories that we talked about were models, if you're using it for text to image, or even for video.

I know you mentioned how video is something that's super important now, especially when we think about branding. And so, when you're creating, like, AI images, for instance, of course there's, like, IP

concerns, or intellectual property, or even other types of concerns that you might think about. But if you're using your own images, or creating your own images, you can now actually use it to create videos.

In addition to that image. So if you're like, Hey, I want to create something for my fashion or clothing line, and you create those clothing, clothing pieces with yourself, or even with models that you like makeup, you can create videos and you can share that with like. On any social that you have social channels, so whether it's I.

G. Tick tock or, you know, Facebook, you can do that, but some other things that we definitely talked about and we deep dived on was not only just like images and video, but also, like, how do you create or use prompt engineering correctly? So we did everything from best, better and good prompts, you know, like the more I know we all heard of this garbage in.

It's like garbage out. So when you think about your prompts, you can talk through everything from a way to really understand like How are you creating your prompts? And so we have like this framework if you will whether you want as you mentioned to have a Subject matter expert. So if you're looking for feedback when you're thinking about your own personal brand, you can literally upload if you have a branding guide or if you have your LinkedIn or if you have any type of Presence online, and you can have AI do a online analysis on you, and then you can ask it like, Hey, if you are looking to become a model and you're thinking about the top model agencies, what would they say about my analysis?

Or what would they say about my online presence? If you have your own business, you can upload it and either it's chat, GPTI like Claude three personally, but you can use any type of AI tool to get that analysis. And then for your brand, you can ask it to actually create. It's own brand language or your own brand persona.

So if you want to be personal or professional, if you want to be persuasive, you can have that, incorporated into it.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Ted, can I call on Chanel on this too? Can I call on Chanel? Oh yeah, let's go. So, Kelly and I did Chanel's program through L. A. Chamber of Commerce. Like, I'm lucky enough to call Chanel my mentor, but she's a big deal. She's used AI to help get, like, federal, state, local, million dollar projects for her clients.

And she's taught both me and Kelly how to use AI, the free version, on how to get these contracts. By the way, the LA Chamber of Commerce program that both me and Kelly did is free, so just, like, go to Chanel. Sorry, I'm just, like, promoting you up, girl.

Audience Speaker: Oh, by the way, some programs are paused, but check, yeah, she's right.

Check out government programs for small businesses, entrepreneurs. I know the state, the county, and the city have them, and we help you to expand your business, to get government contracts, to learn about how to partner, so, and I help companies to use AI products to make it a more efficient process, and also cost effective because anything you will call and ask me that I have to charge you like hundreds of dollars an hour for, you can ask AI, so, or you can use responses that I give you and ask them to expand upon it.

And as Kelly mentioned, you can upload your website, your pitch deck, you can even do competitive analysis and say like, this company does this and I want to look more like this company, but I'm, for example, I'm a black owned business and I want it to be culturally competent and aware, but this same branding, and then you can exit to build out a 20 page pitch deck.

And tell it what to say, or things you want to exclude. So you can really use AI to pretty much build your business, your budget, your projection. You can say, I'd like to make five million dollars within five years in this space. Please provide a strategy. Like, what partners should I reach out to? So. It's also check the sources, what I do with any AI tool, I say provide source, source links so that if I have to like reference something for a customer, I can still have the facts because one thing that AI will do some tools that are not as, I also worked in Silicon Valley, so I know that they're still working on the tools as a work in progress.

Some of the AI tools, they will make up things like They'll get, they will get you an answer. It doesn't mean that it came from a true source. So, so just make sure that you're, you know, that you're doing your research. But also, when you have questions, Juliet, mentioned that if you can, if you have a question about certain things and maybe you don't know which question to form, you can actually ask AI.

What other questions should I ask, you know, so that I can get a better outcome? So it's all about prompting. The more you tell it about yourself, you put your resume in there, your brand deck, your website. This is, say, give me feedback about how I can improve and compete against Nike in the same space as a small business.

Like, what do I need to do? So.

