

## S2: E149: Are You Building a Brand... or Just a Business?

All right, welcome back everyone. I'm so excited to introduce you to our incredible guest today, Bernadette Joy. This is part of my series where I've been interviewing powerful women business owners who have powerful brands to inspire you on your own journey.

Bernadette is the author and founder of Crush Your Money Goals. She personally paid off \$300,000 of debt in three years and invested enough to retire by 40. She speaks globally such as TEDx, South by Southwest, and NASDAQ, and she's featured on Forbes and has amassed over 900,000 views, providing actionable advice on achieving financial freedom.

So welcome to the show, Bernadette. Hello, thanks for having me. Absolutely.

I'm so excited to dive in. You know, we met at PodFest and just a few months ago, and immediately you were like, I was like latched onto your powerful story and your offers, hearing you speak. And then I just knew that I wanted to interview you for my ladies, mostly ladies.

I have men that I work with as well, and then vice versa. We just did a podcast for your audience. So it's so much synergy.

And so before we really hop into your story and how people can pay off their debt and all things money, you have a powerful background and a story of being a first generation immigrant. And I'd love people to understand, I said that a little bit in your introduction of where you came from to where you are now, because it's so powerful. And I feel like when people hear that, no matter where they're at in their journey, they'll have a sense of like, okay, this is possible, right? So this seems slightly off topic, but I just came back from the Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona, and I spent a good amount of time staring at the elephants.

And I learned that that elephants are very matriarchal by nature. So the grandmother, the mom, the granddaughter, the sisters and the aunts, they all stay together and the men go off on their own. Yeah.

It's super fascinating. Also, if you've never seen a baby elephant in person, it will change your life. So I say that in the sense of there's this weird thought that came up to me this past week, which was as a baby elephant, I did not have a great relationship with my mom, and I'd never met my grandmother.

And I thought to myself this past week, what would my life be different? How would my life different if I had those two things? And so I share that with you as like kind of the basis of a story of the sense of like my family immigrated from the Philippines. I was born here in the US. My husband was born in the Philippines.

But that immigrant story very much plays into my brand, into my business, into how I conduct myself in the world, because a lot of the advice that I saw in personal finance, like just did not resonate with me. It

just wasn't my story. And so when I were watching this adorable baby elephant who weighs 1,000 pounds running around, I was like, wow, that baby elephant looks so free.

But it also knows that there's a mom and a grandma and other elephants to protect them. And so a lot of the people that I work with, and this goes into more of what we'll talk about, a lot of the people that I work with are people who felt like they were never taught money for whatever reason that might be, because those people just weren't present in their lives. It could be that they were present, but they were working all the time.

Like with me, like my parent, like I was a latchkey kid growing up. And so even though we weren't taught money, we've observed and we've still learned things about money, whether or not those are things that serve us are another story. And so for me, I got a really amazing testimonial today in my Instagram, another person I haven't met before.

And she just said, I want to let you know, I read the book. I'm reading it right now. I'm halfway done.

And I've read so many other personal finance books, but this is the first book that actually feels like it's talking to me. And that's all that I really want for people. And I'm sure you feel the same way about branding is like brand, the point of having a brand is so that you can actually have real conversations with people and meet them where they are.

A hundred percent. I love that. And I say that all the time about meeting people where they're at, you know, because everybody's coming from different contexts.

So that's huge. Yeah, that's really beautiful. And thank you for sharing that story.

You know, I also was a latchkey kid. And so again, if you're listening, no matter what place you come from, I love that you said we just weren't taught. A lot of us were not taught about money.

And I think there's so much shame sometimes around money or like different things that come up in money stories that again, subconscious and unconscious, sometimes we don't even know that they're there. So I love that you, that's one of the big things that you address is like, it's not, it's not anybody's fault. You know, you just weren't taught it.

So you mentioned the book, let's talk about that. And everybody, Bernadette's book is called the crusher of money goals. As I mentioned earlier, it was featured on Oprah daily as one of the top 10 books for personal growth in 2025.

So congratulations on that. That's so epic. Thank you.

Can you tell us just a little bit more about, you know, high level what the book is about, who it's for? And, and maybe, you know, just a few tips out of it that would serve the audience today. Yeah. So just to give

like a more specific background of me and then therefore who it's for is I so my husband and I, like you said, we paid off \$300,000 of debt.

