

## Agency for Change Podcast: Brooke Mullen, Founder, Designer & CEO, Sapahn Handbags

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**Brooke Mullen:** 0:01

Do not give in to your weaker self.

**Announcer:** 0:06

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:** 0:30

Hey everyone, this is Lyn Wineman, president of KidGlov. Welcome back to another episode of Agency for Change podcast. Today we are diving deep into the world of ethical fashion with a remarkable guest, Brooke Mullen. She's the founder, designer and CEO of Sapahn Handbags. Brooke's journey with Sapahn is way more than just about fashion. If you follow this brand, you know they are about empowering global communities and championing human rights, which is something you don't hear a lot in the fashion industry. From their roots as a bridge to a better world to becoming Nebraska's most recent certified B Corporation, Sapahn's journey is one of finding beauty and resilience and empowerment. Brooke, I can't wait to talk to you today. Welcome to the podcast.

**Brooke Mullen:** 1:31

Thank you, Lyn, I'm so excited to be here with you.

**Lyn Wineman:** 1:34

I know you're in Miami. I'm in Nebraska. I bet your weather's a lot warmer than mine.

**Brooke Mullen:** 1:42

It definitely is warmer when we're not getting all the crazy weather that you're getting, but I think soon enough that will be reversed.

**Lyn Wineman:** 1:47

Sounds good. Since you have Nebraska history, you know we have to talk about the weather first, but now let's talk about Sapahn. I'd love to have you start by telling us about the brand you have created.

**Brooke Mullen: 2:07**

Yeah, so such a pleasure I'm going to start by maybe as women we've, all can probably relate to being on the hunt for that perfect bag, that perfect bag.

**Lyn Wineman: 2:12**

I'm on the hunt right now. I'm on the hunt right now and when we're done. I'm going to ask you some questions, so all right, sorry to interrupt you, keep going. But yes, I understand.

**Brooke Mullen: 2:22**

Right and we can relate to, like, you know, the thoughtful designs and just like, okay, you know, we dream about all the amazing pockets and the lining that's colorful and not black, where you can't find anything, and not something that has flashy logos, but something really understated that we can have forever and so timeless. Yes, and so that is Sapahn. Sapahn is known for our buttery, soft leather, thoughtful designs, just something very timeless. And, I think, having a bag also, you know, in different things, we, you know, we don't shy away from compliments as women, and oftentimes, when somebody compliments you on your bag or your whatnot, you're like, oh my God, I got it on sale, let me tell you the best deal I got.

**Brooke Mullen: 3:01**

And so Sapahn totally changes that, because there's something so special and so powerful about the story behind that beautiful thing that you're holding, that beauty that you carry, and that's all in the craft of how Sapahn bags are made, who they're made by and the mission that Sapahn's about, which Sapahn means bridge in Thai, and so we empower rural artisans all throughout Thailand and really are trying to flip the script on fashion and really going directly to the source of the people that make our bags and really championing them as a whole, part of a whole brand, and so when you buy something from Sapahn, you're buying something that really is something that you can hold with pride and because of how it's been made and the whole process. So that is Sapahn.

**Lyn Wineman: 3:48**

I love it. I love it. You know you had me at buttery soft leather. I'm like yes, please and the understanding of yes, let's please not have the black liner, where I can't find my pen or my lipstick or any of the things. So I appreciate that so much, but then, as you dive into the story, it makes it so much better. So I'm really curious what inspired you to start Sapahn and how do you see the power of businesses like this creating positive change, because that's so much of the great part of your story.

**Brooke Mullen: 4:24**

It truly is. And the more I've been down this road I'm like, wow, business is wow. We have a huge opportunity to create massive, massive change and mobilize people in the most beautiful way that

honors people and we get to win as business owners because you're really tackling into human potential in a different way. So the interesting story of how Sapahn came to be in the short I'll try to. It's a long journey, but I'll try to shorten it. It all started I was living in Thailand doing masters in human rights. I just had gotten married to another Nebraska guy and he was also doing his PhD in human rights.

