

MARGINS

Season 3, Episode 3: “I Want to Believe (Trust)”

SPONSOR READ: This season of Margins from Managing Editor is brought to you by Showcase Workshop, which helps your team deliver outstanding sales presentations wherever you go. Marketers, you’ll be able to see how your content performs in real time, so you can deliver more of what works. Learn more at showcaseworkshop.com/Margins.

MARY ELLEN: From Managing Editor Magazine, this is Margins. If you have “content” in your job description, or you’re just interested in how we all talk to each other online, we made this podcast for you. And this season on Margins, we’re exploring the idea of influence: who has it, who wants it, and how we wield it at work and in our communities. I’m your host, Mary Ellen Slayter.

ELENA VALENTINE: And I’m your co-host Elena Valentine.

The Big Idea

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: Is there any phrase in the English language that engenders less trust than the phrase, trust me, right? It’s almost like if you have to say it, why are you having to tell me to trust you? So trust is a funny thing, right? Other things you would think you could explicitly discuss it or say that, but that doesn’t work. That doesn’t work. Right? So when somebody says, trust me, what do you think?

ELENA VALENTINE: The problem is that inevitably trust the word itself means nothing. It’s all about the action. That inevitably becomes both the solution and the challenge here is that so much of trust is an unspoken thing based on actions that you see are built between other people. I think that’s what makes it so difficult in all of these contexts around influence. One thing that as I was having my own conversations about this for this episode was realizing just how long it takes to build through action, but just how one tiny action can tear it all down.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: There’s that aspect of it, which is I mean that to me seems like a fair way to build trust. The other ways that trust are built are actually through, we talk a lot about unconscious bias in our work, right? We talk about how we push those buttons and people, but a lot of the decisions that we make about whether to trust somebody are not conscious and they’re not based on their behavior whatsoever, right? We see a certain uniform and we say, okay that person, I can trust them. Or we see somebody we’ve built up associations or mind about the color of someone’s skin. We say, “Oh, you can’t trust them.” You know? So there is an aspect of that that is intentional, right? What you’re describing. It’s like, well, I see how you behave and so I have chosen to trust you in these ever sort of more intimate ways, but there’s a lot of trust that people, sometimes I think when we talk about privilege and people have a hard time wrapping their mind around what we mean by privilege. I think privilege, 90% of privilege, especially if we talk about white privilege or male privilege is really about getting the benefit of the doubt and some built in trust that we give certain people that it’s like they start off with it and they can lose it. Right? Whereas I think other groups of people in other settings we say you have none, you have to earn it.

ELENA VALENTINE: Yes.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: All of that is unconscious. We don’t really decide who we’re going to trust. I don’t think, do you decide that?

ELENA VALENTINE: No. What’s fascinating, you’re right. It’s not only just around the implicit biases that we own have, but if we think about it from the work context, right, we trust certain roles somehow almost inherently, right? If the doctor says so, or if our president says so, there’s some sort of almost blind trust that we must have or certainly in the past. Obviously there’s a lot more coming out and we’re seeing so much more unrest because of breakdowns of trust.

MARGINS

That's what's been really fascinating when you look at trust from both the personal and the work context here and exactly what you are bringing up, certainly around implicit bias and kind of the initial trust that we might have with folks. It is both very telling and still very sad that those situations very much exist.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: I was thinking about they used to call it, somebody read it the Warren Harding Effect is what they called it. Where it was like Warren Harding was apparently not a very bright person and not a very moral person, but he looked presidential. Right? So that's how we got Warren Harding as president because he looked the part. So we just trusted him to lead the country because he was a tall white man with a good set of hair. So is that really something that we make all these decisions. We think it's very conscious, but it's not. Right? I find that really fascinating. Or like when we put trust in people and then they betray it. We have higher expectations for certain groups and it's hard for us to wrap our minds around when they betray it. Like accountants are an example I like to use, right? Accountants are consistently ranked one of the most trusted professions in America. The AICPA has put an enormous amount of work into their ethics. There's rules for things, there's codes of behavior. Yet at the same time because we put so much trust in them, it feels like such a breach whenever they violate those codes. The truth is they violate those codes all the time. I mean, I don't mean to like slander accountants, but that is who steals from you, right? That's who has the mechanism to do so. So it's such a let down when they don't stick to those super high expectations we give them. I think doctors are a similar kind of thing, right? A doctor who disappoints, you and breaks that trust, an accountant who breaks it, or a police officer. I think sometimes when people wonder why people are so angry about that, it's because we expected more.

