Hello everyone. This is Tom Fox back with our next guest, and you're in for a real treat today because we have with us Sabrina Sivan, and she's gonna talk to us about her presentation entitled, creating a Look and Feel for Your Podcast Assets. That gets a. She's the founder of, we are complex, creative and the.

Bullshit agency and host of No Bullshit Talk podcast, which is a multi, and she's a multi-passionate entrepreneur who loves being involved in her community and this industry. The agency helps businesses with branding, design websites, and digital marketing needs, working with household brands national brands, actually international brands such as Fitbit, unicef, Pelli, and the Ministry of Defense.

She and her team have a huge range of experience with large organizations, but when not helping companies and brands look and feel spectacular, she's involved in community based projects such as complex creative, pro bono scheme mentoring at the Chartered Institute of Marketing Digital Display for B I M A, taking the Million Tree Pledge Teaching at Birmingham City Univers.

And Cancer Research UK Challenge. Sabrina, I'm so thrilled you could join us and I'm gonna turn it over to you. Thank you for having me, and once an introduction. Wow. So thanks everyone for joining. I am here today to talk to you a bit about branding for podcasts and just creating a good look and feel for your podcast asset.

So I'm just gonna share my screen so that you can see the presentation and go from here. First of all, I bought Kick it off. As Tom said, I am the host of No Bullshit Talks, which is the name of my podcast, which you probably can see behind me too. And I am, I run a creative agency, so we naturally do a lot of design stuff and branding stuff.

Anyway, so therefore it comes naturally to me about branding when it comes to podcasts. But I thought I'd break it down a little bit. And so first of all, I'd start off with what is branding exactly. Now the first thing people talk about is they think branding is your logo. And you will hear any branding expert just cringe when you think of branding as just the logo.

So branding is a whole big thing on top of that, and it's all about how. It makes your audience feel about your brand. And, but today I'm gonna talk about not just branding in general, cause that's very large topic, but it's about creating the right look and feel for your podcast. This will largely talk to the visual aspects of your brand.

But there's a lot of things that go into it. So some of the things I'm gonna, I'm gonna talk about here, as you see is the logo, colors, fonts, the graphics, the images, the sort of things that you use, but also the tone of voice. And that sets a tone for obviously your podcast itself. How are you talking to your.

Is it quite laid back? Is it interview? Is it very serious? Is it, there's lots of different podcasts out there. Is it. Completely jokey. What is a whole tone of voice that is a brand? Like you think about some of the biggest podcasts that, some of them are like, they're completely different to each other.

Some really serious ones out there that have been done by a particular band, such as Financial Times, for example, in the uk that's a very serious podcast, but then you can take back the Joe Vogan experience. It's a very controversial difference between the team. And then music.

Music is also part of the brand and the feel of the podcast. Having the intro and having the middle bits broken up and stuff. Music is also a big fact of your podcast, but we'll just talk about some of the bits that affect the branding and the look and feel. So first thing to ask yourself is who is your audience?

Now, I think lots of people like to jump in to the actual physical design of what they want the podcast to look like, and you cannot do that until you determine who your audience is. And you'll probably have heard so many other people in the webinar or people coming up in the conference who are going to be talking about how to choose your audience or how to niche in terms of your podcast.

So who. Are you speaking to? And before you start anything visual, you need to determine this. Because one of the biggest branding mistakes I've seen, not just in podcasts, but in my job, in my day to day, is that people design things by what they feel they think. Okay. So I like the color pink. I do actually like the color pink.

I am wearing pink. I have my pink logo and everything like that. I love the color. So lots of people do design their like assets around it. But that wasn't why I, we, I've gone for pink. Mine is because my podcast is largely for female entrepreneurs. So I am designing something that speaks to that audience.

Okay. Maybe it's stereotypical that I'm assuming that lots of women like pink, but lots of women do pink. But also pink is known as a branding color for lots of feminine items Mine is for all genders of entrepreneurs, but it's got a large female following. So that's how I've designed it.

It feels both feminine. Very girl boss. In fact, like as you see, I'm drinking at my marble, which says girl boss, like my whole brand is very girl boss. And that's what I've done. Yeah. So if you go back actually to my front go back to my very first. So you see, this is my podcast cover and you see the pinks obviously through it, but it does feel very girl boss like I am coming across friendly but professional, with a blazer, with the laptop, but it's also very entrepreneurial with a MacBook.

