

[00:00:02.200] - Aileen Day

Welcome to the Value Driven Brand podcast, where you'll learn insights on how to communicate with authenticity, deliver genuine value, and create a memorable experience across your entire customer journey, helping your business become a sought after leader in your industry. I'm your host, Aileen Day. Now onto the show.

[00:00:29.740] - Aileen Day

G'day, everybody, and welcome to the value driven brand podcast, I am your host Aileen Day. Welcome, everyone. I hope you'll wait. So far has been a absolute blast today. It is my absolute pleasure to have my special guest, Michele Vogrinec. She is the founder and mama bear of baby brand GAIA, all things baby softness and baby care. And today we are going to be talking to her about how she started GAIA and how she delivered a value driven brand and what she continues to do to help businesses deliver their own value driven brand.

[00:01:17.410] - Aileen Day

And we can learn all about how GAIA became the success that it is today. Welcome to the show, Michelle. Thank you so much for joining us.

[00:01:27.750] - Michelle Vogrinec

Thank you. It's really great to be here, I love talking about all things branding and marketing, so it's really great to be able to have a chat to a little virtual chat. Yes.

[00:01:39.000] - Aileen Day

Now, I have to admit, I'm a little bit jealous of the background, but what where abouts are you?

[00:01:45.590] - Michelle Vogrinec

So today I'm in Belgrave.

[00:01:48.310] - Michelle Vogrinec

So I've moved and I have the most amazing nature driven stuff around me. I'm a bit of a nature girl. So having been amongst the trees is really, really lovely. I was feeding kookaburras yesterday. That was pretty cool.

[00:02:04.140] - Aileen Day

Oh, how beautiful that is.

[00:02:07.720] - Michelle Vogrinec

They have very sharp beaks. Very sharp beaks,

[00:02:10.840] - Aileen Day

I imagine, Don't they eat meat?

[00:02:13.840] - Michelle Vogrinec

Yeah they do. And I have it in your hand. And they've got like pointy beaks and like, yeah, you've got to watch it

[00:02:21.470] - Aileen Day

and make sure they're not taking your hand off.

[00:02:24.150] - Aileen Day

Well, as I mentioned, you are the founder of baby natural baby brand, GAIA. Tell us all about GAIA. How did it come about? When did it come about? What was that journey for you in creating what is now known as one of Australia's well known, most well known natural baby brands?

[00:02:50.750] - Michelle Vogrinec

You know, I had my first child and he had a skin problem, so you have to hand it to the baby and you kind of like, wow, what do I do with this? And then the person that's responsible for this little thing got

any training in it. And then they come out in a rash and your kinda like hell's that going on. And when it gets worse to a point, we can't fix it. And you sort of like I'm supposed to be the one here that's making this OK.

[00:03:18.040] - Michelle Vogrinec

And you wake up in the morning and he's scratching little holes in his shoulder and things. And so we had a problem and I'd spoken to quite a lot of doctors and all kept rifling through these drawers saying just try this. And I'm like, what is it? What am I putting on my child's skin? I lived a natural and organic lifestyle, as I do now, and so I live and breathe it. And so when they handed me things I'm like what's in that?

[00:03:43.030] - Michelle Vogrinec

I don't know, you just try it. What are my options? You don't have any. I've got options. Everyone has options, no you don't. So frustration, I guess, led me to then sort of research into what ingredients that were problematic to use on sort of sensitive skin. And I discovered that a lot of the ingredients in baby products were actually listed as potential allergens. So I was like, hang on a minute, how can this stuff be OK?

[00:04:13.240] - Michelle Vogrinec

And I decided on my, I was pregnant, actually, with my second child. I think when you're pregnant you think you can take on the world.

[00:04:20.710] - Michelle Vogrinec

So off I went. I went and did a skincare blending course. Right. And I sort of started making up little things to go in Josh's bath. And it started to work. His skin started to settle down. And I'm like, pretty cool. And I spoke to other Mums and they were saying was my sister's brothers got it, my mother's cousins got it. Everybody knew somebody that had sensitive eczema at the time. And they were saying like, oh, we need something. So I set about doing a little bit of a market analysis and went, what is only a couple of other sort of brands out there?

