

88. Revolutionizing Skincare with Kate Kimmerle - Episode Transcription

Leah: Welcome to Her Story of Success, a podcast featuring stories from influential women trailblazers and business leaders who have defined & pursued their own versions of success and fulfillment. We hope these stories, lessons learned, and celebrations inspire you to believe in yourself and enjoy your own journey a little more. I'm Leah Glover Hayes, your host and CEO of Her Story of Success Women's Business Collective.

In today's episode, I'm so excited to be interviewing Kate Kimmerle. Kate is the Founder of Miss Spa, the President of Revolution Beauty U.S.A., *and* she was the first person to bring sheet masks into the U.S. beauty market. I've been a fan of Miss Spa's face masks for years, and the more I've learned about Kate and her amazing mission, the more I've fallen in love with the brand. Kate is passionate about providing women with affordable, but high-quality products. And she's also built an amazing work environment where she's intentional about mentoring and empowering other women.

In this episode, Kate gives us a behind the scenes look at Miss Spa's success, offers some great advice to other working moms, and so much more. She also tells us all about some of Miss Spa's newest products, which they launched at the start of this year as part of an entire skincare line. Kate was so generous and sent me some of the newer Miss Spa products to try, and they're all so incredible! I highly encourage you to check them out, and please share this episode with a friend or coworker who needs some inspiration this week.

I hope you enjoy this conversation with Kate Kimmerle!

Well welcome Kate Kimmerle to Her Story of Success. I am absolutely thrilled and excited to have you with me today again, but for the first time.

Kate: Well, I'm excited to be here. It's great to see you.

Leah: Absolutely. So for you listening, what happened was I interviewed Kate a few months ago and the recording did not work. So she is so wonderful and gracious and generous that she came on Her Story of Success again, so that we can release it to you. So thank you, Kate, for giving me your time twice.

Kate: Absolutely. We're going to make it even better this time.

Leah: Yes, I love it. Well, we have so much to cover, because (a) I'm a fan girl of you for a few reasons. Number one, you are an amazing woman business owner with a family, you're doing all the things, and you do it with such grace and joy and love, and you own your own company. And also you have an incredible set of products that I used and was a customer of before I ever knew that you owned the company. So it's Miss Spa. So I want to talk about you being a businesswoman, creating products, how to go through that, and just how you've seen business strategy and business marketing and all of those things change since you started your company, and then especially since 2020. So let's go way back. I want people to get a little bit of a feeling of who you are as a person. So you own a beauty company, and it wasn't like you just started it when you were 40, because you were already successful. You've been passionate about this for a long time. And so I'd really love for you to take us back to the beginning. Like, what are you like as a child that led you to have your own beauty company? What were you like as a little girl?

Kate: Completely beauty obsessed. I would say fashion and beauty obsessed to the point where I wanted to be a hairdresser, and my parents would not let me and I was devastated. Absolutely devastated. I was putting makeup on my two younger sisters constantly. I think I was the first of all of my friends that had the Barbie head with the hair and makeup you can put on. So Barbie, it was kind of, that was my first foray into getting makeup and hair and doing that. And then I started experimenting on friends and I just always, I was the one who subscribed to Vogue when I was like 14. I was just very into fashion, beauty, all of it. And even when I first got into the industry, I was more, there were more opportunities in fashion at that point than anything else. So, you know, I studied fashion merchandising. I studied fashion design. That just kind of seemed like the track that I was going to end up on. But quickly I realized I really just had a love and a knack for product in general and marketing and trying to put together the whole supply chain of like, how do you go from ideation and having this amazing concept, and then how does that actually result in a physical product? So that became more of my obsession was tapping into the creative side. I never thought I was a creative person. I thought I was a business person up until maybe a few years ago, but I really, I love to sketch, and my sister is an amazing artist and she can like, legitimately paint and sketch and do all sorts of stuff. But I'm certainly not that, but I'm able to sketch out certainly in my mind and then on paper, what I want, what that would look like. So that's kind of how it all started.

Leah: I love it. I do want to dive into that a little bit more. Because I think that's not the scary, but like the unknown part of like, "Oh, I have this idea, but how does that go from an idea to reality?" So share with us a little bit about, what were you doing in your career when you decided, "I think I can do this," and taking that step, what did that look like?