I found myself in working at the United Nations on human trafficking. I wasn't really sure what I was going to do with this degree like, what tangible impact I was going to make. I'm not an academic, like my husband was going to be, and but there was a culmination of a lot of experiences, but that happened to create Sapahn as it is today. But the person that started it all gave me this inspiration, this idea was this girl named Mary, from Burma. She's in Myanmar. I meet her, as we were. My husband was doing research, and she was bright. She was like, so socially like, intelligent. Her story was challenging. She was, you know, working six days a week, maybe even seven, supporting her mom at a very young age to survival prostitution on the side make ends meet. But the girl was so brilliant, she knew how to make connections, she knew how to make the systems work and when I asked her, what gets you on this cycle of poverty, she looked at me and said education, quick hands down, no question.

She knew it thinking she knew it because in a in a whole, you know, caste system of women are, you know, second class, there's not a lot of opportunity. And then she doesn't have family and she's poor. Like you're not going to get any opportunities, you have to create them yourself. And when she said education, I kind of thought, well, here I'm wondering, chasing this, like what am I going to do? How am I going to make a tangible impact with this whole degree and this privilege of getting to study, something like this? What am I going to do? And her answer of studying, you know, getting educated. I thought I could figure out a way to create a scholarship. So I asked her in that second I said if I created a scholarship for you to come study in Thailand, would you come study with us? Yeah, and she was like, hands down, yes, this was October of 2009.

Again, a couple months before that, I was studying, just started, my master's started working at the UN and I also. In the meantime, I love markets, I love meeting women who are making things and just building those relationships which, all over Thailand, there's so many beautiful hand things and handmade things. And so I thought, huh, I can take all these. I like knew exactly what I was going to do with this to generate the money. And so that was October of 2009. My husband was like, I think this is awesome, let's try it. I mean, let you try that.

So I'm supposed to be writing my thesis on again on trafficking, doing all these other things, but, like, what lit broke up was this and so I started, you know, connecting with all these women. They were taking me to their villages, six, 12 hours from where I was meeting them outside of Bangkok and learning and seeing how they're making beautiful handmade silk, silver, all these different things and I just bought what they had. I said, great, I love this, I want to buy whatever you have. They told me the price. I took it back to Lincoln, Nebraska, in April of 2010 and had a trunk show at my parents' house and everything sold. Wow, so, I thought, and people were asking, like, where do we get more of this?

I mean they were fighting for bracelets and different things and I thought okay, we were home for a month. I created a business. The next month she moved to Thailand to study with us. We were early twenties, 25 and we were paying for our own education, all the things.

And then here she's coming, and so there was some more nuance. But for the next two and a half years I basically did this whole project as a way to create her scholarship. So anything you bought from Sa pahn, we gave all the profits back to the scholarship and then it just started to evolve and grow from there,

and at one point I was designing nine product lines and nine different villages all throughout the country.

So it would take me 2,500 miles to get to all these different villages, and when I would get to them they'd be like Brooke there's another village so it was just this whole like amazing web and what I now call. You know what scientific terms are. It's a supply chain. But I didn't realize that when I'm, you know, early days, not knowing anything about business or anything about fashion or retail. But then I would come back to Lincoln, Nebraska, and through the Midwest and I'd have pop-up events from October to Christmas. The rest has kind of grown up to be a little bit more of history.

**Lyn Wineman:** 8:54

You've kind of become an accidental entrepreneur. It's like the business part of it is kind of the oh, all of a sudden I had this purpose, I had this dream, I had this vision. It was lighting me up and then it became a business. And I think that's so awesome, because a lot of people go into it the other way. They're like I want to be in business, I want to be an entrepreneur, but what's my thing going to be? And you, you had the thing and it was so tied to your aspirations for the world. Right, and I think that makes it magical.

**Brooke Mullen:** 9:35

Yes, it feels magical and it feels like we just celebrated 14 years and it's like I never, yeah, never thought I'd be designing handbags and have this brand that so many women are connected to and really uphold, in some in such different ways.

**Lyn Wineman:** 9:51

Wow, I love it, Brooke, I love it. So part of your journey now is you are Nebraska's newest certified B Corp and I actually I've never been so excited to not be the only one doing something anymore. Right, like KidGlov is not the only B Corp in Nebraska, we're one of a handful, but up until December we were the only female owned and founded B Corp, and now Sapahn is part of the club, so welcome to the club.

**Brooke Mullen:** 10:23

Thank you. It feels such like a great club to be a part of.

