

Agency for Change Podcast: Kelly St. John, Founder and CEO of KSJ Collective

Announcer:

Welcome to Agency for Change, a podcast from KidGlov that brings you the stories of changemakers who are actively working to improve our communities. In every episode, we'll meet with people who are making a lasting impact in the places we call home.

Lyn Wineman:

Hey everyone. This is Lyn Wineman, president of KidGlov, welcome to another episode of the Agency for Change podcast. Now today's guest has a story that on the surface sounds a bit like an entrepreneurial version of a Hallmark movie. Small town girl with a dream, heads to a big city, gets a job, works hard, rises to the top, and then gives up her corporate office to follow a passion with her own business. Welcome, Kelly St. John, founder and CEO of KSJ Collective, a woman-owned, woman-led, strategic growth consultancy for the beauty industry, specializing in the indie prestige and luxury segments. How are you today Kelly?

Kelly St. John:

I'm great Lyn, and I'm super excited to be part of your podcast. So thank you for having me.

Lyn Wineman:

Absolutely. And Kelly, thank you for taking the time today because I know how busy entrepreneurs are. And before we dive into that, what we're calling your entrepreneurial Hallmark story, would you just start by telling us more about KSJ Collective?

Kelly St. John:

Absolutely. As you mentioned, KSJ Collective is a strategic growth consultancy for the beauty industry. That said, we do work up with a few clients who don't fall within beauty and are more in the accessory space, but mostly we are about the beauty space. After honing my brand building skills, leading the beauty business and human markets for two decades, I started this business based upon my vision or version you could say of these three P's. And to me, those three P's were passion, partnership and performance. And our mission is to just, to bring the right products to the right partners and build a successful business, sell and grow brands that really are going to define the future of the beauty industry.

Lyn Wineman:

I love your three P's. Passion, partnership and performance, that sounds fantastic. And so, Kelly, can you give us an example of some of the brands that you're working with, and how your team is supporting them?

Kelly St. John:

Well, we work with nearly 40 clients. So I always say that choosing one is a challenge. It's kind of like choosing your favorite child, but I think based upon your question, I think the best example that provides a true 360 picture of how we work with a brand throughout the various stages of their business lifecycle

would be a brand called Biophile. This brand entered the market in fall of 2019. At which time we worked with them to help fine tune their messaging and get ready for go to market. Biophile was one of the first microbiome friendly brands to market. And their science is deeply rooted in their proprietary biotic broths that are powered by probiotic bacteria, and botanicals, and super food that are in a unique bio fermentation process that results in this amazing, nutrient dense broth that supports the skin's microbiome. So that's a lot of words, right?

Lyn Wineman:

I'm going to jump in and say, that sounds really cool, right? Yeah.

Kelly St. John:

Yes. It's very cool. It's leading science. It truly, you will hear a lot about the microbiome in the future, but they were one of the really, the first brands to enter the market in this space. So we knew it was interesting and we also knew the messaging really needed to be fine-tuned. So once we had that positioning and their go-to market strategy finalized, we then developed a retail distribution strategy and we led the brand in launching with five key retail partners in August of 2020. Clearly, as we all know that smack dab-

Lyn Wineman:

Interesting timing.

Kelly St. John:

Smack dab in the midst of the global pandemic. We like to say that this brand was a COVID baby, because they truly launched during COVID. And we literally were out there pitching, and talking to retailers about amazing partnerships, and then the world shut down. And anyway, so we worked with the brand to negotiate those retail partnerships at what would have been, one would have thought, a really challenging time where you would not be opening new distribution. We went on to negotiate the marketing strategies with those partners that resulted in a successful launch.

Kelly St. John:

And then as the brand was ready, and at the point to kick off their first capital raise, we then shifted into a service where we were assisting them with investor relations. And an introduction actually that led to their first seed round, which had just actually closed and is about to be publicly announced. So from here going forward, we're supporting the brand in the growth of their direct-to-consumer business, which is their key priority now. And then we also provide education and sales management services for their retail partners. So this is a good example of us working with a brand literally from go-to-market all the way through their, really about their first 18 months of life cycle. And our hope is that Biophile will be part of the KSJ family, and we'll continue to work with them as they evolve into the next stages.