[00:04:56.630] - Michelle Vogrinec

They were way up there in price and they weren't helpful to my son's skin. So off I went on this little journey of making all this stuff and it just took off. It was just something that people wanted and needed. And and it just from there it went.

[00:05:15.460] - Michelle Vogrinec

To this little business that I thought I'd work around, my kids you know the next minute never happens, which is great and it's really nice.

[00:05:26.950] - Michelle Vogrinec

And it's like it's where I am now. But that's basically how things started. And then I saw a commercial chemist and said, how do I make this viable commercially? And it all went from there and started out on foot going into pharmacies with big belly, big pregnant belly at the time and and made my way out of the big bad world. So and created this amazing brand.

[00:05:49.780] - Aileen Day

Wow. That is amazing. And is it true that you started creating said brand in your son's kitchen?

[00:05:59.440] - Michelle Vogrinec

Yeah. So I started and I'm not very good at making it, to be honest. It took me quite a lot of effort, but I started to make people potions. So I did a skincare blending course and I studied aromatherapy and I started putting things together and it just started to work. It's you like making a cake, you get all these different facets to make it work and learning and understanding you know, you need an emulsifier. You need all these different parts to make the cake.

[00:06:29.320] - Michelle Vogrinec

Amazing. Well the skin care amazing, same as a cake, you make jelly I make jelly different. So I

wanted to make sure that the cake I made, the skincare was was actually going to help skin and not just about marketing or what ingredients were trending at the time.

[00:06:46.970] - Aileen Day

Yeah, I'll tell you what, I wish it was around when I was a child. I would. Oh, suffered abhorrently from eczema as a child, I remember spending my I'm going to send a 16th birthday in hospital covered head to toe in eczema and to the point where I couldn't have anything touching me. And the height of humiliation was it was so bad that doctors and nurses kept walking into the room where they had had me kind of resting. I don't quite know what they were planning on doing with me.

[00:07:32.210] - Aileen Day

And I think they quite knew either. And nurses and doctors kept walking in and saying, oh, we've heard about your eczema. Can we we have a look.

[00:07:42.150] - Michelle Vogrinec

Look.

[00:07:42.950] - Aileen Day

Yeah, okay. And then here I am, 16 like. Oh, a 16 year old girl already potentially hates my body, whatever, and all these strangers, because I was naked under the sheet because my eczema was so bad I couldn't have anything touching it, like directly contacting with it, and they'd just like lift up the sheet and they'd look up and down my body and they'd go, Oh. Oh, yeah, you poor thing and then just drop the sheet and walk out and I'm like, what are you going to do anything? So I was a little bit of a sideshow, but.

[00:08:27.260] - Aileen Day

Oddly enough, when I moved to Melbourne, my parents took me to a naturopath and after about 12 months of seeing the naturopath and getting acupuncture and swallowing some of the most abhorrent, disgusting potions, it was vile. My eczema disappeared. And yes, it was an interesting, interesting time. But I've pretty much had eczema since I was as long as I can remember. I remember my parents putting, they were such a wits end as to how to fix it. I remember them putting, someone said to them, put baking soda into a paste and and you smear it on patches of eczema.

[00:09:25.010] - Aileen Day

And I remember lying down on my stomach and they did it on the backs of my knees. And my next memory was just screaming because it was so bad that the bi-carb soda just felt like it was burning me and my poor parents that were just know there was nothing on the shelf. There was no there was nothing. As you said, there was chemicals galore. But the chemicals would make it worse and aggravate it even more. And it really wasn't until I became nearly an adult that I kind of grew out of it.

[00:10:04.010] - Aileen Day

So to have a brand like yours that mitigates children or even adults having to suffer like that is just so beautiful. And I must say, when I had my own son, his father and I were a little bit nervous that he was going to get my skin and and he did a little bit, but not too much. But GAIA was our go-to like that was in the bath, you know, there was there was nothing

[00:10:39.940] - Michelle Vogrinec

that makes me happy.