**Lyn Wineman:** 10:26

It is a great club to be a part of, and so I'm curious what is the achievement of becoming a certified B Corp mean for you and the brand and your commitment to the future?

**Brooke Mullen:** 10:40

I love this question and so, from starting off, we kind of started, not the typical way of many, as you mentioned, many businesses but, in addition to how we run a business, is very much bringing human rights, principles and business together. There's a whole field that's new called business and human rights. There's guiding principles at the UN, and it started about the same time I did, and so we were part of in our research. My husband and I were part of some of those early conversations with UNF they

were having at the time back in 2010. But really bringing, how do we make that the foundation of how this is done? Because it honors people and that's, at the end of the day, I think we would all agree. Exploitation and slavery is wrong. So how do we? How do we then, you know, do that, and so we've started from day one, all of our artists set their own wages. So we honor this whole transparency, this whole accountability, this them participating, the whole experience that they are part of our whole system, and so we have a duty to honor them to. You know, do no harm these types of principles, but it's all in action because we go, we know them. Yeah, it started from all these, these things.

And now we've kind of always toyed with the idea do we become a B Corp, do we not? And because we have all the foundations of what a B Corp does. For the longest time it was, I think I just we woke up to to it. We are doing this the hard. This is hard already and it's even harder because we're alone doing it. Yes, why are we alone doing this?

There's so many people 3000 plus in just the US alone of other B corps who think like us, who are facing the same challenges and the same callings to do it differently. And it's like it's so much, it's so exciting to be in that group where different doors open, rather us, and fighting against the grain of like, no, the best way to win isn't to like lower or increase my margins by asking my factory to give me better rates. Like, that's not, that's not the answer. Yeah, and so to be around other inspiring and aspiring brands and leaders. And it's just feels like a no brainer and very excited again to what all we can continue to collectively do. And I like part of it's also encouraging other people who are acting in the same way that Sapahn did or similar to also join this whole movement. It only empowers. I mean, at the end of the day, we want to empower and create awareness among customers and we want to create more case studies and it's like B Corp does that, you know, for all, for us all, absolutely.

**Lyn Wineman: 13:19**

You know, Brooke, we were on a parallel path to that, I think at KidGlov, where someone had introduced us to the idea of B Corp and we became more familiar with B Corp and it was always kind of like, well, that's a nice idea that we will do someday, but right now we're busy with this and we're busy with this and we're busy with this, and then all of a sudden we decided to do it and the amazing part of it is the community, the community of people, the support. Anybody who's interested in the B Corp movement, I'd encourage them to check it out. It's surprising how many business are already doing many of the things, and the B Corp assessment and process and community will help you solidify the practices and share them as well. So I think that's cool.

**Brooke Mullen: 14:07**

And it's been such an amazing roadmap also of going oh, here's some opportunities that we can best business practices right. These are like you want a cutting edge of like how to do business better, Like the whole process isn't just a fluff. It's actually like helping you build a more robust, efficient business.

**Lyn Wineman: 14:28**

A hundred percent. It helps you understand how to be a better steward of the community and the environment, how to partner with and give back to the community, because you want to be part of a strong community.

How to better take care of your employees and provide them opportunities that will help them grow as people. How to have better financial governance. So much of it is. It's really such a great process. So I want to bring this back, Brooke, you've mentioned a couple times now about how you are really working with the artisans in different areas and really empowering them. I'm curious if you could tell us more about that and really the impact then that it has on them and their communities.

**Brooke Mullen: 15:12**

Yes, well, this makes me, you know, thinking about all of our artisans in Thailand just totally makes me light up. I got to spend 10 years there, living side by side with all these communities, and really it's, this question it's sometimes hard to really quantify, it's a qualitative things that I hear all the time and it's going to the villages and they're now at home raising their kids. So, in this part of the world and many part of the developing countries where we source all of our products from, people are forced to migrate in search of work. So at the UN, that's what we were researching.

You know, people were leaving their whole families, everything behind to find because there was no economic opportunities. You know, migrating with no money, or even, you know, and under you know very as you can imagine, if you're leaving with nothing, you're easily exploited, absolutely, people can easily take advantage of you, and that would happen all the time. And so I kept thinking how do you go to these villages and build business, how do you create and generate opportunities, because there's so much opportunity where they could make and do all these beautiful things back in their villages and not have to leave their families behind. So moms can be moms, right, people can take care of one another. That financial and women having the own power to make their own money, so much financial freedom from that.