ELENA VALENTINE: I think in response to that, Mary Ellen, it's interesting, a quote that really resonates with me recently is someone who said the world isn't getting worse. The veil sheltering you from reality is lifting. To me that actually really resonates here for this conversation, because what we're realizing is that one group has always trusted a certain role. There's been other communities that have never trusted and that these roles and people in power never built that relationship based on trust. So this is what we're seeing inevitably, is folks that are kind of coming to light to realize, "Wow, I've trusted these roles, I've trusted these communities." To see that others have not and what happens now, how do we kind of have a conversation around that to make trust more consistent? I don't necessarily know if it could ever be.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: Not with those structures, not with those structures for sure.

ELENA VALENTINE: No.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: Yeah. It's like it conjures up very different things for people. I used to say somebody asked me once, this was years ago when I was still working at the Post and they asked me if I trusted this particular person on our team and I just looked at him and I said, "Trust him to what?" So that's my answer to question. Trust is not just like, there's a lot of spaces between, "Well, I trust this person to do their job competently and on time. Do I trust this person?" So there might be somebody I trust to do that, but that doesn't mean I trust them to come over and feed my dog. Right? That doesn't mean I trust them to watch my kids. It doesn't mean I trust them to, I mean, there's like any number of things. Those are to me, trust is like trust them to what? I trust people to do as they have done in the past mostly. Somebody who can be highly trustworthy in one segment of their life can be a total disaster in another.

ELENA VALENTINE: Yeah. It's interesting. I want to bring up this one statement because you had mentioned someone telling you, "Hey, please trust me on this as a leader." Most recently I kind of had a conversation about this with a few of my team members after they raised kind of some issues and concerns around something. I had to tell them, "I hope that you can just trust me as your leader as we've made this decision." Inevitably I said it's to be backed in data. That really when I'm asking you to trust me, it's because I want you both to take into account those key pieces of data in the past where you've seen that trust backed by action and in the future. If I've broken that, that I would want you to hold me accountable and that we would continue to have these conversations again.

MARGINS

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: People hate being held accountable though, right? Isn't that the worst feeling in the world when somebody else has to tell you that? Especially because you know it. If you're a good person, you probably already know that you've slipped and you're already feeling like that ugh. Nobody actually likes to be held accountable Elena. That's really unpleasant.

ELENA VALENTINE: The segue to this conversation and to the leaders that we're talking to in this episode is to be held accountable inevitably to do that well, is that you have to showcase a level of vulnerability and to say, I don't have all the answers. I own this. I messed up, but I commit to committing again. So that's where I see the power, especially in this wave, right, of the power of a vulnerable leader. Oftentimes the power of vulnerable leader inevitably also comes with someone who when we see this time and time again, they've been able to rebuild the trust when shit's gone wrong because they have come in with a level of humility, vulnerability, and also backed by a solution and backed by a plan.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: I mean, what you're talking about though fundamentally is a very different model of leadership than what we have had in corporate America within our government. You're asking and those sort of behaviors that you're describing. Well, I agree with you. In the past, that would've been seen as weak. That would have been seen as not really fit to be a leader, but to me the era that we're in right now that vulnerability, that ability to like say, okay. To me that builds trust actually. To say I really don't know. I don't know, give me a minute. I need to think about this. To me, I know at least for me personally, I know in my own personality, the hardest thing for me in the world to trust somebody else with is to trust them with my sense of inadequacy, right? That I feel like I'm going to fail at something. As a leader, that's a terrible feeling, but if I can say to you, "Elena, I am not feeling great about this." We talk about trusting each other. We're also talking about trusting ourselves.