Kate: That's a great question. Cause I can tell you exactly when that happened. And it was really when I was working for several different types of companies. And I was always actively involved in sales. You know, I'm a big believer in relationships with customers, and some of my customers are some of my best friends or had become my best friends. And so for me, it's really, it was really about the collaboration that happened between us and being able to collaborate on products and working together to take something from just an idea or just a concept to an actual product. And I quickly became obsessed with one of the companies I worked for. I think I mentioned this to you before, but I've always worked for women-owned and led companies, which is sort of odd. So like I had several jobs before I started my business in 2000, and all of them involve some sort of women mentor, which is really kind of incredible to think about, you know? And several of them I still stay in touch with. So that was also a big piece of it is I was inspired by them because they also have that balance of creativity and business in their toolkit, they were able to do that, and they trusted me. And so I found myself working with customers, developing relationships, collaborating, and it would eventually turn into customization or some sort of product creation. So that was really how it all started. And it was, I worked at a stationary and gift company, and we did a lot of custom products with companies like Crate and Barrel, that was a perfect example. And same thing. I had a, the person I worked with there, she was amazing. And she was like, "Can you do something like this?" And even if it was just tweaking the packaging, I think, you know, everybody is looking to put their own special stamp on something, whether it's a retailer, whether it's a brand, and you want to always have that point of difference. And so that was really what I kind of clued into and started working diligently at creating that. And then when I started my company, I had the experience of seeing how products were made. I had enough experience in the manufacturing side. I had enough experience on the sales and marketing side, until I was able to finally kind of put it all together in 2000 in a way that made sense and made it a true business.

Leah: I love that. And what I'm hearing is that you did a lot of things and tried a lot of things before you started your own business, and that breadth of experience really helped you when you were starting your own company, because you had a lot of different viewpoints of the process, right? From start to finish. I interviewed the chief

people officer of Forrester, it's a marketing and research company outside of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and, and that's what she said. So she actually started out in sales, and she did a lot of different jobs before she became an executive, because she's like "I needed to see and experience all of that." So when you're in that place of leadership, you have a good viewpoint and you have some understanding of the processes that your people are going through.

Kate: A hundred percent. I think that's huge. And I also think, like, having the opportunity to work at smaller entrepreneurial companies allow you to wear many different hats. So you, you know, you could be sitting with the sourcing department while they're on the phone or emailing with Asia, you could be sitting with the marketing department, and you can be in design. You could be with the creative team, product development team or whatever it is, and like little nuggets of information coming from all of those different areas and then pulling it all together is definitely what made me successful with where I am now.

Leah: I love that. And I know that we've talked about mentorship and you love mentoring women business owners. And one of the things I wanted to talk about a little bit is kind of both sides. Like I want to talk to the entrepreneur for a minute and let you mentor her that's listening. But I also want to talk about the people that have come alongside you, because no one can do this alone. And like from my business partner has no desire to start her own company, but she has a super power and a passion for helping bring vision to life. So I want you to give some guidance for both of those people, if both of them are listening, the person that has the vision and wants to bring it to life, and then the person that wants to bring someone else's vision to life, maybe just some guidance that you have that you've learned along your journey that you could share.

Kate: Yeah, sure. I mean, I think that the people that support the vision or help grow the vision are probably more important sometimes than the visionary themselves. I mean, if I didn't have that team, I don't know, like, I'd be all over the place. Like I'm like, "Oh, I've got all these ideas." And, you know, I think having as an entrepreneur, having a team that can kind of like go through, cull your ideas and take them to the next level, because for many entrepreneurs, I think we're sort of at our worst when we're trying to do it all. Right?

Leah: Yes. Thank you for saying that.

Kate: Yeah, it's not necessarily a good thing. And so, but I think at the beginning we all

have to, right. So we're wearing a lot of hats, we're figuring stuff out and get into the point of being able to bring people on board who, you know, maybe wouldn't even want to start their own business, but, you know, there's sort of like the, what do you call it? Like the power behind the throne, as they say, they were like, we would be completely ineffective without having these people. And so the team that I have allows me to do the things that I do best, which is be the visionary and problem solve and negotiate. And, you know, I'm the risk-taker. Most of these people want a job, and they want to know that they've got a paycheck that they can rely on every week. And that's huge. And at the same time, I'm the one that's going to run out there and take the risk and do all the crazy stuff necessary in order to make sure that that happens while making sure that they're all protected as well. It's a two way street, you know, you don't want to be the crazy entrepreneur who's running around recklessly. Cause to me, I do this for my team. It's not all about me at all. It's really a team effort.

Leah: What are some of the things that you did when you were building your team? Or what is it that you knew that you were looking for? How did you find the right people to bring in?

Kate: That's also a really great question. I hired a lot of people that I worked with in the past. And a lot of people do not subscribe to this, this management theory of bringing friends and bringing potentially customers. But my team is comprised of primarily, you know, a lot of women that have worked for me for a really, really long time, and in the case of at least a handful we've worked together in a past life. So when I was trying to grow sales, who did I go to, but the woman that I worked for and who's sort of mentored me and helped me kind of raise up. And she was always like my big sister and now she's the president of the company and running things. And so that part to me is really great. I also have like one of my former customers who I started the business with has been my right hand. She's now really kind of general manager of the business and handles HR. But she said to me, it's funny, because we were both pregnant with our now 16 year-old teenagers at the time, and she was a buyer in the beauty. And she said to me, "When these kids..." she ended up being pregnant with twins.

