

TRANSCRIPT:

Ep. 058 Liv Conlon on Building a Million Pound Business by the Age of 19, Dealing with Haters, and Creating a Personal Brand

**Intro Clip, Liv Conlon:** I took it because it was a good salary for a 15 year old. And I lasted two days in the office, I found myself and the bathroom shy in being like, this cannot be my life I cannot answer to someone else. I just really want to be able to build my business. So it's been in my DNA. And at times when things do get challenging a waiver we bet to Could it be easier, but I think when you're so dedicated to the overall vision, what I'm getting to love right now, sacrifice and those years has been totally worth it.

**Suneera Madhani:** Welcome to CEO school. We're your hosts Suneera Madhani and Shannan Monson, and we believe that you deserve to have it all. Less than 2% of female founders ever break 1 million in revenue, and we're on a mission to change that. Each week, you'll learn from incredible mentors who have made it to the 2% Club, as well as women well on their way sharing how they defied the odds so that you can do it to your real business now, class is officially in session.

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**Shannan Monson:** Okay, so excited to introduce you guys to today's guests. Not many people can say they've started two successful businesses from scratch. Built a million dollar brand, which you know, is a big deal we talk about here a member of the 2% Club in her teens before turning 20 and 111 national and international business and entrepreneurship awards all before turning 21 I'm so excited to introduce you guys to CEO and founder Liv Conlon

**Liv Conlon:** Oh my goodness, Shannan, thank you for that amazing introduction. I always think it's like so weird to hear your own introduction back to you. You're like, did that was that me? Did I do that happens? I live that life. That was me. Yeah.

**Shannan Monson:** So let's start. Let's start from the beginning. I want to hear how old were you when you started your first business? And what was the idea? And what did you do?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, so I actually started my very, very first business when I was 13. I was in school, and I was buying nails. And I basically seen that they were I was paying way too much for them. And I thought right there must be a way I could buy these cheaper and sell them to my fans. So me being me, I went on to Alibaba and I ordered 500 sets of them from China. And I started to sell them on eBay and to my fans that skill and that really just gave me that first entrepreneurial bug bar when it came to being 16 and I was setting my grades and I had the option to go to university and follow what I would say is probably a more traditional route of

going to uni and then getting a job I totally took the opposite path I told my skill I'm out of here I'm going to start a business I'm they basically said look love we actually think you're gonna ruin your life doing this like such a shame to see you like ruin your potential. I don't go into university and from there I launched my MLM home Don's which is the property stagers which is a home staging company in the UK.

**Shannan Monson:** Okay, so I want to back up for those that are listening that are not in the UK. So you're from Scotland, right?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah. from Scotland from Glasgow. Yep.

**Shannan Monson:** In Scotland, do you start University at 16? Is that the equivalent of high school or is that college?

**Liv Conlon:** So basically I had one final year of high school to finish. Okay. So you usually go to university when you're 17-18 but I actually left school even earlier than that.

**Shannan Monson:** So you're just like, I know what I want to do. I'm good. I can't imagine that was well received. What did your parents say? What did your friends say? What was that experience? Like?

**Liv Conlon:** Yes. So fortunately, like my mom's like, always be my biggest inspiration she has she's always had her own business. And I used to like skip tons of school to go on like business trips with her. I was always like on the laptop doing work for her. So she was always behind me. So that's been massively important to have like that parent figure that said, Liv, you can do anything, and do something you love. But school and the traditional system, they really actually thought, I think at that point that I may be on drugs, or something's wrong with me, because they just saw that, you know, I was academically gifted and they thought what are you doing like you should be a doctor or a lawyer. And if you're not one of those things, then your life will amount to nothing.

**Shannan Monson:** Yeah, it's really hard for people to see outside of like, the boxes that they're they're used to seeing. Okay, so you're like peace out, you left school early. And you started a property staging business. I want to hear what this experience was like. First of all explain the business model and how you got your first sale. Start there.

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah. So basically the idea was born because my mom was involved in properties. Well, she has a property that was on the market, it wasn't selling. And it sat on the market for three months. And you know, having watched a lot of interior design programs, I'd heard of this thing called home staging. But it wasn't really around in the UK. At that point, no one was really doing it. And I said, like, let me stage the property, and we'll see what happens. So I staged the property, and it sold within three days and above the valuation. And I was like, Hey, I think this might be a good idea to offer to other people as well. Um, so yeah, from there, I started it with literally like zero in my bank account, and never had like any form of jobs that would have given

me funds to start it. And basically, what I did was, I went out to networking events, just told everybody what I was doing and got my first client. I asked them to pay up front, so that I could use that money to then purchase the furniture. So I could start the business like that, and I just scaled with that strategy. Every time I got a client, they'd pay me and then I'd buy the stuff with the money.