Lyn Wineman:

Kelly, that is really a great example. Thank you for that because it really illustrates how the Collective goes deep with a brand like Biophile, starting in the beginning, and how you can continue to support them as they grow and change in the market. And we had an earlier conversation where we talked about significant shifts that happened in consumer behavior as the result of everything that happened in the

past year. And I'm guessing this dramatically impacted the lens from which retail buyers are viewing potential new brands. Can you speak to that a little bit?

Kelly St. John:

Yes, it really did. And it was not just one thing. Many, probably five years ago now there was a big shift into formula integrity, clean ingredients, retailers scrambling to figure out what was their definition of clean ingredients. And so when we say by clean ingredients, there's a number of no-no's, or nasties as many retailers refer to them as, and these are things like pegs and different sorts of ingredients that truly can be cancer causing, can be disruptive to your hormone balance, et cetera. So that was one really big shift and really truly, fast forward to a few years later, clean is really table stakes. So if you're a new brand launching in today's space, I mean, buyers really are no longer asking, "Are you a clean brand?" Because they assume you are a clean brand based on the technology that's out there.

Kelly St. John:

And then the other really big trend was with everything that happened in our country last June with Black Lives Matter, that really caused a major shift amongst the retailers as they really forged together. And Sephora was one of the first ones to establish their 15% pledge and commitment to work towards an assortment offering where at least 15% of the brands were BIPOC founders. Some retailers were focused more on, specifically on Black Lives founders, but really BIPOC founders. So covering the gamut. And this, looking at a 15% pledge, a lot of these retailers realized they had a long road ahead of them. A lot of them were at 4% or 5%. And so this isn't something that is a one and done type of thing. It's something that they're continuing to work upon and allocate additional marketing budgets to these brands to really help them grow.

Kelly St. John:

And then the other trend that I think is worth mentioning is that with what we have all experienced this past year during a global pandemic, the rise of self-care rituals, really truly impacted both the skincare category and the body and wellness category. So more customers were focused not on just their skincare, but realizing that your body is 90% of the skin on your body, and it was important. And all of a sudden bathing rituals, and baths, and those types of things became critically important. Buyers could not keep bath products or soap in stock and then wellness brands that were focused on ingestibles, and nutrition, and supplements have been really huge. So despite the craziness of this past year, it's been an exciting time in the beauty industry with regards to trends and new innovations.

Lyn Wineman:

I am a big believer that last year, 2020 was a strange year, but for people who were really on top of it, and looking for new opportunities, and staying positive, and working hard, that good things came from it. And a lot of those things that you just mentioned really, I think are a good example of that. And as I hear you talk and talk about self-care and wellness, but also Biophile and clean products. I mean, what is it like Kelly, being surrounded by all of these great products? Are you just trying new things all the time?

Kelly St. John:

Oh, that is an understatement, Lyn. My bathroom doors and products, I have to keep them really organized to be clear on what I'm testing, and how long I've tested, and... But yes, having worked for the Estée Lauder Companies prior to working in beauty at Neiman Marcus, I literally have been testing various beauty products on my face and my body for over two decades. And as a buyer, one of your

primary objectives is to vet all the many brands, which lead to then that retail buyer curating this amazing product offering to their customers, who can feel assured that these brands have been vetted and tested. So customers should know that. I mean buyers take it very seriously. When I was leading beauty at Neiman Marcus, we would have never brought on a brand that was not thoroughly tested by our team.

Kelly St. John:

And now having my own business, that same process applies, we would never add a brand to our portfolio that we had not previously tested their products, reviewed them for efficacy. And honestly, we have to fall in love with them, we have to be passionate about them. So I guess as a result of all of this, I like to at least tell myself that I can pass for a few years under the name that my driver's license says. So I guess that's proof that by dedicated skincare regimen from an early age might yield some results.

Lyn Wineman:

I am going to say 100%. People can't see you on the podcast, but because we're recording on Zoom, I can see you. And I'm just going to say I'm jealous, which is the best compliment I can give you.

