S2: E206: The Most Valuable Brands of the Future

Hey there and welcome back to the Make Your Message a Movement podcast. This is your host Tiffany Neuman, and I'm so happy to be here with you today. So we've been talking a lot about what's going to make a brand and business valuable over the next 5 to 10 years because obviously we're in the middle of this enormous shift right now. Everyone's talking about it. AI is changing how we create, how people search for information.

In fact, I was just on a summit recently about search online and how our brands and our messaging affects that because the LLMs, which for those of you, most of you listening probably know, but if you are not familiar with that term, you know, Claude and ChatGPT, they are now going to be where people are looking. And it was so interesting. I landed my first client from chat recently. I had a discovery call and the woman's like, I've been binging your stuff. I love it.

And I was like, that's so interesting. How did you find me? Thinking she would say, oh, the summit you were in, or so-and-so told me. And she said, oh, chat, ChatGPT. I was looking up who to work with, and you popped up.

And this is something we're not talking about enough because it affects how we market. And, you know, there's things are changing so quickly, there's probably hundreds of things we don't even fully understand we need to be paying attention to. And that is one of my roles, or how I see my role in this podcast, is to keep you informed because I'm learning as quickly as I can, and you may be too, but we need each other to discover this unfolding path in front of us, right? And it's exciting, but it's also frustrating. I was so excited to have my first client that came through that channel, and then I was like, okay, now I gotta figure out how to do more of this.

And I'm excited about that. And interestingly, the more powerful the technology gets, I also keep coming back to something that's super simple that we're forgetting about, which is the most valuable brands of the future are going to be the ones that feel the most human. Because yes, people can use chat and Claude and other tools to find us, but once they do, what are they seeing and hearing when they land on your website? You know, there's been this thing for the past 10 or so years where certain coaches say, oh, you don't even need a website, just have a big following on Instagram. Now that can be true, although then you don't own, you know, your real estate on Instagram, and I've had quite a few colleagues I know that just lost their entire following.

So of course we talk about how you need your email list, but your expertise, your authority now needs to be stronger than ever online. And the reason I believe I was found is because of course

we updated our website and we do this for all of our clients to be relevant. For Chat and Claude and the LLMs, but also your fingerprint online needs to be cohesive and consistent and clear. And we also need to think about not being messy for the sake of being messy, like human in a messy sense. Because strategy and professionalism still matter, but brands that are going to stand out and that are standing out have to be incredibly intentional.

There has to feel like there is an actual person behind them. We see this even in corporate brands like, say, the Honest brand. Jessica Alba is the face of that. There's so many bigger brands Sarah Blakely being the face of Spanx and sneaks. So we need someone with a perspective, a history, personality, set of values, and a way of seeing the world that you could recognize even if their logo disappeared or if the message disappeared.

And that's actually going to matter more as AI-generated everything becomes normal. So I want us to think about AI as an amplifier, not the source. So if we imagine, say, a musician walking onto a stage with an incredible song, just think about your favorite musician, right? There's emotion in it. There's a story behind it.

There's a melody that came most likely from something they actually experienced. And there's a point in the song, if it's one of your favorite songs, where you feel it, right? You can feel that emotion. An amplifier can take that song and fill a stadium with it, but the amplifier didn't write the song. It didn't live the experience that created the lyrics.

It didn't make the creative choices or decide why the chorus needed to land where it did. It took the signal of the song and made it bigger and louder, right? We have a new amphitheater here in my town. It's one of those beautiful outdoor ones that's open during the summer, and there's all these noise complaints from everyone that lives around it because the amplification was so loud. So amplification like AI can be, is great.

However, it took the signal, which is us, our humanness, to create what it's amplifying. And if we amplify slop or junk, it's not going to go anywhere. It only works if what's amplified is truly powerful. So that to me is one of the best ways to think about AI in your brand. If the signal is strong, distinct, truly yours, AI can help you amplify it in ways that are honestly pretty extraordinary.

You know, a lot of people these last 5, 10 years have used paid ads, and they can work. But I've seen so many colleagues spend hundreds of thousands, thousands of dollars on these paid ads, spraying and praying, or even on social media, on Instagram, with no returns or no to little

returns. Not saying those things don't work. But what if you nail your brand and message and then AI can truly pick it up and amplify it? And there's no charge to that.