We're currently at a net worth of \$1.97 million with zero debt. And I just turned 40 a couple of weeks ago. And so thank you.

I know I, you know what, something magically shifted in me when we, when I turned 40, like all the stuff that worried me, I'm just like, for some reason, I just don't care anymore. It's just like, I've been the last 40. It keeps happening.

It's awesome. I love it. Right.

So the book is really for someone specifically who is worried about money and wants a plan and maybe even had a plan, but isn't sure if it's the right plan or how to tweak it from there. And so in the beginning, if you don't mind on page 10 of the book, this is who these are some examples of people that are case studies in the book. So some people who I've walked through are getting ready to divorce or recovering from a traumatic relationship, empty nesting and getting ready for retirement, deciding whether to go for a promotion or change jobs, taking a leap into entrepreneurship, making the choice to have kids or not and how to prepare for them saving up for college or other educational investments, deciding what to do after a medical emergency or after a loved one has passed away, maybe looking to pay off soul crushing debt, like student loans, credit cards or personal loans, maybe get getting laid off from a job or recently are worried about what their life will look like if their job goes away tomorrow.

And a lot of folks that I've worked with have been designated as a primary caregiver, whether it's for a elderly parent or for a child. And a lot of folks right now, specifically in 2025 have been asking me a lot of questions about whether or not it's time to buy or sell a home or to make a major upgrade. And generally speaking, almost everyone I've talked to is finally at the point that they're realizing that they have been working their butts off for years and years, maybe even decades, and it's time for them to take a break.

And so I share that in the sense of like the commonality between all of those, those examples, it's like, life is lifing. And so if you are someone who feels like, oh, this plan would work if all these things weren't happening, then that's not a good plan. Because unless you're going to just drop dead tomorrow and say, well, I'm not going to let life life anymore, then chances are, there are going to be more things that come up.

And so what you need is a plan that is going to work when those really tough times happen. And that's who the book is for is something probably is coming up for you right now that's really difficult for you to navigate. And finances is a big piece of it.

And you're trying to figure out how to navigate this particular situation in a way that's not going to sacrifice your mental health and still help you grow towards your financial goals. Yeah, love that. And I

love that you gave examples of all of the different areas, because I'm sure some people listening, you know, they may be like 60 and wondering, like, well, these women are in their 40s, like, it's too late.

I'm sure you would agree, it's never too late. And also just, you know, there's varying people, as far as newer entrepreneurs that listen to the show that are just starting out that maybe they're like, well, actually, let's start there. So, you know, we talked when I was on your podcast earlier, you know, especially when the economy is kind of down and things, people are more mindful with their money.

And I talked about playing the long game. And if you want to stay in business, you absolutely can and should. And there's a lot of resources out there and ways to keep going.

And I think there's going to be quiet millionaires born during this time. But the question that I have for you would be, you know, like, how would somebody decide if they're paying off debt, what investments to make? Because there are still investments that we need to make for our business, right? Like, I believe, of course, I'm partial, but you need a good brand, you need certain things. But there's so many shiny objects for entrepreneurs, right? There's so many good marketing messages, flooding our email inboxes, promising that it's going to solve all the problems.

And so what would you tell somebody? I mean, and this really goes, especially for newer entrepreneurs, because I feel like they're the ones who tend to chase the shiny objects more. And then you hit a point, you're like, I don't need this stuff. But um, so let's talk about them first.

And then we can go on to the people who like, are more established. Yeah, yeah. So I will tell you, based off of what's happening with me right now, as we speak, I heard a really great quote this past weekend from Pat Flynn, who's like, really popular, right? He said that information, you need to as a business owner, you need to focus on providing your clients with information that's just in time, not just in case, as in like, what do they need right now? Not like when they become rich, or when they become famous, or whatever.

It's like, what do they need right now? So right now, I currently have in my own accelerator program, it's called flow your worth. And I have 10 businesses that I am personally investing my own money into. And all of them skipped over having a proper CPA do their books.

And now it's biting them in the ass, like I'm sure. And and so part of my program is I pay for a CPA, like approved CPA that I know does a really good job. And part of my investment back into these companies is like, I can't invest in you, nor can you invest in yourself if you don't have proper books.