The other thing that I was really surprised, and I don't know if I should have been, but when I asked a group of women who weave every morning or every day together, I was like what's the Sapahn impact for you? And they said Brooke, I thought it was economic. I was like, oh it's, you know, finance. And they said it's this community of women. We're not alone.

**Brooke Mullen: 17:00**

That to me is the most powerful thing. I have support. I'm not alone. I have, I can encourage and support other people. We're in it together. And there's this whole unity. I think, and especially with women, we can all that, we can all automatically relate to that.

Those were some of the big things. The other, you know, one of the other biggest things, right when COVID hit, our artisans contacted us a couple of days, right after the news broke and they were like we see that there's. You know, I was talking to them on the phone and they said we see that there's a shortage of face masks. They're like what if we take the lining from your bags, which is all dead stock? What if we use those, the linings of that fabric, and make face masks for you? Keep us all employed, because Thailand functions off of tourism. That's done right.

With COVID, there was no, I mean, where a lot of other businesses had troubles of getting you know source. We didn't. We had the opposite of like how can we sell more to create more jobs? So all this whole community now has an opportunity, and our artisans are the ones who came to us and said

here's this idea. It's amazing. Yes, and so those are things during, like I said, during COVID and beyond, it created, it kept people, you know, fed and also their spirits alive.

**Lyn Wineman:** 18:16

Yeah, both of those things were so important during that time. Really cool Brooke. Any other stories? I'm a storyteller at heart. Yeah, I love if you've got some stories of how your journey has impacted more people, just as you've shared.

**Brooke Mullen:** 18:43

Well, one of the early stories that just kind of again helped propel this idea and keep me pushing. We were in a remote community in Myanmar, and this is when I thought I started thinking like how can we do business differently? And that was, we were there, we were trekking through all these really remote villages, different tribal communities, and there's one community have these gorgeous, you know, came up upon them gorgeous orange, bright orange scarves that they, you know, tie up in their hair.

**Brooke Mullen:** 19:04

And I immediately was like those are beautiful. And these women you know kids were running around, they just got out of school and the kind of the schoolhouse I, through translations, my tour guide said well, would you like to buy some? Of course, 100%. So all the women went back to their huts and brought out the stack of the ones that they had made and asked them the price. I paid them exactly what they asked for and they were beautiful. I mean really nice cotton, vibrant, vibrant colors. You know, they were just so excited. And as we were walking away there was so much chatter and the guy says to me he says do you know what they're talking about? They're so excited, do you know why? And I was like no, you know, they're like now they're able to buy a cow. So that transaction and again it might've been I paid, you know, a couple of dollars more, right, but it was everything, life-changing and I kept thinking, wow, like what does that other ripple effect look like? You know how does that? And if you go to the village, if you go and talk to them and communicate, and they're so brilliant, they have so many ways to be more resourceful and to generate, I think, some of the missed opportunity to us as business owners and CEOs here in the US. We have all these big supply chains back in these countries. Yeah, it's not going to those places and it's not asking those questions. And that's where Sapahn's different and that's why we're so powerful and resilient is because we have those relationships and they're coming to us with solutions and at the end of the day, we can't. People can't work. You know, I think as an employee morale, it's like you, those are, your biggest assets are people, and that stems to also, it starts from the people, you know, maybe across the way.

**Lyn Wineman:** 20:55

I love that. You know, I feel like Brooke. There's been such an awakening and I think people want to be more thoughtful about how they use their buying power, and I think the magic of being a purpose-driven business is that we can make it happen. We can communicate the stories. We can do things at scale. You know, we can be the conduit to help, you know, consumers who want to use their money for good, to people that can be helped, even if they're continents away. I think that's what's amazing about what you're doing. So I'm curious, Brooke, for someone who is maybe at the point where you were in 2008, 2009, they're like, looking forward to their future. Or maybe there's somebody like me who's

maybe later in their career and they're like I want to make a difference, I want to be more mindful and impactful in my purchasing decisions. What advice would you give them?