Leah: Oh my God.

Kate: I know. but she said, "When these kids are in kindergarten, I'm coming to work for you because you need help and I can help you. And as long as you're flexible with everything, and I can take care of them, it's what I want to do." And here she is, you know, 17 years later.

Leah: I love that because I think so often, what gets glorified is the young person that started a business at 20 and, you know, skyrocketed and has a billion dollar valuation. And that is amazing. Like that is so incredible. I'm not discounting that for one second because those people should be commended, but that's why I was excited to talk to you, I get so inspired, you didn't start this like when you were 20, you know, you were fairly young, but you had people that you worked with before to even bring on. That means that you had some experience and you were a little bit wiser. And I love that you also are empowering women along the journey. So I want to talk a little bit about your company. So when you decided to start a company, it wasn't just, "Oh, I want to have an awesome product." You did, but what were the things that were important to you when you were building that foundation and you were starting to grow and have employees and have a culture, what were the things that you said, "This is what's important for the foundation of my company, that people are going to feel this way, they're going to act this way". Like, what did that look like for Miss Spa? And you have a couple of companies in there, a lot of products. So tell us a little bit about what the base company is and the foundation for that.

Kate: Yeah. So the base company is called Snap Products, and Snap Products was originally founded as a private label marketing company. So we basically developed custom products for all the large retailers in the U.S., and what that looked like was, you know, we would be working on beauty products and then maybe one of the buyers would switch desks and start being in charge of apparel. So they'd come to us and want us to do apparel. So at one point we had not only a beauty, personal care side to the business, but we also had a general merchandise side, which meant we did cut and sew apparel, we did flip flops and sandals, I mean, anything that was on trend. And I think that was one of the biggest things is I wanted to create a culture of, you know, I wanted everybody to move fast, which is what Snap was all about. And I want it to be ahead of the trend. I didn't care what it took, but I wanted to be the first person at the table who, and sometimes we were too far ahead of the trends. Right? We'd have something that I'd seen in another country or somewhere else. And like, "Oh, we've got to bring this," and it was too soon and that's really the birth of Miss Spa and the facial sheet masks is I had started seeing those with all my travels in Asia and had never seen them in the United States. And I was determined to be the one to bring them to the United States. So that's how that business of customization on product and working with retailers ultimately led us into the branded side with Miss Spa. And now we have M skincare and our naturals brand as well. So it really started out as being just sort of a generalist. And I think that happens a lot in business, right? You start out as a generalist, and then you sort of narrow the focus, and it became

really clear to me that being on the private label side and doing custom stuff for other people was not necessarily the way to grow the business. Because as the business grew, I became more focused on being able to scale it. Is it stable? Is it scalable? You know, all those different things to be able to, as I added more and more people, to make sure that that base and the foundation was really solid.

Leah: I love that. So what are some of those core values that you looked at as you were growing your business?

Kate: Well, definitely trust. I mean, that speaks to the hiring many people that I knew, but also with our customers. My whole thing has always been like, if I tell you something, it's as good as done. I mean, so many of the deals that we made early on, we had no contracts at the time or like, you know, agreements, and we would do these handshake deals that were, you know, really significant. So, you know, I think that's the foundation. I think one of the things I value so, so much is resourcefulness, like I, you know, I value resourcefulness over just about anything. If somebody can get out and make things happen and comes prepared with solutions and is able to problem solve as opposed to bringing problems, that's always somebody that I'm interested in working with and having other teams.

Leah: Absolutely. As a leader or a business owner, having someone that comes to you with ideas that you didn't even think of, and they like figured something out? You're like, "Oh my gosh," it, it gives you so much peace of mind to know like, "Oh, I can trust you. If I ask you for something, if you don't know, you're going to try to figure it out before you come back to me and ask me five more questions." And I'm like, "Oh, that's, that is amazing." Well, and you're right on when you said it feeds into the trust.

Kate: So for me, core values, like I always look at, you know, what, I walk into a company or whatever, and I see that these are our core values on the wall, and it's like, it's interesting to me, core values all are more circular than they are a list, because I think that all sort of have to feed off each other. So like accountability, resourcefulness, trust, collaboration. Like I would say our team works as a team, and I am the, I take my own accountability and put it at the top. I mean, I feel like if something needs to happen and if I can't roll up my sleeves and get it done, I mean, I have to model that behavior too.

Leah: Absolutely. Let's talk a little bit about the team dynamics since this pandemic hit, because we've all seen all of the reports that say that this pandemic has affected women more than men. I would love your viewpoint from the leader of a team that

you do have more women than you do men on your team. How has it affected your team? And then what have you done to make sure that your team feels valued and that they still have what they need to be successful within that team, especially through collaboration and things like that?

