

EEP - Kat Kennan

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SPEAKERS

Maria Ross

00:01

You know, we are trying to drive, you know, compassion and understanding. We want positive change. Like I've talked about how, you know, our mental health crisis is getting worse and worse. And, you know, for me, I want to make such an impact. It's so important to me. And it's been a part of my journey for sure, to positively impact lives. And because I'm a marketer, right? I think about how can I do this via companies, right? And if I can get, you know, of course, I want it to be hundreds and 1000s of companies. But you know, even if it's a, you know, a few dozen companies that think differently about marketing, you know, that's 10s of 1000s of consumers that are going to have a different experience. And that's everything.

Maria Ross 00:53

Welcome to the empathy edge podcast, the show that proves why cash flow, creativity and compassion are not mutually exclusive. I'm your host, Maria Ross. I'm a speaker, author, mom, facilitator and empathy advocate. And here you'll meet trailblazing leaders and executives, authors and experts who embrace empathy to achieve radical success. We discuss all facets of empathy from trends and research to the future of work to how to heal societal divisions and collaborate more effectively. Our goal is to redefine success and prove that empathy isn't just good for society, it's great for business. Marketing often relies on a lot of tricks to reach people in this noisy world. But we have an opportunity to be more intentional and responsible in our marketing. And when we do that leads to increased customer engagement, loyalty, and yes, profit. Today, I talked with Kat cannon, about trauma informed marketing, and how we can rethink the way we promote our offerings. Kat is the founder and CEO of radical customer experience, a groundbreaking consulting firm that encourages brands to establish genuine connections with their customers by embracing strengths based trauma informed and inclusive marketing services. With a passion for empowering individuals and driving positive change. Her mission is to help brands speak up, speak out, and foster diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in their customer interactions. As a certified trauma informed professional Kats journey to success is rooted in years of marketing leadership for companies and organizations of all shapes, sizes and industry sectors. Moreover, her personal experiences with complex PTSD have made her a passionate advocate for all trauma survivors, leading her to establish the advocacy organization stand up to trauma. Through this organization, she enables others to heal and thrive beyond their traumatic

experiences. Kats unwavering commitment to creating a more inclusive and empathic world have earned her recognition and respect with the marketing and trauma informed community. She is leading the charge and revolutionising the way businesses interact with their customers leaving a profound impact on the industry and society as a whole. Today we talk about what trauma informed marketing means, why brands need to pay attention, how to avoid canceled culture, and how to rethink old marketing models. And get away from fear based messaging. We discuss how trauma can show up for your customers where you can take a pause and adapt. And she offers great tips on easy ways to start infusing more empathy into your marketing to boost your customer's perception of the brand. And she has a special offer for all you listeners. So stay tuned. Let's get connected. If you're loving this content, don't forget to go to the empathy edge.com and sign up for the email list to get free resources and more empathy infused success tips and find out how you can book me as a speaker. I want to hear how empathy is helping you be more successful. So please sign up now at V empathy edge.com Oh, and follow me on Instagram where I'm always posting all the things for you at Red slice Maria. Welcome Kat cannon to the empathy edge podcast. I am really looking forward to having this conversation with you about marrying two of my favorite things, which is empathy and marketing together to help businesses succeed because as you know, this podcast is all about leveraging the power of empathy not only to improve our lives, but to improve our businesses and our brands as well. So welcome to the show.

04:44

Oh, thank you so much. I'm thrilled to be here.

Maria Ross 04:47

So let's talk a little bit about your work. You know, as I read in the bio, you talk about radical customer experience your business as a consulting firm that encourages brands to establish genuine connect actions with their customers by embracing strengths based trauma informed and inclusive marketing services. Can you explain what that is for people? Or what those things are for the leaders listening to that podcast right now?