**Shannan Monson:** That's really cool. And I think shows how much we can bootstrap. I started my business the same way. I was like, you pay me now, and then deliver the services, and then that's how I built my website and everything. I'm imagining you though, a 16 year old girl, I know what I looked like at 16. I don't think other people would have taken me seriously. Were you ever afraid when you were going to these networking events and pitching yourself? Were you ever afraid that people would say, you know, who are you to? Where's the real owner of this business? You know, that sort of imposter syndrome?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, I mean, absolutely, I used to have like, my natural color of hair is blonde, and I have natural like curls. So I had long curly blonde hair. And the male like the proper industry is a male dominated space. So I literally would go into these rooms 16, I look 16 I would go up to these guys that are suited and booted and like try and tell them that kitchens and artwork is gonna make them more money, when they were talking about like, you know, profit and all these figures that I didn't really know much about. So it was a challenge. But I think the way I held myself has always been good, even though I felt that inside the definitely compensated with a big personality. But I think that confidence, once you get a little bit of success behind you, your confidence starts to come. And every time I got a new client, I showed up a little bit more confidently, and it really grew from there. But even at this stage with, you know, all the accolades and the million pound business, I still get that feeling sometimes that imposter syndrome of like, Is someone actually going to pay a 22 year old to coach them in a business, even though I've done it like it still comes up.

**Shannan Monson:** I love what you said that confidence builds, you get the one yes. And then the next and the next. And I think sometimes we feel like if we can't walk into the room with accolades, then we shouldn't even go into the room. Right? But it's just not true. It only takes that one yes to say like, Okay, wait, you can do this. And what's really cool about your story is you've already proven it. Right? So you already had the story, you could go and say, Hey, we had this property that didn't sell for three months, we staged it and sold in three days. Would you like that to be your next property? Right. And so I think that's really good advice for new entrepreneurs to prove it first. So you're not going into that pitch like cold and wind, but still massive props to you for going up to I've never heard that term before suited and booted. And I love it. I love it. I love it just going and saying hey, I can help. So how did the business grow from there from, you know, one person going in and staging homes to a million dollar business while you were 16, 17, 18?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, I mean, it was a complete whirlwind. And to be honest, it was complete hard work. So I'd say for the first three years, the business, I pretty much gave up any idea of a social life. I worked seven days a week, 18 hour days, and it was a very physical job as well. So for a

lot of the time, and my first year, I was staging the properties. I even started less than the furniture, which I look back on now and think girl are you doing? But at that time, I thought but this is how you build a business. So there were lessons learned. But in those three years, the first person I brought on to work with me was my mom. So that was awesome, because she left her business to join me. I had you know that figure who is a bit older than me with a different perspective to mine. I brought that sort of youthful social media side of things and she brought Yeah, the more sensible head I guess. And from there like, we started to post on social media and because of what we were doing, it was so different. We actually got a lot of attention because I was young because I was 16 and I shared that story that you know we went from 30,000 pounds in the first 12 months of the business to for the next 12 months turning over a million pounds, which was yeah, it was like it was rapid growth, where we were just taken on. We were just saying yes to everything. And we were delivered on it as well. And we learned as we went along, we brought on team members as we went along. But yeah, it was.

**Shannan Monson:** That's incredible. That's a good I want to stop and just acknowledge you for that. Because to go from 30,000 a year, which is roughly like, what, \$5,000 a month, how's my math? Oh, yeah. Probably like, \$50,000 a year to a million dollars. I mean, that is a huge jump. And I'm thinking, you know, what is your average sale price, right? How many homes did you have to be doing to hit those kind of figures in your second year of business?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah. So on average, we stage about 300 to 400 properties per year. But some we get a lot of projects at times you know, and that that year, where we had the million dollar mark or a million pounds, we got a \$300,000 installation, and it was 50 apartments to furnish. So let's say an average or average price of what we offer is between \$3,000 to \$5,000.