Panel Speaker: A quick question for you. I mean, this is a little bit of a, a diversion, but I mean, just because Elaine mentioned the grants. So, now that we're building our personal brand and we have all this content about ourselves, which government grants or where can we find government grants to support our different types of businesses, whether it's strategy, cleaning company, fashion, like what are the, what's the government supporting and how do we get access to some of that funding?

Audience Speaker: So, for grants, I would actually recommend that you Go to your state and local municipalities that have been funded by grants or large non profits so that they can make you a contract. Because if you go directly to the government for a grant and you're a small business to do strategy, there are some grants there, but for the most part, those are contracts.

But they do make grants to, for example, the City of Los Angeles, to Salvation Army, Red Cross. Any of your community organizations, women's business centers, they make grants to other entities so that they can do business with you. So you can go to a recreation center that's been funded by government grants or contracts and you can get a consultant subcontract to do work under a government contract.

You don't have to go directly to the government. So you just have to find out who's willing to do business with you. But, the key thing is to find out what tier of funding that you qualify for. Because many companies go directly to the federal government when they first start out and they're likely not going to fund a brand new company like 5 million when they can fund 50 million to a larger entity and then they'll flow the money to you and do business with you.

So it's just about strategic posturing and you can use AI for that. So you can say, I'm a small business. I provide strategy and brand consulting services. Entities have been funded within Los Angeles County and this zip code, who should I pursue or what portal can I go and find these contracts and grants?

And then once you do that, you can say to check GPT or whatever chatbot you're working with or AI2, develop a template for me to reach out to this entity to let them know I'm available for work. What should I say? And then drop your website and your deck so that, you know, it can adjust and you can even go to that.

You can go to a company's website and put it in there and say, like, based on this company's profile, how should I reach out to them? And what other, like, programs or services, you know, we had, do we have that may, you know, mesh, you know, is there any other opportunities there? Because sometimes you can reach out to an entity about one thing, and if you don't mention all your services, they don't know, and they may have another opportunity for you.

So these are things that I would use. You know, the advanced technology for

Panel Speaker: awesome. Awesome. Yeah, I guess I'll just piggyback on that a little bit too. Cause the same as like applying for grants are also applying for, or like submitting for RFPs, like some big corporate, like a lot of big corporations go through an RFP process.

And if you do have all your personal branding, all your company branding stuff in order, it makes it easy enough to submit to them, Brando. Yeah, let me just say this real quick, you know, with all of the AI agents and the AI, you know. Essentially, you know, it's, it's actually put here for, and you guys all say great things, so I want to actually talk to a couple of you guys afterwards.

But, you know, we're supposed to work with the AI. I use a tool called Otter. I don't know, some of you might have heard it. Otter is my friend, okay? She or he does everything I ask it to. I'm not really responding to, I don't write my own text mail. I tell, I write what I want. And I'll tell Otter, make this better for me.

And she or he will go and do that and, present it. So, but what's getting ready to happen too. I personally, from the perspective, I like to figure out how I can own a piece of this future, how I can own the AI, the agents that are now coming to market. And, you know, I think what we're going to start to see is a way for you to extend your personal brand by you having a digital twin, a digital agent yourself.

So then you could utilize the digital representative of you to do what you normally would do, you know, and we'll start to see that come to life. There's many platforms that are being launched and you can actually get your hands involved in right now. But you know, I think. Honestly, AI is a, is a great resource to help you with your branding.

I mean, because some of us are not clear at putting out the right messages. Like they said, you could write a whole, a business, a business plan. By just talking to otter walking, you know, do it all that you need. So I personally believe that, the AI is only going to be here to enhance what we're going to be doing.

And, I would start to definitely investigate truth on your own terms in that regard, because it's here. Super dope. Super dope. So, yeah, the reason, one of the reasons I brought up AI to begin with was that in my journey with like building my personal brand, like. I guess let's put it this way. My personal brand isn't directly connected to like ROI for me.

Right, like it's not revenue generating. So it's like a nice to have and I think that it's going to play like a long term is going to have a long term effect on my revenue, but it doesn't have a direct impact on my revenue. So, I do want to go back to Rachel and just talk about her journey and understand like, what should you be spending and how should you interact with someone when you're like trying to onboard them or get advice.