ELENA VALENTINE: Correct. It's the true dichotomy. I think in the past, we used to expect that people in power were superheroes when in reality what ends up building community around them is when they can show their human side and when they can say they don't know. Surprisingly or not surprisingly, that actually helps to rebuild trust by doing so, because we're tapping into a level of relatability now, right? Where we are showcasing our inadequacies to the rest of the world and what a concept for others to resonate that and realize, "Wow, Elena is a human too. Mary Ellen is a human too." It's that kind of at that level once we can kind of get to that level, I think that's when we can start rebuilding trust.

Music

Interview 1 - Jerome Ternyck

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: In this episode, we're looking at trust from three different perspectives and we're starting with a perspective where trust can determine the difference between life and death, the military. So who better to turn to than Jerome Ternyck, the founder and CEO of Smart Recruiters who also served as a paratrooper in his home country of France.

JEROME TERNYCK : It's a unique opportunity to actually discover a world I don't know and something different. So I joined the officer school, the French equivalent of West Point. I trained there for a half year. I graduated there as a valedictorian so I could pick where I would go. I ended up going into the paratroops, which are the elite army. There I was in charge of bootcamps. So I had a platoon of 40 soldiers and they came to us first day in the army, long hair, lots of hopes, lots of fears. 60 days later, they were proper soldiers ready to actually go to combat or actually do what they were told. In that process, I learned a lot of things. I stayed two years. That was a really very interesting time for me because that's where actually the basis of leadership get done in a strong way, right? You unify people around a simple vision or value, right? Or simple vision, which is it's for the country. You then take all the individualism out of people, shave their head. Everybody wears the same uniform and then you go through hardships. So the individual is replaced by the group inside this advanced onboarding process, right? With extremely strong value. In the end, you have an

MARGINS

army that effectively is ready to potentially go to combat and even sacrifice their life for the good of the group, the good of the country. The good of the mission. It's a very, very interesting time. On a personal level, leading this platoon was very strong as well because in France, they send in the paratroops. It's like a disciplinary or semi disciplinary environment. So they send to the paratroops all the kids that have problems. So if you had done time, if you had been in jail, or if you had any kind of problem, pure violence, kicked out of school, they send you to the paratroops. So the group of kids that I was-

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: You had quite a group then.

JEROME TERNYCK: Yeah. So the group of kids that we were charged with doing boot camps was an interesting one.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: Thinking about this too, I'm trying to think about the time period of this was I'm guessing around your age a little bit, but was this first Gulf war? Where did you overlap?

JEROME TERNYCK: First Gulf war.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: Okay. What was that like?

JEROME TERNYCK: I didn't go into combat. So I wouldn't comment there, but it was right around that time of first Gulf war and the French military's active in various locations as necessary. Lebanon was a strong one at the time. Then all the Sub Saharan region as well.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: So these kids had to trust you. So these kids who already had trust issues, probably just thinking about the things you were describing about their personalities. How did you get them to trust you? Do you remember? Do you remember of what that was like?

JEROME TERNYCK: You get them to trust you by being very consistent. Same with kids actually. Consistency is critical in an authoritarian figure or a parenting figure. There it's like this is what's going to happen. It happens like this and there is no exceptions. In the military, they give you everything you need to have authority, right? They even have things on your shoulders that say that you are more important than the others. You have all the attributes to be important, but how you use this leadership is what people look for. Knowing where to push people and how far to push people is very, very interesting actually. I discovered about myself and about many others that your personal limits are a lot further than where you think they are, like a lot further. Physically and mentally, emotionally, your limits are way, way, way further than you think. So it has also given me more comfort in living on the edge of my comfort zone or maybe on the other side of my comfort zone.

MARY ELLEN: Jerome also learned something else while he was in the military. Influence can be dangerous.