**Shannan Monson:** That's phenomenal. How did you I mean, I'm just thinking logistically, right, I run a business. You're a brand new business one year, and the next year, you're doing three to 400 homes, apartments per year, how did you get the team the manpower, figure out how you're going to create systems? And how did you scale it so quickly? What was that experience like?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah I mean, to be honest with you, Shannan, a lot of the time, it was me doing it all and totally burned out, like I had nowhere. Yeah, I mean, I was waking up at 2am, driving six hours to London, working 14 hour days, and then driving six hours back to get on to the next installation. But I feel like it put me in a very good position to then hire for that role, because as an intense position to hire for. And that takes a certain type of person. So our team, I mean, I am certainly not the best manager of people but over time, we found what's worked for us. And yeah, we work with different team members who have a lot of flexibility. But they we also discovered, like someone needs to have an eye to be able to do this. So we've had a lot of team issues. I'm but yeah, we probably at that point, where we hit the million dollar mark, we had a team of 10. So we're starting to share the workload a little bit more.

**Shannan Monson:** That's so cool. I'm sitting here trying to put myself in your shoes and thinking about the things that I was doing at 18 years old. What was it like, essentially, you

know, deciding for that, those several years that this was your whole life? You know, what was it like seeing your friends go to university and be in relationships? I mean, I don't know, party do things that you can't possibly have been doing if you're waking up at two o'clock in the morning? What was that like? And how did you stay true to yourself knowing that this is where I'm supposed to be, even though it's not the traditional path?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, I mean, it was challenging at times, as in the days where you are working those hours you are thinking, I mean, there must be an easier way of life because this is challenging. And many times it did feel like, I could just give this up, go get a job. And it could be a lot easier to have chosen. But for me, it's just, you know, it's just never been in my DNA to take orders from anyone to work for anyone. So when I was 15, and about to leave school, I got offered a position to be a mortgage advisor, a trainee. And I took it because it was a good salary for a 15 year old. And I lasted two days in the office, I found myself in the bathroom crying being like, this cannot be my life, I cannot answer to someone else. I just really want to be able to build my business. So it's been in my DNA. And at times when things do get challenging I waiver a wee bit to could it be easier? But I think when you're so dedicated to the overall vision, you know, the overall mission of what I'm kind of getting to love right now. You know, sacrifice in those years has been totally worth it. And I look back on them and actually sometimes miss the hustle a little bit. I don't know about you. Do you feel that way?

**Shannan Monson:** Oh, 100% it doesn't make any sense. But 100% I think there's this like, when you haven't made it, we're trying so hard to prove ourselves. I know for me, like I was trying to prove that I could support myself that I could support someone else that I could be successful. And there's like a it's a game a little bit, don't you think? Like I'm getting awards? I'm getting recognized by the media like I'm, I'm working towards something and I do think that there's a little bit once you're once you've made it, it's like okay, yeah, I can do anything I want to but what do I want to do?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, I think in those moments, like when you're in that moment of hustle, you're kind of like dreaming that you're like anything else, we bear them out, but ya know that I'm here. I'm like, actually one do like an eight hour drive work 15 hours and then do all over again just to have that feeling back. And again, it's what I would say to someone who's on their journey as trying to enjoy those moments a little bit more. Because I think at the time I resented them. And now I think well, those are those exact moments are the moments that built me to where I am today. So yeah, just be grateful for them and enjoy them if you can.

**Shannan Monson:** I like my whole body. I feel like I felt that in my bones. I think that the hustle is the beauty. And it's what made you who you are. Had you not been willing to make the sacrifices to do those six hour drives and do the installs yourself. I mean, we're talking about manual labor, I'm imagining you lifting couches up and rearranging them like that is a hard job. I've rearranged my living room twice during COVID. So I can only imagine that's a really manual job. And I think that those moments, and being willing to do that is what got you to where you are. So I just appreciate you sharing that to enjoy the hustle. Okay, so I want to talk about we talk about this million dollar mark, million euro mark, less than 2% of female founders ever get

here, men are 30% more likely, and it absolutely shouldn't be that way. And I'm so proud of you for doing this and doing it so young. And I want to hear what was the moment like when that bank account rolled over? Like, what was there a shift where you feel like I've hit this massive goal. And what did you do?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, oh, I love that question. And is actually something I've not even really thought of it until this moment. So I won a Business Award, very close to when we were about to hit the million dollar mark or, you know, million pounds in the UK. And, and the interview, sort of alluded to the fact that that's where we're heading. It was also in the awards application. And the media got hold of it. And they actually presented it before they even like came out and said that to anyone. So and the newspaper, it was pens everywhere that I had already achieved this million time business. And it was gonna it was happening. Like they sort of came before I'd even like started to assess it. But yeah, I think it was a surreal moment of, you know, one of the weirdest things for me was I had this vision board that I created when I started the business. And it was I think it was year 2017 or 18, where we hit that million pound mark. And a couple of years earlier, I said that by 2018. I want to be making 40,000 pounds, turnover per year. And we've had that obviously a million pound mark that year. So I think, looking back looking back on that, for me, it was obviously a massive journey, but I wasn't quite ready for it. I think I was still chasing after it. Even the ones achieved it. I was still getting my mindset to the correct place. I was still having to step into that person who was a seven figure business. And I think it's over the past few years I've been able to do them.