Kate: You know, I would say it has affected women a lot. I think it's been really hard, especially with mothers, with people not having childcare now, if their kids aren't going to school. And it automatically sort of falls on the mother come the teacher. You know, I mean, I, in some cases I can say, I know a lot of fathers that are stepping up and doing the same thing, but I think that's been really hard. I think couples having to work together and be together all the time at home, nobody's going to the office, nobody's going to school. It's like, it's one continuum. I say like every day is like Groundhog Day, was my line at the beginning. It's like the pages of the calendar are just blowing away, you know? Yeah. I think it's, that's been really, really tough. What we've done specifically is taken kind of like a three-prong approach. Like number one, get everybody situated so they can work at home, which most of our team was with the exception of like our operations team. And actually our team overseas never worked from home. They always went into the office, and they were really challenged by that, because we have an overseas office in Hong Kong, and they're living, it's not like here in the U S you know, they're in a much different living situation. So we managed to figure that out. We put systems in. So systems were a big part of it. We expanded into Microsoft Teams so that we had automatic collaboration, which has been huge, hugely helpful. And then we've tried to like, keep everybody motivated as much as possible with, you know, like we did a group cocktail party. We did, there's actually this company here in Chicago that sends you like an infusion, you get a bottle, then they give you like recipes. Like you can decide what you want to put in a, do you want to put vodka? Do you want to put whatever you're kind of, I'll send you the link!

Leah: Please.

Kate: And so everybody, this box showed up at their door and they all got to make their little infusion. And then we all had like a cocktail party together on a Friday night, which was so, so fun. And it was just so good to see everybody, you know, you see each other on the team's calls and, you know, you see each other on the client calls and the customer calls, but it's not the same. And we just had our annual meeting last week and we had a little wine cocktail party after that. So, you know, we try to do enough stuff and some of us are still going into the office. Like yesterday, I was able to go meet with the product development team, which of course was very fun. And

there's many, many new Miss Spa products on the horizon.

Leah: Yay. We're so getting into products in a few minutes, I'm excited.

Kate: Oh good. But we also have a warehouse that we actually ended up sort of being forced to open, to fulfill our e-commerce because our third party, our 3PL warehouse had a worker that tested positive with COVID, and we had so many e-commerce orders waiting to be fulfilled. We were fortunate that we had a space kind of behind our current office space that was available. And we set it up. I mean, this is where I give the team full credit, we were all there packing orders, setting up pallets, doing pick and pack. One person's running to Office Max to buy envelopes, another person's going to the post office. I mean, we fulfilled, I think over 500 orders. My daughter was there.

Leah: Let's talk about that for a second. Who are the people fulfilling these orders? Cause this is not their job. So you had a third party that does all of those things. Who are the people that are fulfilling these orders, what's their typical job?

Kate: Basically the team, I mean, it was like our e-commerce coordinator and her two daughters that weren't in school. It was Mary, our general manager, it was our director of finance, it was our head of supply chain. It was like a full group effort. And even one of our neighbors, like at one point we had to go figure out a way to get the product into the warehouse. So we sent a truck to this warehouse and they agreed that they would just put the boxes out on the dock and we could pick it up. And then we got the truck, came to the new warehouse of ours, and we had no way to unload. The way they had loaded it was completely not, we don't have like a forklift set up to be a warehouse. So one of our neighbors lent us his forklift and came and got all the products. I mean, that's, talk about empathy. Like, there's so many people that like, we never even knew these neighbors and they saw us struggling and they saw all these women, these boxes. He came right over and helped. Like God bless you for that.

Leah: Look at the Midwest coming in. I love it. Midwestern hospitality. I lived in Chicago, it was great.

Kate: Yeah.

Leah: I love that. That's a good story. Just like how people come together in time of need. And that's, when I mentor people, that's one of the things I say all the time is like, "In general, like anyone in business wants to help another person in business,

because we know how hard it is." And I love that you had someone and, you know, men get bashed all the time these days, but there's some good ones out there.

Kate: There are many good ones out there, that's for sure.

Leah: And like as a woman, I am independent. I do not need help from another person except for when I need help. And I love that he saw it and just came over and helped. And so that's awesome.

Well, let's talk about products. So you are a connoisseur of beauty from a very young age. So I do want to talk a little bit about why Miss Spa is so amazing. And I know one of the things that you've said, and I'll let you say your own quote, but what you talked about, you wanted really quality products at a price that normal women can afford. And so I want to talk about like, why was that important to you? And then how did that lead to you creating the types and kinds of products that you have today? And thank you for that. So I truly, before I knew that you own the company, I've purchased your products, and I will say I was so impressed with the quality that they are for the price that they are. So I've been a fan and a consumer of you for years. So thank you. So share with us a little bit about that.