05:13

Yeah, absolutely. So, I mean, let me take a step back and just talk about our mission for a second. So we really are looking to empower companies to embrace empathy, in their marketing practices, really redo things from the way that they've been done forever. So I do talk about strengths based marketing, which is probably an easier entry point than trauma informed. But you know, as marketers, we were all taught fear based techniques, right. And we have to create urgency, it's a limited time, it's limited quantity, you know, I'm sure any of the listeners can go to their inbox right now and find a dozen emails that say, oh, until midnight, but, you know, that's sort of the opposite of empathy. And particularly now, you know, after the pandemic, like we are in a mental health crisis, and, you know, kids are on social, younger and younger as well. And the peer pressure and all of that like negative, you know, focus is really dangerous. And the, you know, obviously, there is a business result, and all this too, which is sales, so like, don't stay with me, but I think brands have a responsibility just like they do, you know, with sustainability or overall diversity inclusion initiatives. Like to me it fits under that larger umbrella. But yeah, definitely encouraging companies and my clients to embrace empathy.

Maria Ross 06:49

And I love that, because we've had a variety of past episodes, I'm going to be putting in the show notes of this episode that have dealt with various aspects of this. And one of the reasons why some of those techniques are used is because scientifically, they have been shown to work and behavioral economics and I had expert Melina Palmer on the podcast twice, actually, but one time talking about what your customers want, but can't tell you. And she made it very clear. It's not about manipulation, it's just about understanding the way people make decisions, and leveraging that in a positive way, in a responsible way. So that you can provide a product or service for the people who need it. And so I think that's where a lot of that comes from is there's the sort of tips or ways to promote, or ways to phrase things or ways to price that our thinking brain says will never work on us. But our subconscious brain it does. And I think we just need to be more savvy as both marketers and consumers about what a powerful tool that is to wield, and why we need to wield it responsibly. So that's why I really love the work you're doing and showing brands that again, what I love the both and thinking, you can be responsible, and be trauma informed and be inclusive, and you can still make a profit, like everybody wins in this scenario. Absolutely.

08:12

And you know, those fear based techniques, you know, particularly are where our society is, and where we're going, you know, we're gonna get diminishing returns. And so it's time to, you know, rethink things. I'm sure too, if you went to LinkedIn now, and any of those, like marketing articles, right? You'd see those same tips and tricks that we've been following for years. And it's like, no, come on, we need to get beyond personas and really connect with our customers. Right.

Maria Ross 08:42

So tell us a little bit about this is usually the first question I asked. I asked, but I wanted to dive right into the What is this that we're talking about today, but let's take a step back and talk about your story. And how your personal journey and experiences have influenced this approach to marketing, and why this approach of being trauma informed as a marketer? First of all, I know you're going to define what that means for us. But also, what's the personal part of your story that informs this work? Yeah,

09:11

absolutely. So I talked about it all the time. But I have complex PTSD, which, you know, a lot of us are familiar with PTSD, as you know, with vets, or, you know, perhaps like medical crises, ad complex, it just means there have been multiple things. But in let's see, 2018 19 and 20. I had three back to back, pretty, like terrible things happen. And then with my mom passing away and expectedly and I realized during that time that I was perceiving marketing messages differently. So you know, you can, I guess you can't take the marketer out of me no matter what. So my analytical brain was on, but I think that's where I started. Did understanding you know, both Annika healing journey and doing a lot of research and reading that there is this concept of being trauma informed. And, you know, it's really come from the medical or therapy community in terms of like how you talk to survivors or patients. And then during the pandemic, I actually went and got a certification and being a trauma informed professional to really learn, both for me and my own journey, but just, you know, also in general of what's happening in the body, and you know, what current reach research is saying, and I was able to marry all these things together, you know, I always say that I will forever be healing and never healed, which is awesome. It's all right, my PTSD is my superpower, and allows me to see the world in a very unique way. But yeah,

we can marry all of these things together, and really create customer experiences that are indeed radical.

Maria Ross 11:02

And what do we mean by trauma informed marketing? Yeah, absolutely.

11:06

So let me give a couple of tangible examples. For everyone who's listening. We can think about it from a campaign or creative perspective. You know, sometimes we're not all sitting around in a boardroom trying to figure out how to ruin someone's day, you know, as goodness, at least I hope not. But, you know, sometimes there's images or words that can be really triggering. You know, we've seen non trauma informed campaigns such as like, you know, Walmart releasing Juneteenth ice cream, or, you know, yeah,

Maria Ross 11:43

I mean, I feel Yeah.