And then you can see on the table they've got My 80 minute MBA and some web designer mags to show what I'm doing. It wasn't even staged. This wasn't, this was actually on a genuine Saban, this was stuff on the table, so it wasn't even stage. You could see my phone just, lying right next to me and my phone's always on me.

Already has this vibe. And I had pink highlights in my hair at the time of this picture too. So the pink kind of went through it with it. But you see this does give off a girl bossy vibe. And so it speaks to other people who emulate that sort of thing, and that's what you wanna do. So go back to that.

That's what you have to think about. Who is your audience and what do they like? Not you. I see this all the time, even with websites and everything. People pick something that they like that's totally different from their audience. So think about. And then what do you wanna do with your podcast? So like I said, mine's aimed at female entrepreneurs and girl boss, and you see this sort of picture for fans.

It feels like a very like powerful women vibe. So my mission and vision with No Bullshit talks is to inspire entrepreneurs all over the world and to. To give them a taste of what it's genuinely like to go on an entrepreneurial journey and the mistakes that you make and all the lessons that you can learn from it.

And as I said, like there's a focus of mainly women. I generally try to have a guest ratio of two women to one male on my podcast just for that reason. So what do you want to achieve with your podcast? So lots of people are starting one because they feel like everyone's got one and they feel like they need to have one.

But you absolutely need to create a statement, like a vision statement, mission statement that everyone does for the business, for your podcast too, and try to think what you want to achieve. Because if you have that statement in your mind, everything you do around that will help you work towards those goals.

Like I said, every action you take and everything you need to do to reflect these goals. Who you have on the podcast, who are your guests? Are they the type of people who will help you reach your goals? Who what type of look and field do you want to have? Do you, are you having corporate images throughout all your podcasts?

Do you wanna have, that sort of, what type of music do you want to have? Is it serious? Is it classical? Is it like rock and roll? What all these things need to come into your mind again, based on what you want to see. Your goal is with the podcast and everyone's got different goals, so it will.

So this is a controversial one because as I said, when people think of branding, they immediately think of a logo. And as I said, your brand is not your logo, which is probably the title of several blogs written by angry branding agencies who always hear that from their clients. And the podcast logo is a very interesting concept because, As I've put in my slide here, do you even need a logo?

Now, when people think podcasts, the most striking thing is the cover photo, which we're gonna come to in a minute. But how many can you think of that? Actually have a logo attached to it. It's funny cuz when you look up different things or people give you advice about what to do for branding podcast assets, everyone gonna start with your logo and then that logo will be on your podcast cover.

But I don't think that's necessarily true. I think that your most important thing is your podcast cover and we can get come to different styles and what you can do with that cover in a minute. But I thought I'd take some of these ones that I've seen. Now. GaN experience one of the biggest podcasts out there, so obviously I picked that one.

And this is his podcast cover really. But because it's done up the circular format, it also is possible to use that as a logo. That sort of accidental, I presume. It could have designed, I don't know him, they designed it this way, but it is rare that is the case. And then this also this Crime Junkie one, which I thought was quite cool.

This just looks like a logo, but that is actually their podcast cover. So it's like they've created a logo for Crime Junkie, which is the name of their podcast, and then they've turned that into the cover photos. So in fact, they actually got a bit lazy with the cover photo, and son did that. Now, Jane Shetty's got a podcast called On Purpose, and you see here.

This is his cover photo, but he didn't Crazy logo. He just did a little bit of styling around having a play button on the on per on the on purpose. And that's it. The Diamond ceo, you'll see an example of that a bit because it's one of my favorite podcasts. Big fan of Stephen Bartlet, that's not his cover photo.

And. That is the icon I've seen used on certain things, but it's also not his logo, so I don't even understand like some of these times where they're using these assets, which doesn't really necessarily make sense. And on his YouTube cover photos, which you'll see it has. D O A C to, to abbreviations just in the corner of each of them.

So they recognize that. But yeah, I've seen this on some other things. So there's a bit of an inconsistency there. But the point is when they're so big like this, they don't necessarily need to have that sort of recognizable sort of brand. And I think that a lot of people compare themselves to these large celebrities at the very beginning when they're starting out thinking that's how they should be doing.

And what I wanted to highlight is the fact that this is not always a good idea to do because they started off differently. And if you go back to where they started their original journey, that's more probably where you need to be. They've built up a following. They could put anything out there and people would still follow them because they've already got their loyal following For someone else's just starting out with podcasts and they're all new to the game, that's not gonna help.