Kelly St. John:

Oh, thank you.

Lyn Wineman:

So Kelly, I'd like to go back to your story. We connected actually because you and my husband, Neil, went to high school together in Lexington, Nebraska, not the biggest of all metropolitan areas, for sure. When and how did you realize you wanted to leave Lexington and Nebraska for a larger city?

Kelly St. John:

Oh gosh. I'm always mixed when I tell this story, because I have such an appreciation for my upbringing in Nebraska, and there are so many wonderful things about my childhood. I mean, literally growing up in a community where I recall us not ever locking our doors to our cars, or houses for anything. It's something that I think few people can say today, but I distinctly recall the moment, I think I was in about the second grade and we were leaving for a family vacation. And of course in those days, none of us had any electronic devices to keep out of our parents hair. And so my mom had bought a number of books that were in the back seat, and the three of us kids were sitting back there trying to entertain ourselves, and not touch each other.

Kelly St. John:

And I think I spent that entire trip diving into this particular book that she had bought. And it was about all of the states in the United States. And I literally spent that entire time in the car, I remember looking, and reading about every state, and picking where I thought that one day I would surely move to a big city. But I still say today, even though that definitely was always a vision for me, I definitely attribute some of my success to the work ethic and the appreciation that is a large part of the values and the community, and that was a part of my upbringing. So, but I always knew I would live in a big city.

Lyn Wineman:

Absolutely. So you ended up in Dallas, how did you get your start in the beauty industry then?

Kelly St. John:

Well, that's an interesting story. I was always enamored with the beauty industry, but to be really honest, when I graduated from college even with a marketing degree, I didn't really understand how I would really get to have a career in the beauty industry, and what that path would look like. Which I think was one of the reasons that ultimately I had the vision of moving to New York, because of course I knew that was where most of the big corporate companies in beauty were based.

Kelly St. John:

But I moved to Dallas with the dream of getting accepted into the Neiman Marcus Executive Training Program. And I had read a book called *Minding the Store* by Stanley Marcus, during a merchandising course that I took at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. And so I set my sights on Neiman Marcus and... But then, of course having adopted a seven step Estée Lauder ritual at the age of 13, because living in a small community, there wasn't a lot of really amazing big brands available.

Kelly St. John:

And so when we turned 13, it was kind of a ritual. My mom would drive us to Kearney, Nebraska, to this little boutique called, I think it was called Schweitzer. I don't know if I'm saying that right. But anyway, they had an Estée Lauder counter, a very small one. And we would have complete skincare consultation and makeup. And from that day forward, my sister and I used to... We had a seven step skincare regimen in our entire teenage life. I was the girl in my sorority that was standing there at two in the morning, taking all my makeup off and doing my seven steps skincare regimen while everyone else was just jaunting off to bed with their mascara on. But anyway, so I was always kind of enamored and during one of my many interviews at Neiman Marcus, of course, I wandered down to the main floor of the flagship store of Neiman Marcus to the beauty department.

Kelly St. John:

And then by pure coincidence, I met the vice president of training education, who just happened to be in the store that day, doing a quarterly visit. And I asked her, how one would get started in a career with a company like Estée Lauder. And at that point she shared that they were currently interviewing for promotional assistance. She told me a little bit about it. I interviewed a few days later and the rest is history.

Lyn Wineman:

That's fantastic.

Kelly St. John:

I accepted the job and went to work for Estée Lauder instead of Neiman Marcus. And I quickly moved up within the organization. I was the director of specialty accounts and then with being based in Dallas, Neiman Marcus was my corporate call. And so I spent obviously a lot of time at Neiman Marcus and in the end, got recruited to join Neiman's, first leading their NorthPark beauty department, which is their number one beauty business in the country. And so began an amazing career in the next chapter with Neiman Marcus, where I eventually became an officer of the company and vice-president of beauty.

Lyn Wineman:

That's amazing, I mean, two mega brands, Estée Lauder and Neiman Marcus, you climb the corporate ladder, successful corporate career, but then made you want to try something different and go out on your own?