Kate: Thank you so much, I love that.

Leah: Absolutely.

Kate: I'm a huge quality over quantity person in general. I'd rather have one really the nice thing than 85 not so nice things. So, you know, and I think that was definitely a part of it. And I've always, because I've been such like a beauty obsessed person, I have no problem running out and buying the world's most expensive cream, even when I couldn't afford it. You know? I mean, like that's, I'm just a product junkie in general. So, you know, a lot of that was about how do I get this \$125 cream available and accessible? And how do I take some of these trends, like serums and stuff like that, sheet masks, that are typically something that, you know, you want to be able to have access and do something every day, if you want to. Right? You never know how you're going to feel on a given day or how your skin is going to feel or your body's going to feel. And I feel like if there's something that you know, that you can get, and it's at a reasonable price point, and it's accessible through either e-commerce or through a retailer, that to me was always kind of the name of the game. And one of the easiest ways to do that, and I knew this from kind of my manufacturing and sourcing background, was eliminate packaging. So with the sheet masks, obviously,

it was easy because like their delivery system was already in a pouch, but with some of the other things, it's like, we don't need to have crazy expensive jars.

We don't need to have crazy expensive anything. We can do this really reasonably and still deliver great looking product that's highly efficacious.

Leah: I love that. So I started using your serums, and I want to talk about that a little bit, because I mean, I'm getting up there in age. So I have seen and tried to purchase so many serums, and I do want to ask, like you have good quality serums, and you get more for your money. Like, how do you do that? Like what are we wasting our dollars on buying other products, and what makes yours so good?

Kate: And we do not talk enough about this. And we were actually, my president, Lisa Ashcraft, and I were just talking about it today. It's like, how do we get credit for all these different things that we're doing? But number one, I would say we have a wholly owned subsidiary in Asia. So when all the K beauty trends — and that was from the original model of the company, because all of these big retailers in the United States used to go to Hong Kong. That was like the hub to buy stuff. So we were already set up and running there — when we shifted the focus and really just started being really selective about private label and focused on our own brands, we already had that machine in place and that infrastructure in place.

Leah: Oh, wow.

Kate: Yeah. So that was a huge part of it. So we source all of our packaging directly, we're not relying on a third party. All of our suppliers we work with directly, we don't have to work through any sort of agent or trading, and that eliminates a ton of costs. And that way we can just pass it right on. And then I'll tell you also, when you mentioned the quality we work with medical grade, really high quality cosmeceutical experts. I mean, when I tell you, we're talking about doctors, PhD level chemists, R&D, that really, really know what they're doing. And we never buy anything, like, you'll see a lot of companies kind of just buy stuff off the shelf. There's a lot of cosmetic companies and brands that will say, "Alright, I'm going to source face masks from Korea, but I'm just going to buy with the suppliers already making," because it's easy. Right? When we started out, we developed a clean beauty ethos long before anybody else had one. We had a list of ingredients that we would never, ever, ever, ever consider putting in our products. And that's almost impossible, because it makes it really, really hard. So we've always said, you know, no synthetic fragrances, no, this, no that, we had this whole, whole, whole no artificial dye, no parabens. And we were doing that in 2013 when nobody was talking about clean beauty.

Leah: Wow.

Kate: So those were sort of like the main structures that we built the brand on, and that's why it's able to be affordable. And sometimes I feel like we give too much product, like in the case of the serum that you just held up

Leah: It's huge.

Kate: But it's also designed for body, and I'm like, "We can't sell something to someone for their body that's this big, you know?"

Leah: So I can use this on my face and my body?

Kate: Absolutely. The whole premise behind the Sculpt range is that it's all about, so we've basically moved from sheet masks, then we started doing spot treatments, then we started doing specific areas like neck and chest and. So Sculpt is really designed to treat you from head to toe.

And that's what Miss Spa is now, it's head to toe spa results at home.

Leah: I love that. And we have this on video. So some of you are going to see this on YouTube or our site, and you're going to see these products that I'm holding up. If not, I will explain them to you. So one of the things that she has is this LED, what is this thing called?

Kate: Light therapy.

Leah: The light therapy. It's so neat. And I didn't even know about this, but you can use the serums with it. And I started doing that, my husband's like, "What are you doing?" I was like, "Becoming beautiful. Calm down." No, but I loved it because it had more beautiful, but, um, there's different colors for different needs. So like some are for brightening, and what's awesome is I'm like getting beauty, obsessed, the older I get, but I love it because you can use it for like, if you've been in the sun a lot, especially like this time of year, when you've all been out in the sun, and now you can use this light therapy to help you eliminate some of those dark spots. And so I love that the products that you have that explain how to use them, what you need, what it's for, and it's at a price that you can actually afford. So thank you so much.