You need to have something that's consistent and recognizable. So when it comes to logo, I wouldn't think that's the be all, and end all. I'd be really wary about, spending all this time creating a logo when I fact the cover photos are most important and I've added this one at the bottom here.

Neon light one because I want you to stay away from stuff like this. If you were to type in podcast logo into Google, I guarantee that tons of bees come up. If you go to like logo bakers or you go to stuff like Can, there are billions of people using this sort of stuff? Or like even this, like websites like 99 designs.com, all these ones, they, this is basically what they do as their logo and they have a neon light, looks cool, feels like a radio station, and they just put their podcast name like this.

But then so many people have the same thing over and over again that it basically becomes, you've got no distinction between your podcast and everyone else's. And at the very beginning, you need to stand out and be clearly you and be consistent. The biggest thing about branding is consistency.

So we come to the The color photo, which is the most important part of your podcast. Branding aspects, I would say. And I've picked five completely different ones, but they're very successful podcasts as it is. Some of you may know some of them and some of you don't. So die over ceo, biggest podcast in the uk pretty much.

It's a huge, huge. And I'm a big fan, and you can see that it's just got a super powerful picture of Steven Bartlet and it's got the name and his, and the, and his own name. That's it. And for most people, that is enough. That is all you need. For most people who are starting off a podcast with just themselves, that is all you actually need.

I think a strong photo and the name and look how simple that is. It's written in. Ariel font. Nothing fancy. There's no logo. It's literally a picture of him in a black t-shirt, a black background and white text, and you see how powerful and professional that looks. Same as Mel Robins. She hasn't even come up with anything like interesting about her podcast name.

It's she, her name is so big that she's just got the Mel Robins podcast. The only thing different you'll see about. Is the fact that she's got the little Stitcher sign in the background in the top because they're a sponsor of of her podcast. And the bright yellow is now like an accent color that she's going, she's used.

And like Jordan Dinger, this one I feel like is more of a podcasty cover photos is deliberately style based for podcasts. And for obvious reasons. And he's got like really bright colors, cool graphics. The microphone, the headphones, and then there cat. But yeah, it's great that he's got, he's got, this is clearly a podcast cover and it's, and it does, it attracts people to it and.

We've got Wednesdays we drink wine. I don't know if anyone would've ever heard of these people, but in the UK this is quite big. And actually I've spoken to a lot of people in the US who do have a guilty pleasure of watching. One of our big reality TV shows is called Maiden Chelsea, and these are two people from from Maiden Chelsea who are friends who came together and started a podcast called On Wednesdays we drink wine and they just chat, talk about girly problems and that's their thing.

But I kinda like this one because it's literally a Polaroid and because that's what their podcast is, it's them too. Have a chat. Look at them doing their little selfies. She's got duck face going on. No shame, that's because that's what they're known for. They're two super attractive girls who talk about looks beauty, boys like drinking.

That's what it is. And it's a Polaroid with their scribing handwriting and a kiss on it. Obviously styled, but. That works. And that's a brilliant cover photo cause it works with their brand and who they're about. And the people that like this are the sort audience that wanna tune in the audience are young.

2030 something women who like drinking like wine, who like beauty glit glam and that will appeal to them. And then same as Pod Saved the World, which I think is a fantastic name. And, it's part of a, of another series. I think it's like Pod Save America as well but obviously sustainability issues, environmental issues is what it is about.

And as you can see, it's like it's got this just really powerful image of the world's gone flat. And it's just very clean, very to the point. Everything here is a little bit different, but I'm guessing most of the people

who are listening to this are gonna be individuals. And Steven, Mel, Jordan, who, who, have that kind of one image sort of thing.

But that none of them have got anything like part, okay, Jordan's one's a bit more complicated, but you see this. The name doesn't have to be something really out there. It's just their brand is already carrying them. That's what's different. But I think Steven wasn't as big when he first came out, and so I think it, he's got his one started off like this and became a huge thing.

But the cover photo is, Probably the most powerful asset that you get, and if you're going to do it, I'd recommend getting a professional photographer really high res. And then think about your branding colors and the fonts and that sort of thing that you wanna do, and make sure you prepare for that, whether you are using.

Whether you dress occasionally for it and you actually have, a top that matches the brand colors that you're gonna do, complimentary colors. For example, Jordan's one the purple one and the reds and the, and they go really well together. So the blue and the reds and orange G colors go make purple.