JEROME TERNYCK: I think about danger, the danger of influence, which is something we haven't touched on, but the danger of influence is people's personality can be modeled in the wrong way and easily modeled in the wrong way quite frankly. That was one of my big lessons from the army as well. I was like, "Oh, whoa. So you take kids from a bus and in 60 days, this is who they can be. Whoa." It's really, really impressive, but it's a very precise process, right? You just decompose the personality and you rebuild the group personality. Now if I'm behind the world with my gun and the radio order comes and say Jerome, jump the wall, go kill this person. I'm going to go because I don't matter anymore because I've been replaced by a group because I believe in an order and I'm obeying. The speed at which you can take an individual personality with hopes, desires, doubts, fears, and turn this into group strengths. Really, I found it scary to be honest, and it could be well used. It can be misused, but I find it scary. So when I think about influence, I mostly think about group thinking and how we teach people to maintain critical judgment about everything.

MARY ELLEN: Who influences Jerome? His answer might surprise you.

MARGINS

JEROME TERNYCK: I volunteer in prison and I go to this institution called Pelican Bay, which is the only max security prison in the West, supermax security prison in the West of the US. Most people in the room are here for long times, like 20 plus years, 20 to life. In this setting, we work together on their personal story or on entrepreneurial ideas, on forgiveness. It's a good program. I find that there leading with empathy is really the starting point in fact for any good deep relationship and the level of influence that these men behind bars have had on me is massive. Absolutely massive. I've learned more life lessons from them than from anyone else. That's because they lead with empathy because they are in a place of vulnerability. If you are a lifer in a max security prison and somebody comes to help you, your level of vulnerability has to be a hundred percent, otherwise you're not even part of the program. Seeing people who have had hard lives and who are looking for a second chance, who are looking inside them have vulnerability and connect has been for me, a really important part of my own leadership and influence..

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: So now that you say that, it has made me think of something else. We often think of influence, especially when we're thinking about masculinity, that it's this very like, "I'm going to tell you what to do." There's this authority, but you talked about vulnerability. The idea that by not being like that, so authoritarian and so gung ho that maybe you can be more influential by being vulnerable. I don't know. Does that resonate with you? How do you think about that?

JEROME TERNYCK: Actually when you said, we think of influence as a masculine character, I was like, no influence is a very feminine trait. I mean, for centuries, right? Influence is how do you get people to buy into you and to do what you want without actually having the power to tell them what to do? That's historically been a very, and I think it comes from vulnerability because if influence is me buying into somebody's ideas, right? So this person has influenced me. They didn't tell me what to do. They actually influenced me. So I decided to change my behavior, my actions, my beliefs, however to influence, then that person has to be vulnerable. I think vulnerability and you're right, we did not talk about your vulnerability before, but in authenticity there is also some level of vulnerability, right? So vulnerability is at the heart, absolutely critical component of influence. If you are vulnerable, your level of influence 10X's overnight.

SPONSOR READ: Whoops, me again. I'm from New Zealand. When we're not being mistaken for Australians, we're making software that allows you to share more with customers than you could through print, like your videos. Check out showcaseworkshop.com/margins. Made by New Zealand. Well, not all of us.

Interview 2 - Jennifer Fondrevay

ELENA VALENTINE: In professional environments, there is no test of trust like a merger and acquisition. So why are they so stressful? What can we learn from these experiences to apply to change management in our own professional lives. I sat down with Jennifer Fondrevay, founder of Day One Ready, an M&A consultancy, to break down the perilous experience of bringing two companies together.

JENNIFER: There's three ways that trust dissolve in a M&A scenario. The first we all expect. Our company versus their company. You don't trust each other. That takes a while to build, but that's an expected dynamic. There are two other ways that trust dissolves. You have the frontline leaders versus the executive leadership. So senior leadership, typically they're involved in the M&A dealing then the transaction, all of that. They've known about the merger or acquisition for a while. Frontline leaders, typically because of confidentiality and legal obligations, they don't know about the merger or the acquisition until suddenly it's announced. Trust, I experienced it myself three times, trust dissolves almost overnight because your frontline leaders feel blindsided. They're the ones who are going to execute. In fact, I often describe those frontline leaders as they're not in the room when the deal is made, but they're burdened with the execution. So now you've made a decision on something that they have to execute that they weren't involved in and so trust disappears. Then the third dynamic is the who stays versus who goes. It's kind of like a game of musical chairs. I talk about how trust dissolves there, because you don't know who you can trust in that scenario. When uncertainty and fear are the operative emotions, even years of building up trust can dissolve almost instantaneously, because now it's almost a survival of the fittest. That's why the TV show Survivor has done so well. Right? You see people who don't trust each other, and that dynamic is magnified in an M&A scenario.