Kelly St. John:

Like so many people, I think when I hit that 20-year mark with a company, something went off in my mind. I couldn't believe that 20 years had gone by, I had been fortunate that every three or four years I would get tapped to take on a different area of responsibility. And oftentimes those were in different locations and different teams. So it always kind of felt like I was moving to a new job every three or four years. And then all of a sudden all those jobs, and all those years equal 20 years. And I really wanted to spend time thinking about, okay, what would that next chapter of my career look like? Would it be at Neiman Marcus or would it not? And it was really the first time I had thought about that.

Kelly St. John:

I just think I had always assumed I would be with Neiman Marcus and retire with them. It was an amazing, amazing company. And so why would I ever leave? But then I really, with some soul searching, my passion was beauty and I really truly kind of felt that I had achieved great success being a leading member of the team that built many beauty brands from small emerging brands into the titans that they are today, and then grew the Neiman Marcus beauty business to be the number one business for the company. So at that point, I thought, okay, I think I want to leave while I could still look back and maybe say, "Gosh, this was an amazing ride with Neiman Marcus." And so I, for the first time in my career started like looking around and actually paying attention to the many executive recruiters that had unsuccessfully tried to reach me over the years.

Kelly St. John:

And I really realized that my passion was emerging brands, and I wanted to use the skills and the talent that I was afforded by the exposure of building all these amazing brands over the years. And so what appeared to be an amazing opportunity fell into my lap very quickly. I took a leap to be the president of a growing beauty brand. I truly thought that it would be my swan song. I ended up leaving that company after 11 weeks. And so clearly a blip in otherwise a brilliant career with Estée Lauder and Neiman Marcus.

Lyn Wineman:

But I bet you've learned a lot from that experience, even though it was short.

Kelly St. John:

Yeah. Yeah. You learn a lot about the difference of working in a very insulated within a huge corporation and working for a smaller company and you just learn a lot. You learn a lot about what is the right fit for you. So I took a couple months to do a lot of research and soul searching, and I worked with an executive coach, and about three months later after I left that job, that wasn't the right fit, I started KSJ Collective. And my vision from day one was beautifying the world one brand at a time. And I actually, a friend of mine who was a big supporter for me starting my business, we were talking on the phone and she actually said that. She's like, "That's what you do. That's what you need to build your company around." And it became my tagline, for my company. So that was really the moment that led me into the world of entrepreneurship.

Lyn Wineman:

Kelly, what an amazing journey. And what an amazing mission for you to have. So now, you started the collective, what has it been like now developing it? Because I imagine maybe things have changed from day one to now, maybe even quite a bit.

Kelly St. John:

Yes, absolutely, quite a bit. And I think that was definitely one of the naive moments I had. As always a very strategic minded business woman, I did a lot of soul searching, and research, and defined what I thought my business would be, and filed for my LLC right away, started working on my website, and was so focused on building what I envisioned to be the way my business would always be. And I had many friends who said, "Don't get so tied to that. Don't spend so much time on your website because you know what? Your business is going to evolve." And my response was always like, "Oh, no. No, it's not going to evolve. I know what I want it to be and that's what I'm building."

Kelly St. John:

And sure enough, I started my business with the thought process that I never wanted to have a team. It was just going to be me and I never wanted to work with more than two or three brands at a time in significant scopes of work where I was almost serving as a fractional CEO or CMO. And so that's the way my business started. And I quickly learned, because of a couple brands that were very, very small and they had wanted to work with me. And initially my thought was, "Oh, no. No. No. No. You are just too small for what I'm doing now." And I shifted and I gave those small brands a chance. And quickly realized that that was the passion that really fed my soul. And that working with brands at such an early stage, I could have such impact and help them to achieve things in such a quicker amount of time than they could navigate in solo.

Kelly St. John:

So I changed my business model and ultimately, I guess about a year ago, I had built my business. So that was about two years in. I had built my business. It was still just me and I was servicing about 12 clients, loving what I did, but clearly my plate was getting very full. And so then with that, obviously we have, I like to say that the best way to describe it is my business has evolved with the life cycle and business needs of my very loyal clients. We're three years in, and for the most part, every single client that we have ever worked with is still with us. They may not be with us in a full capacity. They may have moved into an advisory role, et cetera, but for the most part, every single client is with us. And so we've evolved as they have evolved, and as their needs have evolved.