11:47

Like, no. But, you know, I've seen really great examples, the first marketing campaign I saw around this hit me as a consumer. So there's a brand called uncommon goods, which I've been such a fan of, for so long. And my very first mother's day, without my mom, obviously, you know, particularly in any holiday, right? There's always so many messages coming at you. before Mother's Day. It's every email, it's every social post. It's every commercial, right? And so, you know, I just lost my mom. And I was like, Man, this is so hard. And then I got a text from uncommongoods and said, Hey, we know this time of year is tough for many of you click here to opt out of our Mother's Day messaging. Oh, wow. Yeah. And, you know, as a, as a consumer, as a customer, a longtime customer of the brand, I was like, they really see me, right. And the loyalty that that created and went well beyond the years of like me giving them business, it's like, this deep spot, right, that hits. And, you know, as a marketer, I'm like, Wow, they're so smart. They're just segmenting. Right? And like, that's not a hard thing to do. That's a really easy campaign to put out. And, you know, so there's no reason that brands can't do that, like all along the year, you know, holidays are really important for companies in terms of profits. Right, but can we handle it with more sensitivity? Yes. And, you know, there are other areas of marketing, let's, let's take probably the least sexy area of data hygiene, right? No one likes to talk about it. But if you're not cleaning your database regularly, then what if you are sending an email or even a direct mail piece? Or even it could just be business mail, right? Where maybe you're sending it to a partner that's passed away? Or there's been a divorce? Or, or right, and, you know, then with that one envelope, you really have ruined someone's day. And, you know, I mean, also know, this personally, you know, my, my neighbors husband passed away last year, it was like, you know, one of the nicest people, and, you know, every single day, and there is mail for him. And, you know, how triggering must that be? So, you know, it really applies to all sides of marketing, I would say, more than anything else. It's encouraging marketers to just take a pause before they send something out, to think about how it might fit.

Maria Ross 14:37

I love that. What are some of the examples of the ways you've worked with clients to you know, what are some before and afters you might be able to cite for us to give people more, more examples of things that could spark their thinking of how they can look at their own marketing, and maybe reassess what they've been doing?

14:56

Yeah, so I mean, I've done some training meaning like within marketing departments, almost on the employee side, because I think it's really helpful for marketers or anyone else really executive wise in the workplace to really understand how pervasive trauma is, and what trauma reaction can look like. And so, I mean, statistically speaking, it's north of 70% of people have experienced at least one major traumatic event in their lives. And if we think about the pandemic, I mean, we are really looking at 100%. And, you know, it's not just things like you've lost a friend or family member, or perhaps there was something in your childhood, it could be moving homes, or changing jobs, like these can still be extremely triggering. And so I like to lead, you know, departments through the exercise of what that can look like. And, you know, I've also I'm sure we've all been in those meetings where maybe someone just has a meltdown. And you're like, wait, what has happened? I'm so confused. Yeah. You know, and the reality is that, you know, that person probably had a trauma reaction. And no, it had nothing to do with what was happening in the room, right. And it probably wasn't even as simple as, hey, they had a fight with their partner that morning, or, you know, something's going on with their kids, it's always hits much deeper, I always find myself kind of pointing here, because, you know, that's where trauma really lives. It's underneath everything. And even if you see someone that's angry, for example, that's a secondary emotion, there's always something underneath. So I find that, you know, by leading my clients sort of through that internal exercise, it's much easier for them to then look at the external side, right, of how messages might be received. And so I try to start with early things, like are easy things, you know, holidays are absolutely any, you know, easy thing. We've already talked about how, say even in q4, right, the holiday season, like we are looking at way north of 25% of profits. So how can we handle it since tively? When you know, the holiday is aren't an easy time for a good majority of consumers. Right? And, you know, so what kind of messages can we put out? Like, maybe like things with a lot of happy families? Maybe we should rethink it? Maybe not? Maybe it is appropriate. But just to take that pause? And, you know, and you know, then we see, we see sales increase, we've done some, we've done some really fascinating research with it isn't even fully public yet. But at least at this time, but we're seeing that 83% I just feel like I need to say it again, 83% of consumers feel that brands do little to nothing to handle complaints are difficult situations that they are having in terms of customer experience, customer service. 83%.