Kate: Well, we're going to be offering, I'm so glad that you like it and you've been

using it. I love using that with the serums too, because you can really feel the effect of it. And LED is so big right now in general, you're looking at so many products that are out there, and it's all proven information, you know, that's, what's so great. And, and then we really try to like double down with having the serums available and we also have the medical grade, silicone patches that are reusable.

Leah: Let's talk about those, I have those right now. I just got them and I'm using them tonight.

Kate: Good!

Leah: So I'm so excited. So this was the one, there's a neck patch that I was going to put on before this, but I was like, she might think I'm weird. And then there's chest. I'm a side sleeper and it's so cool. It says like, it's your friend for side sleepers. And then I just saw this one too. A lot of women, let's talk about this one it's called the body patch. Can they use this on C-section scars?

Kate: Yes. So these are all medical grade

Leah: Let's talk about that really quickly. Y'all see, if you have had a C-section or any major scars. This is a 20 times a reusable patch that is medical grade.

Kate: They're amazing. And I'm going to tell you, they really work. I mean, I've been using them and testing them through a medical grade, there's actually a company that dermatologists and medical doctors use. Interestingly enough, they're right down the street from, from Miss Spa. But I looked at them and I thought, "We have got to figure out how to do these in a way, number one, again, it comes back to the value proposition. I wanted to have more and more products that were reusable." And I felt like if you can get a sheet mask for \$4 for a one-time use, why not offer a patch that you can use over and over again? So that's where the premise of Sculpt. But it really helps trap the hydration, and it really helps, especially on your face. Like the one that I sent you that has, so there's a forehead, there's under-eye, then there's one that kind of like is your entire mouth and there's neck.

Leah: I think if anyone is watching this video, they a hundred percent trust you because when we got on the call, you had these beautiful glasses on and I was like, you look like J-Lo. And so we're not going to talk about age, but you did reveal that you have a 16 year old. So you're older than 20, and you look amazing. So I'm like, I'm going to buy whatever you create. Cause it obviously is working. And I love that.

Kate: I use it all on myself and I love it.

Leah: I love that you are a woman-owned company, and you are creating products that you're passionate about, and you look amazing. So it's kind of like the full package right there.

Kate: Thank you.

Leah: I do want to talk a little bit about the family dynamics that you've had as you've been growing this company, because as you mentioned, you have a 16 year old, but I do want to talk about you traveling to Asia, you know, when you had younger children, because I think so often there's this thing called mom guilt, and I know that every mom has, I mean, every woman has it of all the things that we do. I want to talk how you made decisions on when to go, when to not go, what did your village look like that helps you with your kids, so that we can talk about what did your daughters get to see and learn by watching their mother, leave them sometimes and create this incredible business, and what has that done for them? Right? So I really want to get into that a little bit, because that's a part of your story that I really love and I'm excited to share.

Kate: Yeah, well, you know, I traveled a ton. I mean, I was gone every eight weeks, every couple months in Asia. That's where all of our products were made at the time. We now manufacturer in multiple different countries, so that's changed somewhat. I traveled up to being seven months pregnant, I mean, which I can't even believe. I remember people on the airplane looking at me like, "Oh my gosh, this is frightening that she's flying," which was funny. So I was really fortunate though. I had great help, my family is all based here. And I had au pairs and various different babysitters, but the kids didn't know any differently. You know? I mean, I guess that's the most important thing. It wasn't like it just started when they were eight, you know, it was before they were even born, I was always on that track. So they knew me as being the globe-trotting mom who was always on the go. And my biggest thing was like, I'd be gone for a set amount of time. I never would miss holidays or birthdays. I could always work my own schedule, which was great. But when I was home, I was really home, you know, I mean, that's the part that was important. And I know my daughter would say that now, if we were to pop her on the call, which I'm sure she would have a whole story to tell. She's kind of like mini Miss Spa, we always laugh because she's got so many ideas and she's kind of learned this entire business through me, you

know? I mean, she's always been by my side, and she goes out product development, shopping with me, and she comes in the office, she was actually fulfilling the e-commerce orders during the early days of COVID. So she's very linked to it. I mean, there were times definitely that I felt guilty and bad but, you know, at the end of the day it was what I did and I was, it was my job and I was responsible for the family and responsible for the company. So it was kind of like, there was no option. It's not like I had, could just hire somebody else and have them do the traveling. I was always the one that worked with the suppliers, and I was the one who was on the relationship side of things. So it wasn't, I don't know, to me, it was kind of like, it was, I didn't have a choice. And I think sometimes when you don't have a plan B or you don't see any other option available, you don't know what you don't know. So there was a big piece of that, but gosh, now it's like, I try, you know, I travel so much less. I mean, even Asia, I went to, I was in Asia in January and I don't think I have been... I was right there right before all this stuff happened, but I travel so much less. I tend to do more of Europe now, and really globally. I mean, I go everywhere. That's my inspiration. And I think that's been the hardest part is like not being able to go places and like see product and go shopping and talk to people. And I'm so curious, and I'm so interested in that whole product side of it that that's been kind of a killer.