MARGINS

ELENA VALENTINE: This sounds like a silly question, but is there one dynamic that feels more severe than the other?

JENNIFER FONDREVAY: People change. Trust is you think someone. You've built up a comradery, you've built up a level of work relationship because you trust each other and in a merger or an acquisition, people change because of fear and not knowing whether or not they have a job or not knowing whether or not they still will add value and can contribute. People change. For me, the hardest dynamic, and I remember a story vividly, a woman who I'd worked with for years and who I had helped build her up within the company. I remember being in a meeting thinking we've got each other's back, we're in this together. To see yourself suddenly being thrown under a bus so that someone can preserve their own role and responsibility, again, I don't pass judgment. It's now years later. I understand when people are afraid, they'll do crazy things. For me, that dynamic of people who you think you know changing as a result of fear and uncertainty, that can undermine trust in so many ways. You need to be prepared for that, but you need to value trust. It's why I wrote the book that I did so that I could bring transparency to that M&A journey if you will so that trust didn't dissolve. The people had greater understanding of what was going to happen.

ELENA VALENTINE: Jennifer has been around a lot of M&As. So I had to ask her, what are the things people always get wrong?

JENNIFER FONDREVAY: I launched my business because I felt that it was the pre merger and acquisition part of the journey, right? What's considered the due diligence period of the journey where executives assume that everyone will understand and be excited about the new vision. It's there where I say, you need to focus on the people piece. You need to be prepared for all of the questions that people are going to have when you announce it. For me, day one is not when you announce the deal. Day one is the moment you think you're going to do a merger and acquisition because by having those answers to questions that you know you can expect, you can maintain trust in a bigger, broader way. If you show up and make an announcement that people aren't prepared for, you've undermined trust almost instantaneously. So it's fascinating to me how important trust is and the way that you can maintain trust by being prepared for the questions and the uncertainty that will ensue once you announce this deal has been done. They're standard questions. Will I have a job? What role will I play? What team will I be on? Will my boss still be there? There are a myriad of questions. What tends to happen is the announcement is made. Then all the planning and the processes and systems start in motion. If people don't have the answers to those questions instantly, you've undermined the trust that you had from the beginning.

ELENA VALENTINE: What if they don't have answers to these questions?

JENNIFER FONDREVAY: Well, but they're basic questions, right? I mean, one of the things that immediately undermines trust is when the announcement says nothing's going to change or everything's staying the same. So you undermine trust in that moment when you announce nothing's going to change, but then there are the, what I'll say are table stakes answers. What are the roles going to be? Absolutely. Can that be something that is determined over time? We're talking about do I have a job? What teams will still be here? Will my boss still be there? You can highlight within your setup and your announcements the fact that our organization is changing. This is our new vision, and here's where we're going. This is a journey for you to be a part of and to be able to contribute to. So while there are certain questions that yes, we'll be involving them in the answering of it. There are questions that you need to have answers to immediately to maintain that trust.

ELENA VALENTINE: Why is that so difficult? Why is it that this concept of it's not day one it's before when you're thinking about it, why is that so hard for companies to do that this has to be a reminder for them?