Maria Ross 18:10

I mean, that's nuts. I'm just gonna slap you with another hit you with another statistic is that 97% of customers say that empathy is important to their customer loyalty for a brand that if they have an empathetic experience, or if they don't, yeah, 97% say that is very important to them in terms of will they buy from this brand, or won't they? So, you know, this is a bottom line issue. This is not just sort of a like, oh, we just need to be touchy feely like, this is impacting, you know, things that the CFOs care about. And I'm gonna, you know, as I mentioned, when I was thinking through our talk today, there's so many past episodes that I want to link folks to one is to Charna caselle, where we did an episode about recognizing trauma in the workplace. And also, Bridgette, I Rousseau, who spoke about disrupting toxic

marketing models and business models, especially in the online space. And how many of those are rooted in patriarchy, oppression. So many of those methods are rooted in forcing people to do something that they might not choose to do. And so And then, finally, Lindsey, last shell, who spoke about being a marketing activist and leveraging marketing, to do good in the world, rather than cause more harm, and I'm hearing echoes of all these themes as you talk. And the biggest word that's popping up for me as you talk is intention is to stop running, and stop, you know, stop and pause. Think about is this something we should do? Or are we doing it because we've always done it, or everyone is doing it? Or it's the next shiny new thing? And you know, I think what is probably the question coming to most listeners minds is, well, can you just drive yourself? Nuts in circles? because you have to consider every possible reaction. At what point do you start suffering from analysis paralysis? And you don't put a campaign out there? Do you have any perspective or guidance on that? Because I think and myself as a marketer, that's kind of my number one question is, at what point? Are we spent? Do we spend too much time on intention?

20:25

And then we just have to go? Yeah, absolutely. I mean, this is definitely an early pushback that I got a lot. And it sort of really forced me to think about it, right. And what I realized is that intention piece is key, because it is just about taking a pause, it doesn't mean that, you know, as a brand marketer, you need to sit there and think about every single person's experience. I mean, now, maybe it's been a health issue, or maybe, you know, whatever it is, but by taking that pause, I think you're getting over halfway there. Just just to take a moment, and think about how it might read. And, you know, I think for a lot of brands, too, they're terrified of being canceled, right? You know, it's such a big topic right now, the last number I saw was like, over 40%, probably higher now, of executives are absolutely terrified of being canceled, which, you know, leads them to not say anything, right. But, you know, speaking of the statistic you just cited Maria, consumers also expect brands to speak up, and to stand for things too, right. Yeah,

Maria Ross 21:49

I've said that for a long time that it that we cannot brands cannot be Switzerland anymore. They have to put out there, what their values are and what they believe. And it becomes a lot easier to avoid the landmines, so to speak, if you are very clear on your mission and your values, because I've spoken to C level executives for my new book that's coming out in the fall, the empathy dilemma, that that helps you narrow the options. If you can think about what is true for our mission and our values, then you can decide which things to take a stand on, you don't have to comment on everything. But you can take a very clear stand on things that are immediately relevant to your mission and your values. And it's sort of a sort of a litmus test of, okay, there's lots of things going on in the world that we could comment on. But what, what is true for us as a company as a brand, where are we going to, you know, claim our stake, and be very clear with not only the type of customer that will want to work with us, but also the types of employees that want to work with us. Because we always have to remember that both internal and external culture and brand are two sides of the same coin. And so it's about taking that stand and, and where do you stand on something, and but again, you don't have to comment on everything. But where it matters, and where people, your customers and your employees are expecting you to speak up? What will you say?

23:21

Absolutely, absolutely.