And, or, you take a photo and then you slightly Photoshop some of the colors into it to make it make it more of a of a feel of the, and everything like that. So the color photo for me is the most important bit. So thumbnails. If you have a video podcast, then YouTube's gonna be your best friend.

And you need to think about consistent branding with your thumbnails. And this is, again, diary of a ceo. And you can see the doac in the corner just to highlight, you know who it belongs to. But you see how they don't necessarily have a logo. That's what they've got. And. Because you don't have Steven's face on there and the same thing.

You can't instantly recognize it. But this is how they've done every single thumbnail. Pretty much. We've got the big picture of the guests and big name of the, of captured headline across the whole thing and it same bright color and it's the same sort of thing that across it. And if you'd watch these podcasts as well.

The whole dark vibe is through the whole thing. He's often wearing his dark shirt, got black mics, you've got kind black backgrounds on the walls and everything feels the same sort of dark thing. And so he is got that consistently throughout his set, his thumbnails, his podcast cover and everything like that.

So I think it's again, he goes as far as dressing for the occasion every single time. So it's like that's pure look and feel of it. Whether you wanna go that far, that's another thing. But you could easily think about that and think do you have a uniform that you wanna have?

Whether it's just a hat or whether you wanna get some kind of cool assets. Like for something that I'm trying to do with my next one because I'm doing it in the studio, is having banded up coffee cups. And I think that would be really key. And everyone's kind of both myself and the guests are gonna be talking with that and sipping from it.

Again, little added touch that adds to it, which looks really nice. So the thing is though, a lot of people are gonna be scared of using video. Lots of people I've spoken to aren't sure whether even video podcasting is totally worth it cause it's a lot of time and effort. And you wanna get it good high quality and yes, you could do it on zoom, but in person's a lot of expense.

So a lot of people are gonna go for audio and I think if your time poor audio's a great way to do it. So the question is, what do you do with the fact that you don't have thumb bells for audio? It's just gonna be on the podcast however. Social media loves video at the moment, and so if you want to be able to promote your podcast, you need to absolutely have the ability to share it on social media.

And if you've just got audio only podcasts, this is still possible with the. This form of audiograms. And so audiograms are great. They're just a static image like this, but you actually, you can convert your audio files into like this. Using these waves is what most people have. And then it tricks the social media algorithm to thinking that it's video and ranks it higher.

Than a normal image. So you can use audiograms, but again, you wanna brand those up so it's really in line with the rest of your podcast. So it's consistent and you can put those across all social media channels and make it think it's video. But again, they need to be consistent with the branding slick.

Again, recognizable that it's your podcast even with the captions on it, like you should always have captions on it because a lot of people listen to video or audio with your subtitles on. But you will notice that throughout all of this, what I've said is consistency, whether that's fonts, whether that's colors, whether that's a type of imagery, everything needs to be consistent.

And you'll probably notice as well throughout the whole of this presentation, I've got consistent the pinks in mind and just to let you know that this was, like I said, a normal photo wasn't even supposed to be posed. Someone took a photo of me in this normal, it wasn't, it was an actual, just a room that I was sitting in, but I wanted pink as my branding.

This is the actual wallpaper, but we tinted it pink in Photoshop. This cushion and this cushion was actually orange and we tinted it pink. So you can just take a normal photo and tint it up with your branding afterwards. But you'll notice that mine's consistent. Same font that we use with our agency, cuz it's supposed to be like a podcast that's in Palo with the agency.

And this has been through. All of this presentation too. It was the same font, same sort of colors the two pinks that we use throughout this. That's me. And that's the end of my presentation. I wanted to open up for questions, but my social handles there are there and my email address is there.

If you did want to add anything, I've actually realized I stopped my own email address wrong cause it's supposed to be complex creative so there is a c missing. So that was actually not very good, but my social handles look correct and so if you have any questions, I guess I'm gonna open it up now.

Perfect, Sabrina. Thank you. That was really interesting. And if you wanna go ahead and uh, type your website address into the chat everyone will be able to see it. And you're not alone. Of all the things in the world that I'm the most likely to put a typo, my own name tops the list, I do that embarrassingly frequently

But I do have a couple of questions. And the first one was about your really good point at the beginning is that the brand choices you make for your business and your business podcast it should be more about what your audience is interested in than what your personal preferences.