And so what I see a lot of people doing, and this is one of my biggest pet peeves, we've talked about this before, is like people will spend 1000s of dollars on a website, but then not have proper accounting. And then for my clients, because right now we're in tax season, they're like, I owe 15 20 \$30,000 in taxes, and I had no idea. Oh my gosh, and had no idea.

And so first things first is, you need to anyone who's listening to this is a lot of people think they can do the books on their own because oh, it's I don't have that I don't make that much money. I'm not whatever. No, if you put into practice getting a trained professional to do your bookkeeping minimally, and get someone to do your taxes, because it is more complicated when you're doing taxes as a business owner from the beginning, and you incorporate that as part of your operating costs, that you will not end up on this other side where I have clients who are making you know, multiple six figures and then getting hit by these huge tax bills and had no idea that they that's what they owe.

That's like across the board with all of my clients. And then the other aspect of it that I've seen is a lot of my business clients will say, Oh, but I can write it off on my taxes as though it makes it free. About expenses, you know, shopping sprees and write it all off.

Yeah, they're like, Oh, this is a write off. This is a write off. This is a write up.

No, you still have to pay for it. So, so any percentage that you're actually writing off? Yes, yes. But like, for some reason, in people's brains, it suddenly becomes free, because they get so excited about the idea that I can write off my computer.

Now I can write off my office. So then I buy all these like beautiful decorations for the office, because I want it to look pretty, you know, stuff like that. And so in conjunction with that, I have seen a lot of business owners get into trouble with credit card debt, on the other side of it, because they're thinking it's a write off, it's a write off, it's a write off.

Not only are they overestimating how much this write off is, but then, you know, you have one bad month, right? Like as a business owner, like you may have like a really sustainable business, but I've seen it happen to some of my clients even recently, like just all of a sudden, like I have a therapist who's on my on in my cohort. And she is seeing she said to me this morning, they're dropping like flies for clients, because she lives in an area that is being heavily impacted by the federal layoffs. And so in her particular area, people are like, I can't afford therapy right now, because I ain't got no job.

Right? So you have one bad month, then all those write offs that are now sitting on your credit card become a challenge. And now they're they're accruing 20 to 30% interest. Like, that's, that's a that's a way to really like get into a panic really quickly about your business.

And so good thing for her is that she has, you know, both, you know, she has resources helping her on the personal finance side and the branding side. So like on the branding side, we're looking at all the ways that she can shift her narrative to say, okay, this is actually the time that you need therapy the most y'all like, what are you talking about? Like you don't cut therapy when things when things in life get chaotic. That's when you go to therapy.

Absolutely. On the personal finance side, we're like, okay, well, what do we need to do? What other expenses do we need to swap out right now while we get, you know, people back back on the train?

Yeah, so good. And I think that's so relevant right now is there's, there's still investments that need to be made.

And, you know, the write offs and stuff can wait. That's huge. So that's kind of addressing, I mean, it does address everybody, but especially newer people.

So I'm interested in you talked about, you know, you're an angel investor, and how, how that works, and how business owners and so I also talk about like, when I help people create brands, it's not just like, we talked about this before, not just logos and colors, it's not just pretty things. It's the messaging, it's your whole brand operating system. And ultimately, it's an asset, right? It's sellable.

So I'm assuming as an angel investor, you're looking for businesses. And I know this from talking to other investors. It's, it's not just about, you know, like what the income that's coming in, it's also like, how much is this business? What is the potential for it when it sells, right? And I think most entrepreneurs don't actually think about building a brand with the intention of maybe selling it for someday.

And even if it's a personal brand, you can build assets within the brand that are sellable. And that's I'm assuming, but this is where I want to go with this is, yeah, that's what investors are looking for, right? They're not just looking for, you know, a, a nice brand with some clients or some income. So I'd love to hear your thoughts on that, because I think that's a really powerful thought for, for people who are growing the business and would love some investors to come on board.

Yeah, as you're talking, I was like, I was literally looking up on my threads, because I posted about this recently, where I, I wrote on threads that I'm an angel investor, and I got, I'm pulling it up right now. Let me see if I can find it. Here, here, here, here, here.

I got something like 300 responses from people who basically were like, here's my company, invest in me. Here's my company, invest in me. Of course, right? Of course, I like, and me being a dum-dum, I was just like, oh, I did not realize that, that I was just, that's what people were gonna do.