Similar to SEO. Now it's like SEO on steroids, right? So yes, AI can help you create faster, repurpose your ideas, turn podcasts into content, organize thinking, develop a plan in some Some ways. Sometimes you still need human for that too. But AI is not going to make your brand, your message, your thought leadership original.

And this is where people are getting stuck because they're sending hours talking to Chat, talking to Claude, thinking they're being productive when what they're actually doing is getting generic ideas repurposed. They put it out online and then they don't They wonder why they're not getting results. Okay, and that's where so many people are getting into trouble right now. They're starting with the technology and relying on it rather than starting inside themselves. So I actually just had another call with a woman who said, yeah, Claude, my best friend.

She literally calls it her best friend, which Nothing wrong with that. I mean, a little creepy, but I think a lot of us are starting to feel that way about AI. Like, it's— I use it to plan my meals now and make my shopping lists, and it makes life easier. But if you're opening Chat or Claude and asking, what should my positioning be? What should my framework be?

How should I describe myself? What should my brand voice be? What should my next offer be? AI will answer those questions. However, those questions, even though they sound good, they might sound polished or strategic.

It's probably also the same answer that 20 other people in your industry is getting— are getting because AI scrapes the internet. It's pulling from what already exists. And this is starting to also be a big problem. For people with their methodologies and trademarks. Because for instance, I had a woman reach out to me and say, oh, like, how long have you been using your legacy brand?

I just started using that for one of my offers, but then I Googled it and I realized you were using it. And I said, I've had that trademarked since 2014. And she said, I'm so sorry. You know, I'll stop using it. I didn't even know she was using it, and luckily she did her due diligence and searched it.

But sure enough, she used Chat. Chat gave her the idea of your legacy brand, which probably was pulled from my website. So we really need to have this top of mind when we're creating for ourselves, because if I can take your name off the top of the page, swap another expert's name

in, and almost nothing to change, we don't really have a brand. We have maybe competent copy, but those are not the same thing. So what I want you to think about is your brand as a fingerprint.

There should be something about the language, the ideas, the stories, the perspective, and even the way you communicate where people can recognize it. You've probably had this experience with someone you follow. You're scrolling, you start to read a post, and before you even see who it is, you're like, oh, I know who wrote this, or you see something and you automatically know it's from a specific person.

I actually think this becomes more valuable, not less valuable, as AI becomes more sophisticated. It's going to become incredibly good at producing competent work. It already is, right? However, competence isn't the same thing as Distinctiveness. AI can't live your life.

It wasn't sitting in the room when something happened that completely changed your perspective. It hasn't spent 20 years with your clients watching patterns repeat themselves until one day you realized, wait a minute, everyone's trying to solve the wrong problem. And it doesn't have your maybe weird combination of experiences. I'm not calling you weird, but we all have some weirdness going on in our lives that actually is our superpower of how we came to be so good at what we're doing. So maybe you started in corporate and moved into entrepreneurship like myself.

Maybe you're a lawyer who became a speaker. Maybe you're a physician who became a coach. Maybe you spent 20 years in one field and realized the thing you were really here to talk about with something much bigger. All of this matters— your mistakes, instincts, things you're fascinated by, the thing you think everyone in your industry gets wrong. That is where your real brand starts, which is why I say we have to build the brand from the inside out, starting with your soul.

Now, it might sound a little woo to say, okay, brand from your soul.

But, you know, that's okay. A little woo is okay. But there's actually a very practical strategy underneath this. Because the harder something is to replicate, the more valuable it becomes. And one of the things that worries me a little bit about the way AI is being used in branding right now is that we're reversing the order of operations.

We're essentially asking the machine to tell us who we are before we've done the work of deciding who we are, because branding is a deep identity process. And if the AI doesn't deeply

understand your history, your clients, your future vision, values, point of view, your IP, what you want to become known for. It has to base its answer on something. And yes, you can drop in past calls and all of these things in there, but it's still going to pull from other people's thought processes as well. And so it starts looking at patterns in existing language and ideas, and that's how you end up with— I think of A photocopy of a photocopy.