**Shannan Monson:** Yeah, it's uh, I definitely agree that it can be a surreal feeling. And also that feeling of just like you said, the beginning of this interview, was that me? Did I do that almost like a little bit of an out of body and kind of now what so I would love to hear from your perspective, I love asking this question. I'm excited to hear from your youthful perspective. There's like a solid decade between us here. What advice would you give to another entrepreneur that's trying to hit that million dollar mark? What are the if you could say, these are the top three things that I did that got me here? And at such a young age? What would they be?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, let's say number one, don't focus on the figures. Because, you know, my goal was never to hit the a million pounds, it was to, you know, stage properties. It was to work with as many developers as possible it was to have an amazing portfolio. It was it was really mission driven more than figure driven. And that was kind of like an afterthought of Oh, wow, that's, that's awesome. I'm, and yeah, I would say that that really, really was what happened to Number two, as to definitely have optics on your business looking at the numbers, and that's something I hate. I try and avoid at all costs. I don't want to look at any figures

**Shannan Monson:** You're a creative at heart

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, absolutely. Don't want to know, I just want to keep doing my thing. But it was when I actually got optics on the business that I realized, right? Even though that figures high, obviously was the type of business we were then that's not all profit is not anywhere near profit.

So let's start looking at the optics and seeing where we can improve. And then third, for someone that really wants to get there. I would say that to have a million pounds, you need to have a strong personal brand. And I think that's really what carried our business through, I was at the heart of it. I was a soul all that. And you know, other people have tried to replicate that sort of success in a home staging business, but it really comes from the founder down. So I would say that you really need to no matter where you are, you're right at the start, start documenting the process and start really putting your personal brand out there. Because, you know, I'm not known as the property stagers. We're known really as Liv Conlon home staging business. And I'd say that's definitely the key to your success.

**Shannan Monson:** Yeah, I agree. I think it's so powerful, especially in the economy that we're in right now. We crave intimacy and in our businesses, we want to know that we are working with someone that we trust that we respect that we can, you know, feel comfortable doing that exchange of money that's different than you know, maybe a business was 20 years ago. Can you recap those three for us again, Liv?

**Liv Conlon:** So to recap, number one, I'd say focus on your mission, not the figure, you know, that mission comes first. And that comes after. Secondly, I'd say get optics on your business, you need to know where you are to know where you're going. And then thirdly, I'd say your personal brand is everything. So whatever you're focusing on marketing wise, it should be deeply rooted in your personal brands

**Shannan Monson:** That's such good advice. Okay. So what's next for you? What are you working on now? Now that you've hit this mark, so young, I mean, I feel like my life was just starting at 22. What are you focusing on in this next chapter?

**Liv Conlon:** So another really cool thing that's happening Shannan, is I've written my journey into a book, so the book is called Too Big for Your Boots. And basically, it's called out because I've had so many times throughout my journey where someone said, don't shine, too bright, turn down your light. And people really just, you know, sort of a female thing, and especially as a young female for me to shut up know your place. And it was actually a specific quote that someone said to me in a lift that I just came off an interview, and London, and someone met me in a lift and says, Oh, I know who you are. Don't get too big for your boots. And it was quite one of those moments. I thought, Wow, well, thank you to you. You've given me the title for the book. And but basically, in that book, it's a how to start a seven figure brand from zero. I share a little bit my journey being bullied at school. And it's really focused towards young entrepreneurs and females of how they can do it.

**Shannan Monson:** I'm so excited to to read it. I want to hear more I dig a little bit deeper here. What do you think people said that to you so often, you know, like, you're too big for your boots or know your plays? Go back to college? Right? Why do you feel like that was something that was said to you so often? Yeah,

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, I mean, I feel like I hold a meter up.[ to a lot of people of you know, what they have achieved, or what they've not achieved by a certain age. And I do feel like when someone speaks to me or sees what I have achieved, they can think, well, I've not done that. I think it any anyone that has any sort of judgment of you, I do think it's a reflection upon themselves of what they think so I feel like that's probably how it's rooted. Also, I have probably always been, I'm good at self promotion, and I just refuse to, you know, change who I am, for no matter who ot is, I think we need more people, especially females, which is why I love what you and Suneera are doing. We need more women at the forefront of all of this, not hating on what we've achieved, but actually shouting it from the rooftops.