I think one of the things that the takeaways that I would like from here is I think there's like a super dope group of people here and I think there's something to be said about having like a community that you can use as thought partners to understand how to build your personal brand. I think all of us could be on different levels.

Like some of us are on like a Fiverr level, you know, some of us are an Upwork level and some of us want custom solutions to like our problems. Rachel, would you mind talking about the journey a little bit or am I putting you on the spot? You know, dang, it's like, yeah, no, yeah, I'll put it this way when I like, when I took, when I hit up companies for like one on one stuff, like I want consultation or something, like I get really embarrassed because I think like, Oh man, is my budget too long?

They're gonna think I'm cheap. Like, so I like to understand ahead of time what it's going to take to accomplish something so that I'm not embarrassed on the call, you know?

Audience Speaker: Well, we're a couple, so he gets free photography, so it works like that. However, I mean, if I'm working with someone who's actually going to pay me, you know, it's really important for someone to actually know who they are.

That's rule number one. You have to know who you are, what you want, where you want to use all this stuff. So if you come to me and you're like, I need pictures. Cool. What do you need them, like the whole process with them? What do you need them for? Where are you trying to put them? What is the, what is your goal, you know?

And so by having a brand guide, that's like, I mean Bernadette can speak to that because she does branding all the time, but that's like the holy grail because if you know who you are, then it's so much easier for us to get creative. And if, if you're still trying to figure it out, I would say start with that first before you start to hire a photographer.

Because if you don't know who you are, your pictures are gonna come back and you might not love them like that. Is it Ashley? Oh, yeah. Sorry, Ashley. Yeah, that's okay. They're gonna come back like that. And so I think the other important thing is have a meeting. Like, that is so good. You have to connect with someone because A lot of photographers are a little introverted and that might not vibe well with you.

You might need someone that's a little more outgoing that can tell you what to do. Some people are used to just working with models and models know exactly what to do. So like Tim, he's like. All right,

what do I do? You know, you're just standing there. So you have to have some prep work. And in doing so, putting together like a treatment for someone is really important.

Where are you using this? What are your brand colors? Are they going on your website? Do you need horizontal, like Elaine said? Do you need more vertical? Are you doing cover images? So what, what is the information? Where is the information going? So starting with that, so that's your outfit, working together with that.

Also, just figuring out where the pictures are going and what layout you need them to be. And that's pretty much, you know, the start of it, I would say.

Panel Speaker: So when I said engage, like, that triggered her, right? Oh yeah, let's go.

Audience Speaker: Sorry, I never do this, but I'm trying to be Relax, get a little nervous. So I'm a hair and makeup artist, and I work behind the scenes with the help of photographers.

Can you put the mic closer to your mouth? okay, that's better. So it's also very important to know to have a person who is who is someone who is going to be able to show the best side of you. And I feel when we're talking about AI and the things people is doing. to their faces or altering the way they look is not a good look right now.

People is trying to find the reality of our faces and we need to be able to express that. And as I get back to what you just said about what are the photos for? For example, I'm a hair and makeup artist and when I use the photos to attract clients I need to look like I'm approachable. I'm smiling.

I'm happy. So I want people to come to me and feel comfortable. But when I'm trying to promote my brand or my business, I need to be a little more creative. I can be more visual and it can be more aggressive with my brand. And when I'm trying to look for investors, I need to look more serious. I cannot be as, smiley or like So it depends what people want to do with With their branding, it can have different layers of depending of what do you, what, what channel, what, what are you trying to attract and it's important, I feel, to, I think someone says, to just know who you really are and just be careful not to alter yourself too much, especially when you're like using filters or maybe if you hire a makeup artist that is like, No understanding the way you look and is doing something that is make you look like different and maybe you're not happy.

So it's trying to find a way to communicate that with the person when you're creating something.

Panel Speaker: Yeah, I think that's, that's super dope because those are like a couple of really important things like staying true to yourself, understanding your buyer persona. I think those are, like, key topics. Dang, you know, passing the mic around, there's, like, so many amazing people here with such diverse skill sets.

And, and I think when Elaine and I were talking about putting this together, we were like, I said, you can't, you can't see the frame while you're in it, from Les Brown, and she was like, every doctor needs a doctor. I think that, like, We're going to spend, I mean, you can stay here for I don't know how long. I was going to introduce Kat next, but you guys should connect with each other.