**Brooke Mullen:** 22:04

Yes, it's a powerful. I mean, you're totally right, we're so. We have so much power as consumers and the first thing I would kind of would think about is how can you align your values with, also with your purchasing power, like with what you're buying? So where do you shop? Who do you shop from? Is it a woman owned business? Is it small businesses? Is it you know, is it part of your own community, or is it these large corporations? And if you go that route, what I tell people, just think, because everything that's made, there is a person right behind it. So that is something that when I was in Thailand and Asia, I couldn't unsee Right, and I know many people don't have that opportunity to go see what the factories look like. I mean, and talk to people themselves who are trying to like we all trying to want to raise a family, they want just basic needs, but because of the circumstances, that doesn't happen.

And so this these whole systems are really suppressing these people. And again, I think at the beginning it's we all can say the exploitation is wrong, we would never want to support it, but the reality is we do support it by if we're buying things that are cheap.

And you can tell they're cheap, right, the price. You're like how does wow, how does that work? That should be your first red flag. And then also thinking about the businesses who you're buying from and supporting, that also can tell you a lot. And so I think you know the fast fashion. They're made cheap, they're made to dispose Like we have six I think I read a stat of six generations where we have enough clothes for six generations at the state.

**Brooke Mullen:** 23:42

So I think when you are walking, that's the first thing. When you're walking into those stores to buy something, thinking about and thinking about those, you know it's cheap, it's not going to last. Is it going to last? Is it whatnot? So those are some kind of like golden rules.

**Brooke Mullen:** 24:02

But I think by seeking out and looking at oh, what are the B Corp stamp or fair trade stamp or other, there's so many amazing brands out there who are doing this the right way. Yes, you might pay a little bit more than what you're going to pay at a fast fashion place, but just use some logic. You're going to be able to use that thing so much longer because it is quality and you're aligning your values to that. There's a reason why it probably costs a little bit more, because they're paying people. Well, they're paying people a livable wage and that we all want to be paid a livable wage, right?

There's another, you know, if you're shopping, there's another really great platform online called Wolf and Badger. Anything on that website we're on there as well. It's all been vetted. They're all women owned small business. They're all ethically sourced, so there's some really incredible. Um, there's another app called the Good on You app. You can download that to your phone. You can kind of start seeing those things, and I would say like, if brands aren't talking about it, they're probably not doing it because they're like I don't want to draw any attention, so I'm not going to say anything. But guess



what, as a customer, you have the power to push them to say something or choose not to shop them because they will feel that on their bottom line.

**Lyn Wineman:** 25:13

You're right. As soon as brands feel the sales start to slip, the income start to slip, they start to research. What are we doing wrong? What are people saying?

**Brooke Mullen:** 25:34

And as a customer, saying I'm not shopping you because of these principles. Oftentimes what the big businesses want to do is like how do we make this cheaper? How do we like cut some costs? And it's all the little costs. And one of the things I I'm most shocked about, and again, why supporting B Corp as other businesses. I read a stat that said with CEOs, the major CEOs in the US, who also have global supply chains, make 344 times more than their typical employee. Yeah, 344. So when they come to us and say, or in general and as consumers, and say, well, we can't afford that, that is a big fat lie, right. And B Corp, the general B Corps are six to one. Six to one is what B Corp brands. The ratio of pay is.

**Lyn Wineman:** 26:22

I so appreciate you saying that. I just saw something that said if you're complaining about the minimum wage making the cost of goods go up, look at the salary of the CEO and wonder if that is also making the cost of the goods go up 100%. I appreciate that.

**Brooke Mullen:** 26:44

It's the greed. So that's my soapbox.

**Lyn Wineman:** 26:46

I have to ask and I wasn't going to ask you this, but I have to ask do you ever get pushback for being so outspoken?

**Brooke Mullen:** 26:56

No, and you know, a women come so oftentimes, people you know, at events or whatever they're like, oh my gosh, these bags, like they feel them, they. First you walk into the booth or the area you're like, oh my gosh, this is real leather. Because it smells amazing. It smells like the real deal and the feel and the design thoughtfulness, because we love feedback. You know, we love designing the next perfect thing. We're always rechanging our designs to make them even better.