Leah: That's awesome. Now, did you. Take the miles that you get, and did you ever travel with your family outside of work to say like, "This is why I do that, so we can go in and have those types of things," or do your kids like to travel?

Kate: They love to travel. They're dying right now that they can't go anywhere. I mean, I don't think we've been anywhere since Christmas, over Christmas last year we went to Florida, but we don't have anything scheduled at this point. We we've just been taking a little, like, you know, long weekends, my daughter turned 16, so we went and did like a girl's weekend with some of her friends. And that was fun. But they 100% know, I mean, they say to me all the time, "We know how hard you work and we know what you do for us." And there's no shortage of them, not being 100% aware of that.

Leah: I love that.

Kate: Yeah. It's really cool.

Leah: So when you look at your children, what are you the most proud of that you see that they've learned from you pursuing really hard, your passion, building your business? What is it that you see in them that you're like, "Oh, I'm so proud of that."

Kate: They're both really self-sufficient, they're both really resourceful. They are both very focused and able to kind of hold their own. I would say in the case of my daughter, for sure, very mature, like wise beyond her years, which I always was, you know, I was like born 16 or 18. I don't know. Like I was always sort of, you know, my parents were like, you're an old, soul. I'm like, "Alright, I don't know what that means, but hopefully it's good." But I think that they're both very entrepreneurial. So my daughter has like a clothes account where she sells any clothes, like she's rocking it with the clothes account. I mean, they're both very focused on helping out, they're great. I mean, both of them are both really similar and a lot of the same ways. And I know a lot of it has to do with all those values that I've instilled or that they've seen firsthand.

Leah: I love that. And so let's talk a little bit about what you are doing now and next. I mean, you've been a business owner for a while, and you have mentored a lot of women. So what is it that you're kind of passionate about when you think of like what you're giving back or what legacy you're leaving? Like what does that look like?

Kate: Well, one of the things that you mentioned of like helping other entrepreneurs, specifically female. So I'm involved with DePaul University with their Women's Entrepreneurial Institute, and I'm actually leading a seminar next week on sales and marketing with some of these women.

Leah: Oh cool.

Kate: And it's just been really fun. I love mentoring. If somebody comes to me, you know, there's nothing makes me happier than helping someone. Whether it's like on the product side, cause they know I can help them with that or the design side, or maybe they've got like legal or financial questions. So I just love to help, that's kind of how I am and I'm like a huge networker. So anytime I can't help, I'll always find somebody who can. And I just believe that there's a whole element of like paying it forward. I had these amazing women that helped me and amazing guides along the way, which I feel so fortunate, not necessarily always women. I've had amazing people throughout my career that really helped form who I am and where I am now. So I don't forget that. I'm a big, big believer in helping others, because I don't want any, anybody to have to go through the suffering part that I did. If I can like, make it easy for them, not necessarily easy, but at least eliminate some of the struggle.

Leah: Yeah.

Kate: Or some of the roadblocks, you know, like to me, it's like, why not? I want to do that. So that's a big part of it.

Leah: I love that. And thank you as a woman entrepreneur. I appreciate that because there's like a thousand questions and I'm like, "Hmm, how do I get you to teach a sales and marketing for the women of Her Story of Success? I'm going to tap into that for sure.

Kate: Tap me! For sure, it's fine.

Leah: When you think about the struggles that you want to prevent women from going through, I'd love to talk about that a little bit. Cause I know the things that like, I've been in sales and it's like, "Oh, ask people what keeps them up at night." And I laugh now as a business owner, because I'm like, "Oh my God, do you want me to make a list? Like what day? 2 a.m., 4 a.m., like before I try to go to bed, what are we talking about?" But what are some of those things that either felt debilitating at the time, or maybe almost made you quit? And what did it look like to either figure out that step or get help or that kind of thing?

Kate: Financing is always tricky. I think that ends up becoming such a hurdle and just, it's such a big problem, especially with women. I mean, there's very unattractive statistics around women owned businesses and survival rate and percentages, and the amount that even make it over a million dollars. Right? It's a very, very small percentage. So I think that was one of the things that was really tricky for me is when I started a business, I had no way to finance anything. And I remember walking into a bank and them being like, "Well, do you have inventory?" "No." "Well, do you have real estate?" "No." You know, it's like I had nothing. And I guess the only good thing was that I had had good jobs and I had credit, and I financed my business off of credit cards. Which is like, insane to think that I did that, but whatever. You do what you have to do, you know, there's people that have done a lot worse during COVID.