Maria Ross 23:24

And I want to talk real quickly about your, your vision for, you know, if you if you had a perfect world of this vision for the future of trauma informed marketing strategies within the marketing industry, what would that look like? Yeah,

23:38

I mean, I think about our overall vision is, you know, we're trying to drive, you know, compassion and understanding and went positive change. Like, I've talked about how, you know, our mental health crisis is getting worse and worse. And, you know, for me, I want to make such an impact. It's so important to me, and it's been a part of my journey, for sure, to positively impact lives. And because I'm a marketer, right? I think about how can I do this via companies, right? And if I can get, you know, of course, I want it to be hundreds and 1000s of companies, but you know, even if it's a, you know, a few dozen companies that think differently about marketing, you know, that's 10s of 1000s of consumers that are going to have a different experience. And that's everything.

Maria Ross 24:34

Mm hmm. I love that. So let's give some folks some tangible ways to embrace this approach we talked about a few of them already is thinking about thinking about timing, thinking about, for example, the holidays, and what might some of your customers be thinking and feeling and what I heard wrapped into that was also just this extra step of consent. So this very easy step of we're going to be sending you a boatload of communications about Mother's Day or about the holidays. Because the truth is, they're going to opt out anyway without telling you, if it hits a nerve, so you might as well ask permission, and still have them in your community, and let's say on your email list or you know, in the family, but this way, you're offering them the opportunity to give consent of yeah, I'd rather not hear about you from you right now, if these are the messages you're going to be sending, because I'm having a really hard time. So for me, I hear this idea of consent and timing, what are some other ways that they can take some approaches to marketing in this fashion? Yeah,

25:40

I also think we, you know, can't forget sort of real time events, right? We're always trying to get ahead of things and scheduled things and, you know, be more proactive instead of reactive, right. But, you know, what, have we had a sale that was about to start, I thought about this recently, when we had the wildfires in Hawaii? Like, what if you're like, this sale is fire? Right? And, yeah, no, it would have been, it would have been so clever, and you know, probably worth a chuckle. And then what had it come out that same day? It wouldn't have been right and would have lunch? Yeah, it would have been very insensitive. And you know, honestly, that example probably came true for many brands, right? Would not

Maria Ross 26:31

doubt it. And I think that's the challenge with automating so much, which I'm not anti automation, but someone has to be the keeper of knowing what's going out when and being able to make a call that

something might need to be pulled, or rescheduled, based on something that's going on, and not to make that like this laborious decision that requires 12 Different people to sign off on it. You need to have a pretty nimble and agile group of decision makers that can adapt and adjust campaigns on the fly based on real time events.

27:06

Yeah, absolutely. And, you know, we've seen examples of this for years in terms of like, real time marketing, that happens, you know, I don't know what what pops in my head, like that Oreo example, if I was just gonna say that from the Superbowl. Right. Yeah. Right. It's like that, that exact same process, and very probably likely very narrow group of decision makers, were able to come up with that on the fly and send it out. So it's that exact same structure that allows you to take that pause or like, you know, turn something off, reschedule it, when needed. And you know, it's absolutely the structure that you need for the department. It's like

Maria Ross 27:51

that process in reverse. And so I think it's, I think it's a worthwhile thing to try within your marketing planning meetings, whether you have them weekly or monthly, as sort of like what's going on in the world right now that might impact campaigns we have going on? I don't, I feel like so many marketing departments, and I've been in them, where once you get the campaign out the door, you're thinking about the next. But no one's thinking about like, okay, let's, let's pause, what's actually going live this week, and what's happening in our world where we may want to rethink what's going on, give us one more way that they can embrace this approach. What's another

28:29

tip? Yeah, so I think about it, you know, all the way to like the roots of your company DNA. So what my company is one based around is my three R's method, which is not rocket science at all. But obviously, we we should know by now that I love the word radical. So it's radical vulnerability, radical empathy, and radical authentic investment. And I think if your marketing department and obviously that ties into your overall leadership and DNA, the company is able to embrace these three tenets, right, that not only will you be implementing more trauma informed, strength based practices, but it is like, affecting your bottom line in a very positive way.

Maria Ross 29:26

Walk us through them real quickly, before we wrap. Yeah, what are the three?