Do you have a few tips on how to do that kind of research to find out, hey, what is it that my audience likes to begin making those disc decisions? Yeah, so it all depends on obviously time and budget or what your research is, because you can go into a lot of depth about your research. But what I would say is, you also need to understand what your purpose is and then go out there and actually ask your audience what they're looking for as well.

So a lots of people don't do that I think that's one of the most powerful things to don't assume. Cause a lot of people assume or what they're thinking is that the customers are looking for, but they're actually completely wrong. So you actually have to go and do a bit of research whether that's researching some of the competitors who are doing the same sort of target audience and actually looking at that's one of the best things to do.

Think about who your business is most like, or who your podcast is gonna be most like, and say, for example, I wanted to be like Steven Bartlet, because let's face it, I would love to be, let's say that's who I wanted to be. He's obviously got a much, much bigger platform and bigger guests on it.

But the audience are probably similar people who are one of the tracks. So I could go through his audience, look who's commenting on his sites. Social profiles, look, he's following him and thing and think, okay, look at their responses to stuff. And when he releases something, see how they respond.

I'm be like, okay, so they really like this and they don't like this, and here are the mistakes I need to do. And so if you think about someone who you really relate to, you can go there out there and emulate them. Don't ever copy you obviously, but if you understand what your audience wants and you can put your own spin on it and actually produce what they're actually looking for, fantastic.

And on the next thing I was a little curious about was particularly the branding when it comes to your tone of voice and how you speak and, how you write your show notes. What are some of the kinda essential elements of tone of voice branding that you think podcasters should be keeping in mind?

So again, it's understanding your audience. I think that People listen this where the how and where people listen to podcasts, right? So essentially podcasts absolutely have to be conversational. And what I would say is that, and this is something I'm working on now, on the next episode, and it depends on, again, whether you are having a guest on your podcast or whether you are just solo podcast, but especially for people who are solo.

You need to talk to your audience as if you're talking to one person. You have to think about who is your ideal target audience and talk to them like you're having a one-on-one conversation with them. Because how you then come across in your tone of voice is so personal. And so the audience at the other end of it can hear and think, oh my God, they're really speaking to me.

They're actually connecting with me. And that's how you connect to people. So I think that if you are talking with to one person out there with your target audience in mind, when you connect, you really connect. I think that's how you would create the right tone of. Perfect. And where are you going to be checking on your tone of voice?

So it's gonna be of course, obviously in what you say possibly in what you have edited in or out. Do you recommend people put together like a brand guide or a style guide and what should be included in a resource like that? I think that's definitely something you would do if you are doing like, for larger kind of comms for bigger things.

But again, with podcasts it's supposed to be a bit more conversational and a bit more off the cuff. And it depends on, again, the style of podcasts. If they're like a lot more serious then there may be something like that. But again, I think that most podcasts do really well, are just a bit more.

They're a bit more, personal and, less prepped and less polished. A style guide is a rough style guide is possible, but it shouldn't be like do's and don'ts of what you should say and what you shouldn't. It's are you lighthearted, are you friendly? Do you swear or do you allow, cause that's one of the things like do you allow swear words in it?

And if so, what level of extent? Are there any topics that are off topic? Do you address people in this sort of way? Do you use labels? Do you, I think those are really important because also they're important for. Because the guests see to know of what they're expecting when they come on your podcast.

Are they allowed to talk about certain topics? And if not, mine's called the No Bullshit Talks podcast. So pretty much anything goes, if you think about it. But at the same time, I don't wanna offend anyone like I, I say that, I'm very open and opinionated. But absolutely no personal attacks, no religion, no politics in that sense, because it is a divisive topic and nothing good comes of that.

So for me it's talk freely about what you wanna talk about and I don't mind swear words to an extent, but obviously filthy language is just inappropriate, is not right. So you have to draw a line. Absolutely. Make some rough rules for what guests are to expect when they come on your podcast, but they make it so rigid that it becomes unnatural.

And then you're paranoid about what you can say and what you can't say in the podcast. No, that's a good point. And it's really good to communicate that to your editing team too, if you're having that outsource is, our swear words, do we bleep them or leave them or cut them out? Yeah. That's a thing to, to kinda have cohesive.

Sabrina, thank you so much. This was really interesting. I really enjoyed it, especially the living example of how, your slides matched your presentation space smashed your cover. Yeah. I never would've guessed you had tinted the cover colors in the, in that photo that was, I'll be honest, they were orange and I was like, nah, that's not gonna go well, that was gonna pink