Leah: Oh yeah.

Kate: So I was fortunate that I had that, but like, I'm a big believer in bootstrapping, and at the same time, it's hard. It's really, really hard to try to get enough capital going to be able to start a business and turn it into something real. At a certain point, you have to have help. And it's that whole getting to that point and figuring out what you need. And that to me was probably the biggest struggle. I was fortunate that I was able to start the company and have enough revenue to get things going pretty

quickly, but that's not always the case for people, especially service businesses. You know, I have such a different view now because I have so many friends and specifically women in business and they don't have a product to sell. They're selling a service. And there's only so much of them that they can sell, and you know, it definitely changes the dynamic.

Leah: Oh, absolutely. I appreciate that. One of the things my business partner is super passionate about is helping women understand the options of financing and creative ways to get financing. Because like you said, it's a lot harder for a woman to get a business loan. And she and I talk a lot about kind of venture capital and how that's a sexy way to get money and you can do it quickly, but such a small percentage of companies actually fit that model. And so what about the rest of them? What about the majority of companies, especially small women business owned companies that are trying to reach a million dollars? So I think that's a conversation I'm going to be having a lot more of over the next few years, is just how do we get more women funded? I think that you and I talked about SheEO, it's a company that's trying to reimagine and redesign financing businesses, both getting women capital, but also how to invest into companies that's not this like two and 20%. So I love that more of us are having that conversation and putting that focus on there.

Well, just a couple more questions for you. Number one, what all products do you have? Where can we find you and connect with you personally?

Kate: Awesome. So Miss Spa is available on our missspa.com website as well as at Ulta, Target, Walgreens, CVS, Kroger, many different retailers across the country. And then our men's line, which is called M Skincare, is available at CVS and Meyer. And then we have a naturals brand that's called Naturally Good for You that's available at Ulta. So we've got several different brands. All of them are available on our websites, which is great. We've really been focusing on e-commerce a lot. And I'm available on LinkedIn, Instagram, wherever, and people reach out to me all the time. You know, it's like, I get all sorts of like, I love your products. And I was just actually DM-ing with a guy who is like a huge lover of our men's skincare products, and it turns out he's in Chicago. So I just sent him a message like "I'm in Chicago too, thank you so much!" I always try to reach out to our fans, whether they're influencers or just customers and just regular people who love the product that reach out. I love that.

Leah: Yeah. Well, I'm sure you get it a lot because your products are amazing. And I think people are, I mean, honestly, it's probably a little shocked because they're like,

“Oh my gosh, I can afford this.” And then you use it and you're like, “Whoa.” I will tell you, like, if I can give one, I'm going to buy this for the rest of my life, it's the mask that it's two pieces and it's gold.

Kate: Oh the hydrogold hydrogel.

Leah: Oh my gosh. That changed my life. I know everyone does different days of self care, and I love that you say self care should be every day, but I love it on Mondays, because a lot of times Mondays are really hard. And so Monday nights I will put on one of your masks and like chill out, or that's when I start using the ILED thing. So that's like my Monday night ritual. And then, you know, you've got the sheet masks and then the clay masks, I use both. So they're amazing.

Kate: I love it.

Leah: And then I do want to ask, how do you define success today in this season of your life?

Kate: Probably the first word that would come to mind is freedom. I completely associate success with freedom, and that's been a big theme recently for me, even not being able to travel like I'm used to, and it's freedom from a lot of different things. I don't mean like pure freedom, but really just being able to be free to do what I do best, and having a team that allows me to do that. And I wouldn't have them if we didn't have the success at the companies. So I think that that's a huge part of it. Freedom is really important. I think there's a saying, everybody says, you never know who you're really working for. And it's true. You never really know. Right? But I like to think that freedom and having control over my destiny and being able to do the things that I want to do and have people around me that are happy and successful. That's the best thing ever.

Leah: Oh, I love that Kate, and I love you. I appreciate you being on Her Story of Success. It's been literally one of the joys of my life meeting you. You're just one of those women that, I knew of you, and then I got to know you and I was like, “Oh my gosh. She's even more incredible and amazing.”

Kate: Thank you, you are too.

Leah: So I hope that we have a relationship for a long time. Cause you're amazing, and I'll be a fan forever. So yes. So thank you so much. And um, I look forward to

hosting you again soon.

Kate: Can't wait.

Leah: Thanks for tuning in! At Her Story of Success, we are on a mission to help women-business owners, leaders and professionals build your tribe and reach your next level of success by connecting you to one another, equipping you with resources and empowering you along your journey. We would love for you to be a part of our tribe and further this mission by sharing this podcast with a friend or co-worker you want to help succeed.. And you can stay up to date with all of our episodes, blogs and events by signing up for our newsletter at Herstoryofsuccess.com.

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