**Shannan Monson:** I could not agree more, I think what you said really resonated that, you know, a lot of times what people say about us is actually a reflection on their own insecurities. And so by you shining your light, it makes them realize, you know, what, what's missing are the dreams they haven't pursued and for you to really stand your ground. And it's truly at such a young age and to know who you are and to say, you know, thanks for giving me the title of my book instead of really internalizing that. And you know, being smaller, I think is so powerful and such an incredible example for other young women. So I just want to say thank you so much. Another thing that I wanted to like kind of touch on here that you mentioned is that I'm very like good at selling myself good at pitching. So something I noticed you did recently you interviewed the founder of Netflix, and wait for it. Yes. You sent him an Instagram dm asking to come on your podcast. And I'm thinking about this and I'm going I've never gone and gone out of my way to pitch you know, a really big brand. What advice would you give to someone else to I think a lot of times this has been told to us like the audacity? How dare she have the audacity, right? And it's actually what's been rewarded in your life and what I think more women need to stand up and do just just ask, right? So what helped you to make that big ask and to have the confidence to do things like that?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, so I mean, that was definitely one of the scariest moments for me sending that dm and then also I interviewed Mark on the podcast and when we stopped recording, I then asked him today the foreword to my book. He said yes. But when I stopped recording, I was literally no lie. I was shaking. And I was like, Mark, can I ask you something? And he was like, of course and asked him, I said, Of course Let's write the foreword. It's incredible. And it's definitely the highlight of my career so far. I think where that comes from, as I really am not afraid of a novel. I was saying, what is the worst case scenario? If I message him, and he won't reply, which I'm sure I'll probably send them 10 other messages until he does. yeah, and if it is a no a and he does reply, and he says, look, no, your audience isn't big enough, or I'm not interested, then it really is on to the next person on to the next project, or whatever it is we're working on. I think it is like a fearlessness there that you need to just break through that I love. You know, the five second rule, we're 54321. Just do it. And I think, way too often, especially as females, we get way too, into our heads, think about what other people may think, and I have to say the one thing that sort of carried me through this whole journey is just being an action taker. And literally just executing on everything I've put my mind to, regardless of what people think, or if it's a no, because, you know, I've had hundreds of no's to people on the podcast as well. I'm,



and I'm sure at one point, they'll hopefully be messaging asking to come on it. And that's, I guess, where you look at where you want to be, and then work back from there.

**Shannan Monson:** That's so good. Tell us more about the five second rule. I haven't heard this before. And I like it.

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, so it's the five second rule. And it is from Mel Robbins. So basically, she talks about that, when you go to take action, you have five seconds and before your brain starts to come up with all the reasons to protect you. So literally, if you're going to put your hands up a meeting and give an example, if you're going to ask someone a question, you have five seconds to implement before your brain is gonna start to try and protect you and tell you all the reasons why this won't work. They'll think you're stupid. They'll call you names, and they'll comment nasty things on your posts, you have that five seconds, where you can sort of beat your brain and to take an action.

**Shannan Monson:** That's so good. It makes sense because our brain's job is to protect us and we can't tell the difference between physical harm and embarrassment and shame. And so our brain is just saying, hold on a second, what's going to happen? I'm sure in your journey this has happened a lot you know, people saying things and shaming you or bullying you or trying to make you be quiet. How have you dealt with that? I know for me personally this year on the internet I've gotten more internet hate than I've ever gotten before. And it's still as a grown ass woman, it's still hard to hear you know, I know who I am and I know I played so it still hurts when your username397 right. So how have you dealt with that and what advice would you give to other entrepreneurs?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, I'm totally with you there Shannan like it still hurts no matter where you are in your journey although you know it's not true and it's from someone that is feeling insecure or whatever does hurt. I think for me something that I feel very fortunate for was I was bullied at school all through like sort of my younger years and then certainly in high school so I dealt with this on a daily basis in person and it was very challenging for me because you know, pretty much the reasons I'm explaining right now I will shine my light today people didn't like that I'm and they wanted to make me quiet down and lose my confidence. So I have already dealt with as a younger person. And I guess the way that I try to view all of this as it really became one of my biggest driving factors like when someone says you can't do it or don't say I really feel like saying watch me and I know that might sound a little bit arrogant but it really was fueled the fire like in my stomach a lot of the time is when that has happened so when it happens online on a day to day basis still, I'm you know, I've been featured in the press and people have said her mom and dad built this business and they had really nothing to do with all of those different comments I just think you know, power through. Don't take it personally. I love the block button. It's my best friend and I just block left right and center because you know you need to a saying my one favorite quote i think i've ever heard has been you're never going to find someone more successful looking down on you or commenting or doing anything. You're not going to find Oprah on your post saying your ass looks fat in this you're not going to see Tony Robbins telling

you you suck at being a coach like that is not going to happen and those are the people that I want to be in a circle with. Not people that are taking other people down in posts.