I've had multiple clients come with me, come to me with the same ideas, with the same like, oh, I'm gonna call it this. I've had 4 different women, and I'm not gonna say what it is just because I don't want those women, you know, to feel badly about it or feel a different way, but I had to kindly say, I've had 4 different women come up with that same naming convention for their offer and their framework. And I'm sorry, but this is not a unique idea. And guess what? They received it on AI.

So the other thing that happens is there are important ethical and legal conversations happening right now. I already talked about this a little bit. But before we get into that in depth, and maybe I'll bring on one of my clients who is an attorney to talk about the legal amplifications, I have a more basic problem with it as a brand strategist. I don't want to build your brand by asking, what is everyone else doing and how can we make a version of that, right? I want to sit with you or to guide you into looking at what do you believe?

What have you earned the right to say after doing this work for so long? What do you see that somebody newer to the field or from a different industry simply can't see? What do your best clients consistently come to you for? What is the deeper transformation underneath your service? And most importantly, what's your vision?

Where are you going? And then once we understand those things, we create a solid brand foundation and create a brand that's uniquely yours. Then AI becomes incredibly powerful, but we need that signal first. And honestly, this is why I built Brand OS the way I did. We use AI throughout the process, but the system does not begin with AI.

It begins with you. The first thing we do with all my clients is the authority positioning and messaging sprint, because before we talk about the website, your content, your marketing channel you should be using, we need to understand the human element and the business underneath it all. By looking at all of those things I mentioned earlier, We're looking at what you want this business to become over the 3, 5, 10 years in the future. Then we bring that pattern recognition that comes from my experience doing this work for 20 years and start asking strategic questions. Then we move into copy, branding, website.

So of course I love a pretty website too. That's so important because we are visual creatures, and I was a creative director for years. I care so deeply about how things look, but if the positioning underneath it is all wrong, all we've done is created a beautiful way to scale the wrong message. An AI can spit out a website in 20 minutes. It can help you scale a message, but we have to make sure it's the right messaging first, and it's not a cookie-cutter look and feel as everyone else.

So what we want to think about is when we create that brand foundation, the messaging that's magnetic, And when someone comes to your website and they don't think, oh, it just looks good, or this is cute, we really want to help people move from, oh, I've heard of her, to now I understand why I need to work with her. This is exactly who I've been looking for. And then this is where AI gets really fun because we've done the deeper work. We're no longer opening a blank chat and asking AI to decide who we should be. We have the positioning, we have the messaging, we know the audience, the offers.

We can then train AI and say, okay, here's the message, here's the brand, help us express it using these rules. And that is an entirely different relationship with AI.

Now I can take this podcast episode and use AI to help me turn it into LinkedIn content. I can take a signature framework and explore 10 ways we might teach it. I can take a podcast or a set of podcasts and turn it into a keynote, which then turns into a series of emails. So this is where the AI layer inside of BrandOS is based around what I think of as a closed-loop system. We aren't saying go into the internet and tell us who you should look like or sound like.

We're giving the system the brand strategy we already developed. We're grounding it in the strategic methodology I've built over 20 years, and then that technology is amplifying the brand that already has an identity. It's not scraping the internet, and more importantly, it's not training the internet. It's a closed loop system. So this is important right now, because there's also so much excitement around the tools themselves, right?

I'm sure you've probably been on networking calls. And it's like, okay, which model are you using? What's the latest agent? Is Claude better than ChatGPT? What's your prompt?

What new thing launched this week, right? It's changing so quickly. And I enjoy it. I'm a quick start by nature. So give me a new tool.

I want to play with it, you know, but eventually everybody gets access to the tools. So think about Canva. A lot of us now use Canva. Years ago, creating something that looked

professionally designed required hiring a designer, right? I was a designer when I first came out of art school.

I was classically trained as a designer, and then I moved my way up into creative director, which I'm glad I did because now anyone can open up Canva and make something that looks pretty decent. Now we can even start to open chat and make something pretty decent, and it's been amazing. But access to Canva didn't suddenly give everyone great taste. It didn't give everyone 20 years of design experience. The understanding of typography, hierarchy, storytelling, psychology, or strategy.