I feel like there's so many people here that could support each other. But Kat, would you mind talking about Soho Works and telling them about the space that we're in? Welcome in, everyone. So, for those, how many people have been here before to Soho Works? Great, and a lot of new faces. Well, welcome, and I hope you all feel at home.

So, Soho Works is essentially a global network of co working spaces. We have three locations in New York, and four in the UK, and we are the only West Coast location. So, we're essentially the workspace of Soho House. The goal is really to bring creatives and businesses together to ideate. So welcome to the space.

You're more than welcome to stay the entire day. We have coffee, tea, and espresso available. I think some of you saw the bagels and breakfast. So help yourself after this. And yeah, also don't forget to validate your parking outside here. It's 11. So be sure to validate your ticket upon exiting. But if you have any questions and would like to learn more about membership.

I'm right here and I'm sure Ted can pass my contact along to you as well. Welcome in everyone.

I'll let Elaine close and then I think we could just mix and mingle.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Okay I got, because I'm a coach, so I got a present, well it's not my present, it's Bernadette's present, so I got a present for you and I got homework for you, okay? So let's start with the present. Present is Bernadette is gonna be taking headshot pictures.

So I know all of you are not wearing pjs today. Congratulations. So if you would like a headshot, Bernadette's here. So just go up to her. Yeah, just come grab me.

Panel Speaker: Cool, and you could correct, because we talked about a couple things. First, we were like headshots, but then we were like conversational talks, so whatever she's comfortable with, and people

Elaine Lou Cartas: are comfortable with.

You know, practice what we just said. Tell her what your goal is, who your ideal client is, and then she'll help you. You'll get a little taste, and then you hire her later on. Second, here is my homework assignment for you, is you got to hear everyone's intro, and come from a place of being unattached to the results.

Okay? Cause I know we live in a very transactional world, but connected with one or two people, whether it's like, you know what, I could probably refer this someone or do their outfit. I don't know. There's something about their energy. Just connect with one or two people. You're going to have

Panel Speaker: a swarm around you with that outfit,

Elaine Lou Cartas: but be unattached to the result of it.

So there you go. You're present with Bernadette.

Panel Speaker: If you guys are interested in being part of a WhatsApp group where we like, share resources, people like, tell people about what's like, they got going on or if they need a service or have a service, you can join by just going to SohoCollab. com and filling out the information, it'll lead you to a WhatsApp group.

But otherwise, thank you so much for coming. Round of applause. And connect with each other.

Bye.

Elaine Lou Cartas: Even though you are listening to the replay and you weren't at the talk, what was valuable was that homework I shared just right now to connect with one to two people sometime this week, and as I shared, here's the hard part, be unattached. To the result, I just want to remind you, do you ask for marriage on the first date of that's what I thought, even for me in my business or even my personal life, there are questions I ask myself every day, and one of them is how many intentional conversations am I having today?

That's what I ask. I mean, it's not coming from a place of transactional, but like I had a conversation with my Muay Thai coach and I thanked him how he's been giving me feedback on the basics. And that's been really helpful for me in my own business because I asked myself, okay, do I have my basics down?

Am I looking at my numbers of what recurring consistent clients are coming in, the marketing channels that work, all of that. And I know you heard from my fellow amazing speakers. And if you are interested in connecting with Ted Bernadette or Brando, I've shared all their information in my show notes. So just click on that in whatever streaming platform you're listening to.

And if you enjoy this podcast episode on personal branding, here's three things you can do. Number one, share this with a friend or two that can benefit on the golden nuggets of personal branding thrown in here. Second, would love it if you could leave a five star rating and review so other leaders like you can find this podcast.

It's a free resource. I did. I created this podcast intentionally as an accessible resource for other leaders. And third, if you want to work with me as your business and executive career coach to help you create a sustainable, And to find your own version of success and you want to see if it's a good fit to work together, then schedule an introductory business and career review call at elainelou.

com forward slash call. That's E L A I N E L O U dot com forward slash call. And you'll receive three action items towards your goals.