**Shannan Monson:** It's so true. It's so true. And I think that that perspective is really beautiful and helps to put, you know, a lot of things into place here. You know, I always say, would I take advice from this person, right. And that helps give me that perspective to okay. They can call me names online, what I want advice from them. And I think that helps me to protect who I am listening to, you know, there are people close to me that might criticize or give feedback that I do want to listen to that's constructive, and it's helpful. But if it's not someone that loves me unconditionally, but I would want their advice from then you can take your comments, right to somebody else's page, because you're blocked. And I love that that's something that I do as well. We are big believers in my sister's an influencer and I know she loves the block button, too. This is your space. And I know, there's been a lot of talk, at least in the US about censorship and free speech. So I would love your thoughts around, you know, with your personal brand that you're building, if someone says I'm afraid to block people, or like, I don't want to censor people, what would you say to them?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, so I would say that and like real life, as in when I'm not on a phone or on a laptop, when I'm actually live in my day to day life, I am so so protective of who's in my space on it, you know, my really close family members and a few very close friends, it doesn't actually extend more than that. Obviously, when you capitalize on social media and all these different platforms, you then open yourself to a much wider audience. However, I think you still have the right to protect that space, and see who you want to see. So even for example, everything I do is in a bubble. I don't want to go on to Instagram and see people on my feed that don't inspire me and make me want to be better. So I only ever follow people who are more successful than me and make the sort of content I want to be consuming. So I think whether it's consumption or people who are following you, that's totally your right. And you can protect who sees that is up to you as they can as well. But I don't think there should be free speech if you don't want someone to be to be, you know, abusing you online, basically.

**Shannan Monson:** Yeah, I completely agree. It's free speech, you can go say whatever you want, but I don't have to listen to it or allow it in my space. And you know, this is my, I curate this space, I'm spending the time to show up for free, you give so much phenomenal advice for free on your Instagram, daily on your podcast, you know, it's within your right to make sure that's a safe space. And I think that that's what allows us to keep creating too. So thank you.

**Liv Conlon:** And the interesting thing is you don't actually get paid for that free content like that is an act of giving back to your audience. And yes, just obviously, so much of your audience appreciates it. And I think it should be put out to those that are there to support and also to learn.

**Shannan Monson:** Yeah, I completely agree. I don't agree that I don't think people appreciate how much of it is free, you know, our podcast we've been producing for months, it is completely free, we pay 1000s of dollars to produce it. And it's just a free resource because we want to give

back to our communities. Same on social media, I'm sure yours is the same. You know, if you're listening to this, if you're listening, if you're watching something on social media, and there's not an ad in it, that is free content that someone spent their time and energy to create for you. And I think that's something that I feel really strongly about that we have a responsibility both as creators and as consumers to you know, when I come to Liv's space, Liv invited me into her home inner circle, and I'm gonna bring that same energy and positivity. Something that you've done phenomenally well is you built a personal brand. So it's not just a staging company, you built yourself Liv Conlon and that's allowed you to take it in different, you know, be a speaker, do consulting and coaching and courses. What advice would you give to someone who's trying to start a personal brand? What do you think is really what helped you to get to where you are today?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, so let's say everything you do is your personal brand, when you meet someone in person, whether it's online, it all stems from that place. And you know, whether you want a personal brand or not, whether you think you have one or not, you've got one, and it should really be curated. If you're in business, of course, unless you're doing this for fun, then you can do you know, go wild. But if you are in business, and you're building your personal brand, you've got one already and I really first advise you to do a bit of a personal brand audit, like where are you right now? Are you showing up in the way that you'd like to? Are you the person, the go to person for what you want to be? And I think it's first define what that is. So what do you want to be known for? And then all of your actions should really be directed towards that. So for example, if I wanted to become what I did, the go to person for home staging in the UK, everything I was doing every single day was working towards that goal, whether it's putting out you know, thought leadership content, and interviewing other leaders in the space I'm really putting yourself in that place, but also have the uncurated content as well, which is your behind the scenes. And it's getting people to know you. Because at the end of the day, a personal brand connects with other people. Hint the word personal, people want to get to know you. So Shannan, your personal brand is awesome. And, you know, I feel like I've known you for years, although we've only connected recently because I followed you and you bring your audience to your life. And I think you know, as a personal brand, you don't need to share it all, but what you do share needs to be transparent. And it does need to be authentic.