It gave everyone the tool, and that's why you still see posts using Canva or even AI that look pretty terrible, because if the person doesn't inherently have style, it's not going to help them. And that's where AI is similar. Everyone is going to have the tool. The differentiator is what you bring to it, because anyone can generate 1,000 words in 30 seconds, and that doesn't automatically make those 1,000 words worth reading. Anyone can generate 20 business ideas doesn't mean that they know which one has market potential.

So the tool is not the expertise. The tool again amplifies the expertise. So this is where people can feel when something is missing, right? A lot of us are developing a sense for this, even if we can't explain it. So for instance, you land on a website or maybe you read a post and things are technically correct, but it doesn't feel right.

It says the right things and somehow says nothing at all, right? I just looked at a website yesterday.

Somebody, I was on a, not a discovery call, like a networking call. Somebody shared their website, I landed, and it was like so much fluff that I felt like I was being walked in circles and I didn't actually understand anything at the end. So I don't think the solution to all of this is trying to manufacture humanity So please do not leave this episode thinking you should intentionally add 3 typos to your newsletter so people know you're a real person. And I'm also highly, highly aware of people who choose not to use AI. So if you're listening to this and you're like, oh, Tiffany, you're just talking about AI all the time and that's not me, that's fine too.

You do you. We have our own ways. But what I can tell you is I've personally saved hundreds of hours this past year. I was able to go through my car accident experience and be off my computer for almost 2 months other than like touching base with my team and recording this podcast and then sending it to them. And AI, because we've trained it, because we had the foundation I've been talking about, absolutely was worth it.

And I also don't think vulnerability should become another marketing tactic when we're saying, Okay, what personal story can I tell this week because vulnerable posts perform well? People can feel that too. And honestly, I think we're all over people just crying on social media to get attention. So humanity isn't a tactic. What I want you to think about as we start wrapping up for today is it's authorship.

There is a real person behind the idea There's real experiences underneath the perspective, and those are choices being made. These are things you say yes to and things you refuse to say because they're not true for you. Quirks and edges that haven't been sanded off just to make the message more universally appealing. That's what makes our message feel human and our brand feel human. So a few episodes ago, when we talked about my belief that we're moving from the thought leadership— I mean, thought leadership is going to stay here, but more from the sense of moving into the authority era, moving out of, you know, people performing, let's say.

I shared that we're moving away from this version of online businesses where everyone felt like they needed to look polished and perfect all the time. And so this is where I think it's all connected, because a long time— for a long time, personal branding especially, which I'm a part of, taught us to edit ourselves. Make things cohesive and presentable. Now, the cohesiveness still needs to hold true. But basically, if we put it into a nutshell, it's look like the successful version of the person you think the audience wants to see.

So I'm not going to suddenly tell you that the future of authority is, say, the horrible font Comic Sans, which that's my designer self coming out, or blurry headshots, or, you know, nothing polished, because if you want to keynote speak, if you want to stand on stages, if you want to be chosen for your book by a publisher, you still need cohesion and professionalism. But that is not the same thing as perfection. You can still have an incredibly sophisticated brand and still be funny. You can be a serious expert and talk about having ADD. You can step onto a major stage and admit you're nervous.

You can have, say, an incredibly successful business and still tell people when things don't work. You have permission to change your mind and have opinions. You can let people see more of the human behind the authority. And those things are what's becoming the deeper assets because they give something to people to deeply connect with instead of this perfectly polished piece of generated comment and content that looks and sounds like everyone else.

So Last piece of today is I want you to think about the experts you genuinely love following. Not necessarily just the people you love and respect, but I mean the people where if they disappeared from your inbox tomorrow, you would actually notice. There's usually something very distinct about them. Maybe they tell incredible stories. Maybe they make you laugh.

Maybe they have a phrase you now use in your own life because you've heard them say it so many times. Maybe you know what they care about outside of work. Maybe you disagree with them occasionally, but at least you know what they think. And when they write something, you can almost hear their voice.