Lyn Wineman:

That's really fantastic Kelly, I love that story. And I love the fact that you are flexible enough, and astute, and strategic too, to shift with your clients. I think that kind of client retention is pretty amazing. So you talked about, you had quite a lot of growth in the last year, which was a global pandemic. I know from personal experience that being a business owner during a pandemic is not an easy thing. How did COVID-19 impact your work?

Kelly St. John:

Oh gosh. COVID-19, I think for my work and everyone I know was such... I mean, it still is, it's just such a crazy period in our life. But I would say that the shutting down of retail across the country is a week that I

will never forget. I mean, just the constant, "Oh my gosh Sephora just announced. Oh my gosh, Bluemercury just announced." It was just like across the airwaves within the industry. And I remember thinking we all thought that, okay, we'll be shut down for a couple of weeks. I remember having all these strategy meetings with buyers and brands thinking, okay, well, we will be this way for about a month. And then what's our strategy like forward? So there was definitely a moment that I had that fear, kind of that, wait a second, is everything that I've built for the past two years going to come crashing down, like in a nanosecond?

Kelly St. John:

But actually, there was definitely that month of kind of an uncertainty. And I had a few clients that wanted to... They want to know what should we do? And I mean, they were in a position that they really, it didn't make sense for them to continue at the level that they were. So we went into a, keep the lights on retainer policy with some of those brands. And then the contrary happened. My existing clients needed to pivot. And once we realized that this wasn't going to be a two week or a four week kind of hiatus, they really wanted to use that time that they weren't traveling around the country, supporting all of their retail accounts. They wanted to hone in on their business opportunities that they had not fully engaged in, because they were too preoccupied with traveling, and engagements, and all those kinds of things.

Kelly St. John:

Then quickly thereafter, the inbound referrals just multiply to find month over month that we had so many brands that needed strategic guidance to navigate something such as this, that no one had faced personally or professionally. So last year at this time, was still just me managing, as I said, approximately a dozen clients. Today, a fast forward, I have a team of three full-timers, and two part-timers, and we service-

Lyn Wineman:

That's great.

Kelly St. John:

... Nearly 40 clients and growing with a waiting list. So it's I look back on this year and I don't know, I think I'm still processing everything that transpired.

Lyn Wineman:

Well, I can only imagine too, there must've been a time when it was just you, that it just felt like you couldn't even take a breath. So I always love hearing the stories of how businesses grow. And one thing I'm actually curious about, about your industry Kelly, is we've all seen that movie, *The Devil Wears Prada*, is the beauty industry as cutthroat as that movie might make us think?

Kelly St. John:

That's such a great question, Lyn. And actually, that's one of my favorite movies. I have actually never been asked that question, but my answer would be not at all. It's quite the opposite. And of course, I mean, I think that you can certainly say that there might be some *Devil Wears Prada* moments between the big strategics in the industry.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Kelly St. John:

It's not like the Estée Lauder companies, and the L'Oreal companies, and LBMH are all being friendly, friendly, and sharing, and supporting, and lifting up one another. But I will tell you that I find that the founders in the emerging space, which of course by design is really the category of business that I choose to be highly involved with. These founders are highly supportive of one another. And that one of the other rewarding aspects of the collective of brands that I have built is many of these brand founders in the collective they've become great thought partners and friends to one another. Some of them have even started to do it, masterclasses with each other and support each other's business because it's quite complimentary. So it's just, I would say in general, especially in the emerging space, that the beauty industry, it's just a wonderful community of women supporting women for the most part.

Lyn Wineman:

That is great to hear. And so Kelly, we've talked about your entrepreneurial journey, but along the way, you got married, you raised a family, you have two growing boys, how do you find time for it all?