29:30

Yeah, so on the empathy side, you know, we really want to make your customers feel seen, right? So it's just like, again, that really is that pause that we've been talking about in terms of vulnerability. That means that as a brand, you're willing to recognize when you have had a misstep, you've made a mistake. Maybe you were that brand that accidentally sent out like both a sales buyer Right. And, and you know, that's Okay, all right, but just own it. And really, and I use this word very carefully, authentically apologize, right. And, you know, in terms of like, you know, authentic investment, you know, there are a lot of brands, and this gets so tight into the marketing department to in terms of cause marketing, or we're doing a campaign where a percentage of profits or whatever it is, right. But so many

of those don't get tied into the DNA of the brand. It's, you know, it's October, so we're raising money for breast cancer or, you know, whatever, you know, month of the year, or it is right. And I think, really thinking about, where is your community, whether that's consumers, whether that's your employees, is really like authentically investing in your neighborhood, essentially, right? Where your headquarters like, you know, who are people in your community? Are you training the next generation of workers doing that versus like, you know, setting up a park bench or cleaning, like, you know, cleaning a few blocks, you know, on a on a volunteer day. So I think so much of this gets tied into marketing, even if it doesn't seem like marketing at first glance, because let's be honest, marketing is everything. And everything is marketing.

Maria Ross 31:32

So on that, before we wrap, I do want to share that you have a special offer for listeners. It's called the canceled culture checkup. Tell us about that. And what do people listening need to do to get a hold of that? Little special? Yeah. Yeah,

31:46

absolutely. Yeah. So we have this software product. Now. It's a tiered subscription, like many SaaS products, but it really measures brand sensitivity. So the end result is a brand sensitivity score. So it really is measuring brand sensitivity against these three tenets that we were just speaking about. And just in terms of overall Kancil culture, right, we talked earlier about, you know, businesses, and executives are terrified of getting caught, you know, and whatever it is me, you know, maybe they made a campaign decision, and then then they reverse the decision, and probably getting more hot water. But this really, you know, by surveying their customers, and this is like all based on psychology, and I could really, really dive into it, if I have the chance. But it really shows you by looking at these tenants, like, how can you overcome that? How can you be proactive? What do you need to be looking for? Maybe there's a company that's doing like, really well above average on vulnerability, they will admit mistakes, but maybe they could do better on authentic investment. And people, you know, their customers are like, Yeah, you know, maybe you can invest in a different way in terms of supporting a nonprofit or what have you. Yeah.

Maria Ross 33:14

So again, where can folks find this? Yes. So

33:19

head on over to my website, radical customer, experience.com. And you will see all of the tiered options there. There's a quick little video that walks you through the platform. And for listeners, I do have a discount code that gives 30% off for the first three months, and it's Maria 30. Yay,

Maria Ross 33:42

Maria 30 is your discount code for that. So go to radical customer experience.com. And check that out. Kat, it was a pleasure to talk to you. I'm always excited about new ways to be more responsible as marketers, and still have a profound impact on profitability and success. So thank you for coming on the show today. We'll have all your links in the show notes, including the link to the website so folks can

take advantage of the canceled culture checkup discount offer that you have. But for folks on the go right now, where's the best place they can reach you contact you find out more about your work? Yeah,

34:15

absolutely. Since you all have my website already, head on over to LinkedIn. And I'm Kat cannon, and most of my stuff is is all there. Awesome.

Maria Ross 34:26

Awesome. Thank you Kat, again for sharing your insights today. I'm sure you have given marketers and marketing leaders listening, some food for thought. So thank you. Thrilled to be here. And thank you everyone for listening to another episode of the empathy edge podcast. If you like what you heard you know what to do, please rate and review and share it with a colleague or a friend. And remember until next time that cashflow, creativity and compassion are not mutually exclusive. Take care and be kind. For more on how to win achieve radical success through empathy, visit the [empathy edge.com](https://empathyedge.com). There you can listen to past episodes, access shownotes and free resources. Book me for a Keynote or workshop and sign up for our email list to get new episodes, insights, news and events. Please follow me on Instagram at Red slice Maria. Never forget empathy is your superpower. Use it to make your work and the world a better place.