JENNIFER FONDREVAY: The focus initially is on the transaction. It's why I do what I do, because so much of M&A is about the transactional aspect. My focus is on the people piece, because if you don't have the people piece, if you haven't addressed that early on and you don't value the importance of maintaining trust as you transition as a company, bringing two companies together, trust as we keep talking about is such a critical piece of that. So if the focus is

MARGINS

purely transactional and you aren't thinking about what is the impact of this on the people and their ability to contribute, right, because you want to maintain productivity. Absolutely, there are going to be issues. There are going to be questions for which you won't have the answer, but being transparent and upfront about what you do and don't know and your ability as a team collectively to work towards that solution together, that's the missed opportunity. By making it transactional and focusing purely on just getting the deal done, leaders are missing that opportunity to maintain that level of trust and to have their workforce understanding where they're going and what the vision is. Frankly, their role in it.

ELENA VALENTINE: Many leaders have had to navigate difficult decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic, myself included. I asked Jennifer what she has seen from those who've done it better than others.

JENNIFER FONDREVAY: There are a lot of lessons we can learn from COVID and the reactions of leaders and how people followed or didn't follow leaders in crisis that apply to a merger and acquisition. Those leaders I think who demonstrated empathy and humility, who were very upfront about what they did and didn't know, who tapped experts, right? Who recognize they didn't have all the answers and they tapped experts, but who walked the talk. Those leaders I think we all saw in different stages are the ones who were most effective in getting people to change behavior, to trust them, to follow the guidelines. For me, the key piece of that were two things. How they communicated and then how they acted. Nothing undermines people's trust in you if what you say, you don't act in parallel to what you say. It's essentially walking the talk and you saw those leaders who were not successful because they said one thing, but then didn't apply that to themselves. The same applies in a merger and acquisition scenario. You have to as a leader, I say speak the hard truth and end on optimism and demonstrate through your actions what you expect others to do.

Interview 3 - Laura Bartlett

MARY ELLEN: Remember travel, where we flew on airplanes and went to new places. Well, a lot of us turn to travel influencers for advice when planning those trips. How do we decide whose advice to trust? To answer that question, I spoke to Laura Bartlett. She's the founding editor and publisher of House of Coco, a travel magazine based in London and an influencer in her own right.

LAURA BARTLETT: I think what makes someone a good influencer in the travel space is authenticity and individuality. I think a lot of people will see an account that has a lot of followers and they say, "Oh, they obviously have a lot of followers because of what they do. I'm going to copy that." Whereas I think that what you need to do is be authentic and stay true to yourself. Don't try and copy what everyone else is doing. There is only one view and that is your power. I think that's what people need to remember. Otherwise, everyone just ends up doing the same thing.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: Yeah. That's what I was thinking. Sometimes when people want to do this and they do wind up just copying other people. So part of it is the authenticity. So let's say I've embraced my perspective, but I mean, so what's the next part of that? Why does somebody perspective catch on when somebody else's doesn't? What makes your people cool, cooler than other people?

LAURA BARTLETT: I think consistency and having a very short message and sticking to it and be consistent. I think some people just think, "Oh, I'll create one piece of content. I'll put it out there. I'll disappear off for a few weeks. I'll come back." You need to be showing up consistently every single day with the same message. Some people will kind of have one message one day and then another the next day. One day, they're all about eco travel. Then the next day, they're all about mindfulness travel. It's like, "Well, what's your message?" You need to kind of have one message and consistently stick to it and be prepared that it's going to take time before you get noticed.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: So it's about building a brand then, right? How long does that take in your space? How long does somebody have to show up and be interesting before you would consider them a proper influencer?

MARGINS

LAURA BARTLETT: I mean we have people in the team that don't have a massive amount of followings. They might have a thousand, 2000 followers, but they create epic content. So we've allowed them to be a part of our platform because we see the value in their work. They kind of used our magazine as a way to level up their content and get new contacts and get to travel the world that way. I mean, I wouldn't be able to put a time span on it on how long it would take to kind of be somebody. Yeah, I think people have to be prepared that it's going to take a little bit longer than they think. I think people think you can literally just start an Instagram account, put content out there, and a million people are going to follow you. When that doesn't happen, they get this disheartened and they quit. People see the fun side, the travel, the luxury destinations, but they don't see the kind of hard graph that goes on behind the scenes as well.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: What's it like being a travel influencer when people really aren't supposed to be traveling?