**Shannan Monson:** Yeah, I agree with that. If you're just getting started creating content, especially the behind the scenes content, I think it's a little bit harder to curate. Let's say I have a brand new personal brand. I'm starting from scratch today. I have no idea every time I open my phone, I'm like, I have no idea what to post, right? I'm in real estate. But what am I supposed to post especially the behind the scenes stuff? Can you help? Like, how would you start to curate that content and figure out what behind the scenes to post and how to create content?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, perfect. So basically, where I'd start is in your place of zone of genius, basically. So what could you give someone that would offer value to them today, and I think you really want to convey a feeling with your audience on your Instagram stories and on your social media that they don't want to miss out on what you're saying that they're actually going to grab their food and run away from their children lock themselves in the bathroom and listen and turn

the volume up often to listen to everything you say on it on it because you're adding so much value I'm so I'd say that most of your content should be adding value to your audience in some way, not making it about yourself, but actually trying to add value to their life, whether that is in business or whether you're trying to educate them or give them value and sharing you interiors or your family. So I think at every point. Am I just going on social media to ramble on? Or am I actually going to add value and often if I don't feel like I can add value, even though I'm like, I've not posted today, I need to go in and sit down and do something. Sometimes I'll hold up the phone and ramble on for 30 seconds and delete it because it's like today I'm just not showing up the way I should. So yeah, show up when you're in that zone.

**Shannan Monson:** I love that analogy with this content, make someone run to the bathroom, lock the door, lock everybody out. That's really good there's always like tests I'll put my content through to say like, is this publishable? And I think something that I'm always reminding myself is we can create a lot of content that doesn't get published, either. You know, it's okay to learn to be a content creator. So I love that advice. Okay, I want to get kind of personal here with you. Um, obviously, I'm sure everything hasn't gone. Perfect. Glass wall, you know, perfectly smooth. So I would love to hear you know what you're comfortable sharing. What do you feel like were the biggest mistakes or lessons learned or like biggest obstacles that you had to overcome?

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, so oh, my goodness, I'd love to share a few flaws or a few mistakes. I'm so yeah, I would say that one of my pieces of advice was to get optics on your business. And that's my main pieces of advice. Because I totally never had that. Like, because we experienced such rapid growth. We were basically just running, running, running without checking what was actually going on. So for me, like, I overspent on so many different elements of the business, paying accountants like 10s of 1000s of dollars here there and everywhere because I wasn't, you know, tracking my expenses and doing everything correctly. So I'd say that the optics would be number one issue. Because I am creative like, I love just putting stuff out there that makes me happy that makes the audience happy. But as I actually bring in any form of income, I'm so secondly, one of my mistakes with being, you know, as useful as social media has been to my business. Like we organically built a seven figure business with no paid ads. But for a long time, we were posting content, spending hours putting hours into it, and it was literally delivering nothing. And I know that it's your skill, you're such big fans of like, tracking what content actually brings in clients and followers and stats and everything. And that's another thing we invested so much time into marketing that had absolutely no return on investment. Apart from lessons in life. Yeah, and I'd say that third my biggest issue has always been finding the right team to carry out what we do and especially with the home staging side of things. Like my standards are totally different to what most other human beings standards are.

**Shannan Monson:** Yes, here talk more about this. I feel like as the CEO owner, this is a problem. We all feel deeply in my bones like I do it right and then other people say they're just not the same level. So talk go deeper there.

**Liv Conlon:** Yes. So like, I would say that our success was really built on one my eye for design being so great, and being able to really execute something to perfection. Now I'm not a proud

perfectionist, but when it comes to interiors, like we had everything so perfect if I was there, that if I then hired a team member, I probably spent at times eight hours a day on WhatsApp editing properties that they were 500 miles away. And I was like, move that cushion 0.3 centimeters. Chop that cushion, I move that table slightly forward and push this. Like it was to an extreme. And through that, like we just lost so much time I lost enthusiasm and my team because I had this totally high standard that no one could achieve apart from me. And yeah, that was challenging because I actually had so many team members come and go, because it was no longer enjoyable with this impossible standard. Now, I am slightly getting better at that I've got more of an 80% approach to things but I still struggle with it. I still want to re edit something someone's done. I still want to perfect it. Um, so yes, definitely something I've struggled with, I think it's probably been being a perfectionist has been one of my biggest downfalls, but in a few ways, something that really supported me too.