And so I followed it up with, here are five, you know, five specific mistakes that I'm seeing people, founders do when it comes to making an investable business, and why I'm not attracted to those type of businesses. So the first thing that I said to people was a lot of founders, when they're looking for investors into their business, they're looking for a donation, not an investment. And so what I mean by that is that you're asking for a donation if you're not presenting the investor with exactly how you expect their money back with interest.

Right. Right? So I was shocked at how many people just sent me a GoFundMe page and being like, invest in my company. I'm like, but I'm not getting anything back.

So that's just a donation. What are you, like, that's not what an angel investor does, which I'm all for donations, but that's just not what I'm doing with this, right? Especially into a business that I don't know

anything about. And then the second thing I talked about was like, they're just not researching the investor before they even ask for it.

So a lot of people reach out to me and I'm just like, if you knew any, like, if you just like, did one Google search, you can find out very quickly that I do not want to invest in your like Bitcoin bro scheme or whatever, right. But here's the thing where I feel like you're very relevant. And how I'm so grateful for the work that you do is that a lot of, I got so many people saying, Hey, I want to have a meeting with you and like, have not shown me any value.

They're like, Oh, great. You're an investor. Like, when are you available to, for me to pitch you for 30 minutes? And I'm just like, do y'all not understand? And I'm not saying this, like, I'm not saying this to be on my high horse, but I'm like, the point of investors is that investors have a lot of money, what they don't have is time.

Absolutely. Right. And so a lot of people feel very entitled to ask a meeting for me from me when they don't have a pitch deck, where they don't have terms, they don't have anything that would catch my attention.

And that's where a good brand comes in. If someone said, Hey, I have a business, it generated a million dollars last year. And I'm looking for a 20%, like loan on this.

And our mission is to do X, Y, and Z. Then you've covered the financial side of it. And you've covered the storyline, which is the brand of like, why this versus putting it into some, you know, something else like the stock market. And what a lot of people don't understand, business owners in particular, is that as an investor right now, I can put my money into a 4%, you know, money market or cash, you know, like CD or something like very simple with zero risk, right? Zero risk.

So why would I give you that you're getting a return? And knowing I'm getting a return? I literally have had people ask me verbatim, Hey, I need \$150,000. Thanks. And I'm like, so what? Those are the last people that are going to get it.

That's for sure. Yes. But it's, I thought it was not normal.

It's more the norm to do that than to say, to have the pitch deck, to have the brand story, to have, to have like a proper website for me to go look at and say, okay, you're doing something. It doesn't have to be the prettiest website, but it should have some decent copy on it. Right.

And then the last, you know, the last piece that I shared with people, I was just like, some people are being straight up rats. And I'm not saying that to be rude, but, but I just, true story. A couple of weeks ago, I was asked to be a panelist for an accelerator program for a different accelerator program that actually was a graduate of, and it was like a full circle moment for me.

And I was like, well, I used to be on the other side of this room doing the pitch and now I'm the investor. And, and of course we can talk all day about how like, there's not very many, many women and people of color and all the other stuff. So it was very exciting for me.

That's amazing. And it was exciting for me, but I was actually really disappointed at how many people were being brats. So what I mean by that is like, there can also be this flip side of the coin of like, where you believe in your brand so much that you're not open to suggestions or open to feedback to what people are telling, telling you.

And, and so there's a particular company that I was like, I might actually put money into this. Like it was a juice company and I'm like super into health stuff or whatever. Like I'm drinking stuff all the time.

This has like a bunch of concoctions inside it. Same. That's why mine is such a weird color.

Yeah. Right. So this woman was pitching her, her juice company.

And again, she didn't have any, she didn't have like a huge revenue, but she had a decent product and she was obviously very passionate about it. She had lost a bunch of weight on it. I mean, she had like a whole brand story about it, but because it worked so well for her, she didn't like, wasn't open to any consideration or feedback as to how she might reach other people.

And so, uh, her in her pitch, she was saying, I'm going to open a brick, brick, brick and mortar and red flags immediately went off for me where I was just like, brick and mortar in this, you know, economy with a closing, when things are closing, when you're, when your product is, is low margin. Right. And it has a shelf, like, like, because it's like a very organic juice, like she can't keep it on shelves for like months at a time.