LAURA BARTLETT: The general consensus in the UK from some research that I read is that people are sick of everybody talking about COVID-19. We all know it's happening. We all know what's going on. I think the mistake that some publishers and influencers have made is they've turned themselves into news outlets and they're reference in coronavirus every single day. That's not why people came to you. People come to us and our publication because they want inspirational aspirational travel. So when this sort of first came about, I referenced it with a public announcement and sort of said best to watch our path. We love the world now just as much as we used to. So whilst we can't travel, we will still offer you some escapism through our social media. Our print magazine obviously couldn't be printed because the shops have shut and the distribution's not open. So we've released it digitally free as a free magazine to give people the escapism that they need. So we're still creating content, which is sort of inspiring people for the future of travel and then we're creating different content across our social media. So we're doing takeovers with chefs from hotels in countries where people can have a taste of the Caribbean at home, or a taste of Mexico in your living room. So sort of cook along lives and just creating different content.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: Are the advertisers going for it?

LAURA BARTLETT: Yeah. So advertisers are backing it. Certainly not to the level that they were before. A lot of our travel advertisers have just completely put the brakes on, which is understandable, but equally it's in times like these where you need to be consistently putting your message out there so people keep that trust and they know that you were there to support them when times were hard and then they'll be there to support you on the other side. Whereas, a lot of businesses are just completely put the brakes on PR. My inbox has gone down significantly on a daily basis, which is good, but interesting.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: It's a mistake for them. I try to tell my people this, too. This is not when you stop marketing. This is when you win. This is when market share is one.

LAURA BARTLETT: I always remember the story of years and years ago with Walkers Crisps and Golden Wonder. Golden Wonder was the market leading crisps brand in the world and they stopped advertising because they made it to the top. Walker started advertising consistently and Golden Wonder got very arrogant. We don't need to advertise. We're bigger than Walkers, but over time Walkers became bigger than Golden Wonder. That's how that you get the market share. What people need to do is just tweak their message, but stick with the plan. So you don't have to reinvent the wheel or anything. If you're a travel brand, just change the message and keep putting it out there. As creatives and as entrepreneurs and creatives, it's our job to think outside the box. Within this crazy situation that we're in is so much opportunity. As a creative, as an entrepreneur, you need to be the one that can smell the opportunity and run with it because now is the time to really stand out amongst the rest.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: Yeah. No, I like your model of influencer as leader. That you really are trying to push people and you're trying to like look out into this future. I find that a far more interesting model for influencers than a lot of the other stuff that floats around. Well, I don't want to keep you too much longer because I want know you want to go put away your groceries, but is there anything else that you would like to say about what influence means to you and what it means to be an influence right now?

MARGINS

LAURA BARTLETT: I think what it means to be an influencer right now is being someone that can be trusted. You need to be able to be trusted. You need to be making sure that content you're creating and putting out there is honest and genuine. It's not for click bait. Now is not the time to be creating click bait content. People want to feel warm and supported and fuzzy inside, not taken advantage of and used for the sake of what was going on in the world right now.

Closing and Housekeeping

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: So that's it for this episode of Margins from Managing Editor. Find us on Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Spotify, or wherever you like to listen in. Subscribe now so you don't miss a single episode.

ELENA VALENTINE: And if you like what you hear, share us with your friends — and rate us on your favorite podcast platform.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: If you want to hear more from the Managing Editor team, then there's an easy way to do that. We send an email every Friday morning. You can join the club at managingeditor.com/subscribe.

SPONSOR READ: Thanks to Showcase Workshop, the exclusive sponsor of this season of Margins. With Showcase Workshop, all of your marketing and sales collateral is in one place, ready to present to prospects on your device or by email. Learn more at showcaseworkshop.com/Margins.

ELENA VALENTINE: And a special thanks to the two men who have influenced me in ways my husband can only dream of: Producer Rex New and audio editor Marty Madness McPadden.

MARY ELLEN SLAYTER: We'll see ya'll next time.

Outtake

MARY ELLEN: Why? Why do I trust you, Rex? Is it because you're a white man?

ELENA: It must be.