**Shannan Monson:** I think a lot of people listening can relate to that feeling of perfectionism and something you might laugh, but something I always say to myself is, is it not good enough? Or did I just not do it? Like, is it really not a good question? Is it not to the standard that it needs to be out? Or is it just not the way I would have done it and really being able to let go of Okay, it doesn't have to be the way that I did it, as long as it meets our standard as a company. And I think that's something that I hear from a lot of entrepreneurs when they're hiring team members. This is like all of our biggest struggles, right? We built this business because we have a passion, we want things done a certain way. And we see the vision for it, and we're visionaries, and then helping other people do it in exactly that way. It's not just hard. It's impossible. It can't be done in exactly the way that your vision is. And so you have to be flexible there and in how it's gonna come to life.

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, absolutely. And I was working with a business coach at the time. And I was telling them these issues of the cushions not being you know, point one centimeter is in place. And he said to me, you know, everything that you're talking about the consumer, the client doesn't even see that. So a lot of the time what we're actually working on, it doesn't even come into the client radar, it really doesn't literally, my eyes No one else, hence why no one else could see what was wrong.

**Shannan Monson:** Yeah, I love that as a if it's not done by me or as the Yeah, it's not right. Clearly also a recovering, perfectionist. So I do I think this is really normal, especially as women we're hiring, we're bringing people in, and you do have to let go of control. And it's not, I don't think it's letting go of control. It's allowing your vision to come to life in different ways, you know, with the pillows to be slightly different than you imagine. And it still be okay, because the business is going and going on. So I want to also touch on what you talked about with numbers a little bit more and having we always call a pulse on our business. What did you use? optics? Yeah. So really being able to see on one dashboard or one spreadsheet, you know, not just what's our revenue? Because it can be really easy when you're growing quickly to just say, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. And you're getting all these new clients and your revenues going up. But if you're not paying attention to what's the profit on each of these, you might be spending a lot of

time and energy on things that actually at the end of the day, you're losing money, I can share an example. I had a cold pressed juice company for a brief period of time, and it actually cost us more to operate per day than we brought in in profit. And it actually, I'm embarrassed to say this, it took me a month to realize it, it could have been a year, it could have been worse. It took me a month to realize that every day we operated we lost money and selling more would just exemplify the problem. And so really having the strong pulse on what are my numbers? What do the KPIs need to be focusing on, because revenue is not the end all be all?

**Liv Conlon:** No, no, it is. And so many ways. Obviously, it's a massive achievement, but in some ways as a vanity figure as well, because oh, yeah, you know, unless profit is there, then you could run a million dollar business. And your expenses can be 1.2. Yeah. And that's probably more common than then people know

**Shannan Monson:** 100% I can put a million dollars into ads and run a million dollar business. It's not you know, and not to discredit what you've built is phenomenal. But we do really need to pay attention especially as we scale because you scale the problems too right. So if you had a profitability problem at 100,000, then you're gonna have a profitability problem at a million if you have a team member problem with one team member with 10 it's gonna be 10. Yeah.

**Liv Conlon:** Yeah, definitely your problems change. But yeah, they can get a little bit more severe.

**Shannan Monson:** Yeah. 100% Okay, this has been absolutely phenomenal. I feel like I've learned so much. I'm really excited about that five second rule. Watch me put that into practice because I will be the first to talk myself out of things. Tell us more about when your book is coming out and where everyone can come find you, where you hang out, your website, social all that so our listeners can come meet you and learn more and follow along.

**Liv Conlon:**

Awesome. Yeah. So Too Big for Your Boots is out March 21. You can pick up a copy of that and if you follow me on social I'll probably never shut off about it. So you can find me @oliviaconlon on Instagram and on Facebook. I'm pretty much everywhere. I'm Yeah, come connect. DM me if you've been able to understand any word that I've said. With a Scottish accent, I'm but yeah, let me know what you took away from this episode. And I'd love to connect with anyone.

**Shannan Monson:** Thank you so much for coming on the show. It was such an honor to have you.

**Liv Conlon:** Oh, thank you so much, Shannan. It's been incredible.

**Shannan Monson:** Thank you so much for listening. We hope you enjoy the show. Follow us at CEO school on Instagram for show notes, inspiration and exclusive behind the scenes that you won't find anywhere else. We also have an absolutely incredible resource for you. It's the seven

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