But then you know they're got their cart out ready to purchase, and then they're like do you make these? And then it starts this whole beautiful conversation. It opens up to you know so much more than than what this is, and that people that women are a part of, I think. As women, there's a lot of us, unfortunately but it may be our superpower who have had some challenges because we're women along the way. And it makes us almost stronger when we are like you know what I want to be that person who's supporting other women so they don't also have to suffer the way I did. I love that and so

the pushback what we find is that just kind of creates more of like really like super fans that tell all their friends and that will tell me all the time. I gave away all my Louis Vuittons, all my luxury, and I buy a Sapahn now.

**Lyn Wineman: 28:10**

I love it. Brooke, you reminded me of one of my favorite sayings, and that is you can always tell the strongest woman in the room because she's lifting others up and not tearing them down. And that makes me think of you, Brooke, and the work that you're doing. So where do you go from here? I mean, you've done such big things already. You're a B Corp, you're this well-known brand, you're making beautiful products, you're uplifting women and communities. What's next for Brooke Mullen and Sapahn?

**Brooke Mullen: 28:47**

Yeah, I think about this often. You know it's an, especially comparing myself to other entrepreneurs. Have these like very clear visions of, like exactly what it's going to be when they arrive? But yeah, as you know, Lyn in business it doesn't work that way, you know which is beautiful.

You're like, oh, I did that, that was you know. Now I'm on to the next thing, and the next thing for us, as Sapahn is, is really, I think, one being a case study of success, and I think we're already doing that. Like you know, to the people, the naysayers who are like why, what's the point? And my response back to them it's like, well, you're exploiting people, so like that's like, how are you winning at the game of business by doing that like right? That's really not winning right. And so by doing things the right way by people, for people in our communities to be a business case, to say we did it, we did it with no funding. I was a sole entrepreneur for 10 years, nine years, no funding. And you know where all the big brands are saying we can't be a sponsor for supply chain we have. You know, like you have, all the big brands are saying we can't be a responsible for supply chain.

So no excuse again. I got on a train and whatnot and I went there and I talked to them and do all, and I think that's also you should use that as a leverage for if you're a business but it's really to inspire other people to be a case study of, like this is what you know, it's success. But to hopefully inspire other businesses to change their ways and not be afraid of what they don't know and use you know their human supply chain as a powerful thing. And to those people who are wanting to start businesses like, people ask me I get on calls all the time with other entrepreneurs saying I want to source better, how do I do it? And really, at the end of the day, the more in fashion we can flip around and change this narrative, inspire and talk to customers, the more jobs and opportunities we create across the board. And that's the beautiful thing about being a B Corp and doing the right thing is, the more you grow, the bigger your impact.

**Lyn Wineman: 30:43**

Absolutely. One thing that really excites me, Brooke, is seeing the research that's showing us that, of all the generations, Gen Z has a 67% awareness of the B Corp brand. So you know, you go certain places and you say you're a B Corp people don't know what that means. But I believe the younger generations that are coming up which gives me amazing hope for the future they are more concerned about making impactful purchasing decisions and they are more concerned about what's behind the products and the

businesses, and I love that. I love that for you, I love that for KidGlov, I love that for the world. So, brooke, for our listeners who want to learn more about Sapahn, where can they find you?

**Brooke Mullen:** 31:37

Yes, well, our website is Sapahn.com and sign up for the newsletter. It's beautiful, it's colorful, it makes you feel happy, and great stories along the way. You can always, you know, find some more information about our story there, as well as on Instagram and Facebook. You can find me also on social, on a personal level. Um, so, just, I love connecting with people, like-minded people or even people who want to push back. That's okay. That helps us all sharpen ourselves. The conversation yeah, it starts a conversation. So if I could ask a favor, if you are listening and feel inspired by this, one of the things we want to do continuously is B Corp and just being, as our next level is spreading more awareness. So, if it's, you know, hosting, as you graciously, graciously, have Lyn us on a podcast, or doing some type of collaboration where we could be create some corporate swag gifts for you that are beautiful, buttery, soft, that you want to. Those are all welcomed opportunities.

**Lyn Wineman:** 32:33

What a great idea this is a good time to start thinking about holidays, corporate swag gifts.

**Lyn Wineman:** 32:39

I can only imagine my staff is going to hear this and ideas are going to come back which is fantastic. We'll make sure to put the links to the social media, website in the show notes as well. I'm going to say I love following you, Sapahn, on Instagram. I love it when you show pictures and tell the stories of the artisans, because I think that's amazing. Of course, I love it when you show the handbags too. So I'd like to ask you my favorite question next, and I can't wait to hear what you have for us. But everyone knows I am inspired by motivational quotes and I'm wondering if you could give us a few of your own words of wisdom to inspire our listeners.