It like, it will go bad in 10 days. Right. And so, and, and because I personally have opened a brick and mortar here in this city, I said to her, I was like, well, you're gonna have to sell.

I did the math. You're gonna have to sell like 3000 more juices a month just to break even. And her response to me was, well, you like, you just don't know how good my juices are.

And you just don't know how good my brand is. And everybody loves my brand. And so people are going to come.

And I was like, okay. And I just said, okay, well, you know, and so when I say that, what was disappointing to me, it was another woman of color, right? Where it's like, I'm not trying to, I'm not trying to crush your dream here. I want your dream to actually exist and continue to exist.

But some people get so emotionally tied to their brands that they can't see the forest through the trees. So true. I see that a lot.



And like, you're saying, you know, build it and they will come, you know, and that's, yeah, but you know, how good the juices are, but that's not going to partake to everybody else. Even if you have the good brand, you have to market it. I mean, there's just so many things that play into it.

So that is so interesting. Well, thank you. I think that's so valuable for people to hear of like, actually there's so much potential because so many people aren't going about it in the right way that if you actually have a solid business, a solid brand, something that is investable, if you go about it the right way, you have a really good chance, which is amazing news for people.

And everything that I mentioned is very fixable and can be done well. If you have a good branding strategist on your team, like having a good pitch deck is not that difficult. Like having a good core message is not that difficult.

Like having, uh, being open-minded to feedback when, uh, when someone is telling you this might not resonate with your audience or it might just cost too much to acquire the audience. Like if you're open to that kind of feedback, like that, those are things that anyone can do. And you know, the other thing I said, like research who you're asking money from, like, you just got to Google somebody.

Like it's going to take you. And I said this, someone said to me the other day, they're like, well, you know, you should pay it forward and you should tell people what they're doing and wrong, but whatever. I was like, did you not Google me? I'm literally like, I have like articles going out weekly on like all these different news channels of like tips for business owners.

And so if someone is not willing to like do a little bit of research, like how do we, how do I expect them to do well with my money? You know? So I'm saying that all to say, you know, like, I want to see more women in business. I want to see more quiet millionaires. Uh, and a lot of this stuff is yes, the environment, yes, the politics, yes, there's economic things going on right now, but everything I just mentioned has nothing to do with that.

Right. Those are things that you can do without no matter what's going on in our, in our world today. Yeah.

So, so good. Amazing. Well, I want to be mindful of time.

I feel like same thing when we were recording for your interview, I'm like, we could talk about this stuff all day, so we'll have to do it again. Um, but for today, I just want to thank you so much for being here. I think, um, just a lot of people needed to hear this and it's a very timely message because I think people are a little bit worried about the economy and things like that.

And so, um, just knowing that, you know, there's someone maybe in their corner and somebody who has paid off debt. Um, and also knowing that, you know, it doesn't mean stop making investments. It just means make the right investments.

Right. So amazing. And where can people find you? Where's the best.

Yeah. Well, I've appreciated doing, I I've loved spending time with you today. Uh, you can find the book, it's [crushyourmoneygoals.com](https://crushyourmoneygoals.com). Uh, I have a free guide out there too.

So if you're not ready to invest the \$18 into the book, uh, it's [crushyourmoneygoals.com slash free guide](https://crushyourmoneygoals.com/slash-free-guide). And there I put together a five week checklist where you can literally Monday, you do this Tuesday, you do this Wednesday, you do this. So if you're just feeling stuck and you're not sure where to go, or you're feeling a little burned out and don't want to make any choices and you just want to have something that, you know, is curated and well, uh, research, then go check out the guide.

And then social media wise, I might follow your suit and being social media optional someday. So right now I'm going to say it's Bernadette joy spelled with the word debt on primarily YouTube, Instagram, and LinkedIn, but maybe, maybe I won't be there. I don't know.

So best place to reach me is, uh, getting the free guide. So you'll be on my email list. And that's really where I engage most of my audience.

Perfect. Amazing. Well, thanks again.

And, uh, we'll see you all on the next episode. Remember if you're not building your brand consciously, you're simply building a brand that is not leading a legacy. So I hope this discussion with Bernadette inspires you to take action and the ripple effect is going to be created when we come together to make a difference.

We'll talk to you soon. Bye.