That is how I want you to be able to show up. And maybe you're well on your way, but it doesn't make AI less valuable. In fact, it makes AI more valuable because, like I said, when someone tells you to use less AI, that's actually opposite Of what we need to be thinking about. It's how we use it intentionally. And so I want to be very clear about this because the takeaway from this episode is not AI is making things generic and Tiffany said so, so I shouldn't use it.

For some of you, I actually think you should use it a lot more. But you need to make sure that we've set up a solid foundation underneath it first.

AI should amplify your authority, not manufacture your identity. And that is the one thing from this episode, if you walk away with, I want you to remember. And I'm incredibly optimistic about where all this is going. And as we're in this season where things feel very confusing and chaotic with the world, with our country, with all of that, my goal is for you to really focus on playing the long game in your business. I shared this in my mastermind last week and I think it was really a game changer that helped people's brains click, which is think about the stock market and how many people jump out when the stock market plummets.

And then they lose all their money, when actually when they stay in the stock market, all of those shares that they've had, it's actually an opportunity to buy more at a lower rate and make a lot more money in the long run.

And I want you to take that example to where we're at today. If you're feeling a little shaken up, I think we all are, the energy strong, And I posted a note on Substack the other day that was, you know, the Care Bear stare and they all like have their heart open. That's how I'm going into next year. How can we be the change we want to see in the world? Now I know that's a tiny bit off topic of like brands being more human, but not only can we be more human, But how can we show up with more love?

Because that's the only way we're going to be able to move through this season, to band together, to rise up and be that change we need to be in the world. And we can still do this and be optimistic because I truly believe AI is not going anywhere. Yes, there's implications for humanity in it and for our Earth, and I care deeply about those things. I live right where the most— the world's most fresh water is. Like, I— that kills me to think that they could be using that for these tools.

And instead of looking at the negative, how can we be part of that change and advocate for the positive? They are actively working on new ways to have AI without using all our fresh water.

Right? And so how can we be optimistic and band together? And that's also why we created at the end of BrandOS Pro, once the message is there and the website marketing tools that utilize AI trained on your brand and message to get— make your message a movement, but also community. We need each other as humans to help rise up, to support each other through this very interesting era. But I also believe that we were called here in this time for a purpose.

And the fact that you're listening to this podcast right now, I believe, means that you're one of these people. That's meant to be here on the planet now to help shift things for the positive, because I know I am.

And so it's in this weird duality that we're at right now where AI is going to allow experts and small teams to do things that would have been impossible a few years ago. We're going to become more efficient, more prolific, and free up more free time to do things that we love and be with our families and travel. But at the same time, we're going to crave things that are increasingly human, right?

And having a human brand does not automatically mean people will experience your humanity. They have to spend enough time with you to understand how you think, hear your stories, recognize your patterns. And that takes more than one stupid viral post, right? And vanity metrics. It takes time.

It takes repetition. I can't say that word today. And it takes proximity.

And that is where trust starts to deepen. And this is the biggest shift happening in marketing right now. For years, we've been obsessed with reach. How many people saw it? How many followers do you have?

How big is the audience? How many impressions? Blah, blah, blah. Those things still somewhat matter. But really, I want you to think about how deeply do the right people actually know me?

Because in this world, when everyone can create content faster, visibility doesn't matter enough.

The brands that become truly valuable are going to be the ones people want to spend time with, the ones they come back to, the ones they understand well enough to repeat and recommend when you're not in the room. And that's actually where we're going next week, because the advantage isn't, like I said, reaching more people. It's being deeply known by the right ones. So I know I covered a lot of ground here this week. I hope it was useful.

I hope that you feel more grounded and excited for what's to come rather than overwhelmed. Because there's a lot of overwhelm in the shifts we're seeing, and my goal is to be here and help support you through this transition. So meet me here next week. We'll be talking more about how to be deeply known by your audience, and if you feel called, I would love for you to give me a review and a shout out on the podcast. That's what helps spread the word for more people to know about it, and I truly want to make sure that the authorities of this new generation are getting the support they need to rise up and make their message a movement, just like I love supporting you to make your message a movement.

Have a beautiful rest of your week, and we'll see you next week.