**Brooke Mullen:** 33:26

Yes, yeah, there's a few that just bring in my head. So the one that rings in my head often is Brooke, when I'm trying to be like oh, this is so hard. Right, things are hard, things are whatever. I'm like, oh, I think about the women in Thailand, I think about their stories, and I go don't give into your weaker self, don't do it.

**Lyn Wineman:** 33:47

Don't give into your weaker self. I'm writing that one down.

**Brooke Mullen:** 33:54

I think when you, when you see it again, the privilege of being and seeing people. Thailand's known as a land of smiles for a reason Everyone smiles, everyone's happy, and I mean that's kind of the nuance, but I think there's a great appreciation for the simpler things and I think we can learn a lot from that. From

the West, I think also, yes, things can be difficult and I think when the whole don't give into your weak self, it's like are these self limiting beliefs that I can't do something?

**Lyn Wineman:** 34:30

Yeah, wow yeah.

**Brooke Mullen:** 34:32

That would be my, one of my, and then it's upon always has had a tagline from the beginning of beautiful things, doing something beautiful and encouraging people to do that beautiful thing. So, whatever that is for you, and being that bridge, so being that person who really, you know, whatever it is that you're doing, doing it so well that it's infectious and it, you know, attracts other people and it's at the foundation, is making an impact.

**Lyn Wineman:** 35:00

Brooke, I love that about your brand being in the business of branding. I love brands that have meaning behind them and being in the business of branding, I love brands that have meaning behind them, like Sapahn, meaning bridge, and your tagline. I think they all go together so nicely and help tell that story. Brooke, I have so loved this conversation. I love getting to know you. I mean, that's one of the other great things about B-Labs and B Corp certifications is it just brings like-minded people that are passionate together. But as we wrap up today, what is the most important thing you would like our listeners to take away?

**Brooke Mullen:** 35:41

This was a great question, cause I like had you know several of my lists and I thought, oh, okay, priority, oh, let's see. And I really think I it's a hard thing to say because it's not the feel good thing, but it's also the inspiring thing because we as people have that choice. And I think somebody said it so well to me the other day. They said, Brooke, I donate every year to all these human trafficking survivor networks, but then I go and buy a louis, but you know a brand name that I know is not that's contradicting that. So I'm supporting and giving money here, but I'm also part of the problem over here and I thought, and they're like, you've helped me realize those, that's, that's not alignment of values and shop and how I live my life.

And I think, of course, we can talk about what that impacts for you as living your authentic self. That feels when you do that. There's so much power and synergy in that. So I think sometimes it feels maybe monstrous to be like how am I going to make a change or difference in the world? I want you to know that, literally again, everything you purchase there is a back. I mean the farmer there and, yes, you can't be, you're not the one who's going to be like you know, making sure those operationals are and checks and whatnot.

There's systems out there that do but that actual choice. There is a person behind that and your impact can be super empowering and mobilizing or it can be part of the problem. So I think, just, I want, when you're thinking about buying and what you're doing, if that can be that little noise in your head of like and again, don't give into your weaker self of like. We can all make excuses of I need this and I, you

know, oh, if I spend \$5 more here, you know, just thinking about that, I think, is a powerful thing. So that's what I would leave you with is aligning those things. I think at our core, people want to do beautiful things. And sometimes we have to check ourselves.

**Lyn Wineman:** 37:31

Wow, Brooke, and this is a podcast, so people couldn't see me slink back in my chair when you said that, but that's so powerful, it's so true.

Every year we donate to causes that touch our hearts and then we don't think about or it's easy not to think about how our shopping choices in the other 11 months of the year are creating the problem. Such powerful words. Thank you for that, and I have to say thank you for the time today. This has been an empowering and insightful and delightful conversation and I hope there are many more to come. So thank you.

**Brooke Mullen:** 38:18

I feel so on fire. And I thank you so much, Lyn, for being a champion for the B Corps out there and this community and really allowing us to be on this platform that reaches so many people. So thank you for this opportunity.

**Lyn Wineman:** 38:33

Absolutely, Absolutely Brooke.

**Announcer:** 38:38

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