Kelly St. John:

Yeah, oh gosh. I always say, I just need an extra 24 hours in a day. Don't we all? But for me, children was a non-negotiable, and also career was a non-negotiable. I knew those two things early on before I even thought about family or getting married. And somehow I managed to make time for all of it, but I never... And I had kids later in life. And I never questioned for a moment whether or not I would continue to work after having kids. And I don't know, I just instinctively knew that I would be a better mother, because I have a career that I'm passionate about, and I feel that I'm also a better business woman and a better leader because I have children. And of course it goes without saying, I mean, none of that can be accomplished without a long time nanny that is like family to us.

Kelly St. John:

And an extremely supportive husband, who views the role of being a parent as an equal. So it takes a village to make it all happen, but it definitely can all happen. And I like to think, I know my... It was a big deal for my boys when I left Neiman Marcus, they always looked up to that. And I knew they were so proud of me and then to watch them, as I have built my business, has also been really rewarding to see, because I think it's such a great modeling for your children to be able to see you as adults. Have passion for both your profession and your personal life.

Lyn Wineman:

Kelly, if your experience is anything like mine, your kids are going to learn so much from watching your entrepreneurial journey, the kinds of things that are difficult to teach in a traditional educational setting. And I appreciate the fact to the shout out, to supportive husband, because I hope my husband is listening. Supportive husbands are really important, or supportive spouses, supportive partners, supporting families and friends really important to this process.

Kelly St. John:

Absolutely.

Lyn Wineman:

So, Kelly, what advice do you have for others who have an entrepreneurial dream, but maybe just need some help getting started?

Kelly St. John:

I think I would say that the most important thing is to invest the time doing the research on you. And I think many people would say, "Wait, wait, wait, why do I need to do the research on myself? I mean, don't, I need to be out there researching a million other things?" But the life of an entrepreneur, I mean, it's a different mindset. And especially for individuals, such as myself, that came from a highly structured, very insulated corporate environment, that was very hierarchical in terms of management and decision-making. And so it really takes a unique mindset and a unique individual to be happy, I think, pursuing an entrepreneurial dream. So I think you have to ask yourself, you have to do research and say to yourself, what fills my soul? What are the things that I'm passionate about?

Kelly St. John:

What is it that I offer? What can I provide? And then, of course, there's that work that has to be done as you then take a... Once you define all of that, then you take a look at the competitive landscape. When you have to understand what that looks like, and what's the white space, and is your dream... Will it truly fill... If it'll fill your soul, I guess is what I'm trying to say. Then my advice is you go for it.

Kelly St. John:

And beyond going for it, because you can say, "Oh yeah, that's really just, that's really easy to just go for it." To be successful I do think you have to surround yourself with strong mentors and you have to have equally strong friends and family, as you were saying, that are supportive, and make your vision a reality. And I also think with everything that's happened in the world this past year, there's no better time to venture into an entrepreneurial dream than now. But again, invest the time in doing the research on yourself.

Lyn Wineman:

I love that so much, because when you get busy and as an entrepreneur, there will be days when it seems like there is no way I can get all of this done. It's that passion and that understanding of what drives you, that's going to keep you going against all odds. I love that so much. So Kelly, I have always believed leaders are learners, and I'm always looking for new sources of information. Do you have any particular books, blogs, podcasts, or other sources of inspiration that have been meaningful to you?

Kelly St. John:

Yes. And again, that kind of falls into my wish there was an extra 24 hours in the day, because beyond consuming every ounce of industry news that I can, because to me that is inspirational. I love to really understand what's happening in the industry and on all aspects, but a couple that come to mind that I quite often share. One is *The Upside*, and I'm actually a member. And *The Upside* is it's an award-winning community and accelerator that was developed, I think they started roughly about three years ago. But it was developed for consultants who support and advance one another in business.

Kelly St. John:

And it's led by this woman named Erin Halper. And I will tell you any time that I take time to listen to one of her podcasts or there's a number of, of course member service or a member opportunities that the general public does not have access to, but she also does a lot of free master content. We just did a free master class last week, that was all about being an entrepreneur and how to start your business. But she offers a lot of things on LinkedIn, and they have a Facebook and Instagram page, but every single time I take the moment to listen in to Erin, there's information that I walk away with and apply to my business.

Lyn Wineman:

That is a great reference.

Kelly St. John:

Yeah.

Lyn Wineman:

The Upside.

Kelly St. John:

The Upside.

Lyn Wineman:

All right were going to give that a look.

Kelly St. John:

Yeah, it's great. And when you go to their website, you have to go, I think their website is actually Be The Upside, like B-E The Upside, but I'm on social and everything, it's *The Upside*. And then the other thing that I would be remiss in calling out and I've been so excited at this book was, I've known that it was coming for the last year or more, but Leonard Lauder, Estée Lauder's son, who is the former CEO and chairman of the Estée Lauder companies, currently I'm reading his first book that was released, gosh, I don't know. I lose track of time during COVID, but sometime in the last six months. And the book is called *The Company That I Keep*. And it's all, it's My Life in Beauty written from the vantage point, in the lens of Mr. Leonard Lauder. So he's an inspiration, I think to anyone in business, but especially near and dear to anyone in the beauty industry.

Lyn Wineman:

Fantastic. Two great resources. Thank you for that. And then Kelly, I often find that passionate people like yourself have great words of wisdom. Could you give us an original Kelly St. John quote for our listeners?

Kelly St. John:

Well, I think it's the quote that if you were to survey anybody who's ever worked with me, especially during my many years at Neiman Marcus, they would tell you that Kelly always says something about lipstick. So what I always say to everyone, I just, my kind of my ongoing quote is always show up with your lipstick. And by that, I used to say to my team, I mean, for crying out loud, we're in the beauty industry. So if you're coming to an important meeting, you apply your lipstick before you come. But I think just to me, that just represents so much just about life in general.

Kelly St. John:

So whether it's your lipstick, I mean, so use lipstick as a.... I mean, but you show up with whatever it is that makes you feel that much more strong, that much more empowered. And then obviously, if you're showing up for your friends, or your family, or work environment, I never ever leave home without lipstick on. I honestly, I mean, I put lipstick on every single morning. It is just, there's the power of lipstick is amazing. So I would say for those of you that have never found the right lipstick, there are plenty of resources to help you find the right lipstick and it's life changing to me.

Lyn Wineman:

That is so fantastic. Always show up with your lipstick. I'm going to remember that one forever. Kelly, how can people find out more about you and KSJ Collective?

Kelly St. John:

They can visit our website at ksjcollective.com. And we recently, that was something that came a little late in my business journey because I never quite found the time for it, but we recently launched our Instagram profile at KSJ Collective. And so we're new, we're only a couple months old, but really the impetus for launching a social platform was not so much about highlighting the collective on my business as it was to create this platform that I could shine light on the amazing brands and the amazing founders that are our clients.

Kelly St. John:

And it was always conflicted because there was, as we've grown with so many of these businesses, there was always so many awards and so many milestone events that I wanted to shine light on, but I didn't necessarily want to do that on my personal social platforms. And so finally I hired a fabulous social media manager and we brought it to life a few months ago. So we would certainly like the follows at KSJ Collective.

Lyn Wineman:

Absolutely. I'm going to go follow immediately. Because just hearing earlier how well you vet these brands and how passionate you are about them, I can't wait to see what you are working on and who you're working with. So I have so enjoyed our time together today. And as we wrap up, I just really am curious, Kelly, what is the most important thing you would like people to remember about the work that you're doing?

Kelly St. John:

I think my parting words would have to be, to encourage people to support indie and emerging businesses.

Lyn Wineman:

Yeah.

Kelly St. John:

It doesn't have to just be in beauty. I mean, just in general, especially those that are women-led, BIPOC led. There's just so many amazing products out there, with amazing science, and passion, and

technology behind them. And I think supporting these founders who somehow found the grit that it takes to bring that product to market. I just think it's so important, so that would be my parting words.

Lyn Wineman:

What a great sentiment. Kelly, I always love talking with people who are living their passion, and that really does seem to be the case for you. Thank you so much for joining me on the podcast today.

Kelly St. John:

Thank you, Lyn, for having me.

Announcer:

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