[00:10:41.060]

And there was no question. And it got to the point where even though I didn't suffer from eczema the way I used to, I still didn't have the skin that I would like. And I even got to the point was like, hang on a minute, why aren't using this? I now also use it and still do use it myself.

[00:11:01.640] - Aileen Day

And I love it. I think it's one of the most beautiful products you can put on your body. So I'm curious to know how you stop this product for your baby. It starts to help him. You start getting it out into

pharmacies. What's that journey look like for you when you start to think. We're getting some traction here.

[00:11:25.890] - Michelle Vogrinec

It's really interesting you say that and you touched on it a minute ago, where people come in to a hospital or they go, what's that look like?

[00:11:34.590] - Michelle Vogrinec

OK, that's great. And they just go and you like. And that happened with so many parents. So for us, one of the key areas of our customer journey was education. So we spent time educating the buyer of the pharmacy, the maternal child health nurses, the hospital system. We actually ended up with our own child health nurse that used to actually go out there and educate. And this wasn't about endorsement and it wasn't about getting them to sell our product.

[00:12:07.440] - Michelle Vogrinec

What it was about was when someone came in and said to them, my child has eczema, my child doesn't like this, they had answers. What product do I use? How can I go about it? So we provided a professional booklet that was actually given to them. It was a booklet probably. Now, would it be online.

[00:12:25.190] - Michelle Vogrinec

It was a professional booklet.

[00:12:27.210] - Michelle Vogrinec

And we spent time educating those people that were in the roles of offering advice to Mums and the Mum space is such, such a niche industry and I don't think people really understand the Mum industry like those that are in it. And I know that from speaking to various marketing companies that wanted to do that's a whole another story of it but it is a very cliquey little and they're like bears. They will protect their child, they've suddenly got this child that they're responsible for.

[00:12:58.120] - Michelle Vogrinec

So they want to make sure they don't absolutely it's quite an overwhelming industry. Actually, as a Mum, you're like, what am I putting on the floor? And suddenly start thinking about all the things that are important that you've probably not thought about before. So educating the nurses, the pharmacy assistants and the people who were actually talking directly to the Mums, that was one of the areas that I felt was really important, because when I was talking to those people, they weren't giving me, giving me the answers I needed.

[00:13:28.590] - Michelle Vogrinec

So I felt that it was really important to let those people give those people an understanding of our products so that they had choice. And I was very much an advocate of choice. So Mums deserved to find what was the best product for them, not a monopolised thing where the only things that were available to you were what a company had the money to pay for. Yeah, I'm going to pay for the endorsement over here. We wanted to make sure that the the nurses and all of those people had the right information.

[00:13:59.380] - Michelle Vogrinec

So I think education was one of the things that was top of my list. And working with those areas where you would go to you first as a port of call and I see the pharmacist ranked number three. I look at the research I did for the most one or two. It's either two or three most trusted source in the community. The pharmacist is actually ranked above the doctor. So when you want information, most people will go to a pharmacist over a GP.

[00:14:27.480] - Michelle Vogrinec

So that's what I thought was really interesting. So those people I felt was really important to have access to the information that we were offering. Not so they could push it so they could answer questions. Yeah. And be educated. So that way then they had and it was a I guess about serving. This

is the information we have for you. You get to make an informed choice. And I had and I had a little bit of a mantra.

[00:14:52.660] - Michelle Vogrinec

It's just kinda sitting over here. But my mantra was that your work is not to drag the world kicking and screaming into your awareness. Your job is to do your work sacredly, silently and and those that had the eyes to see will follow. So it wasn't about people. Well, it is. It's about getting here's the information, have the information. This is all the stuff we have that will help you. And if you want to come back to us, fantastic.

[00:15:19.530] - Michelle Vogrinec

And if not, that's fine. We we want to help you on your journey. So it was kind of. Yeah. So that was one of the first things that education really important. Yeah.

[00:15:31.230] - Aileen Day

So what point did you sit there and go, holy shit, this is not a hobby anymore. Toto. We're in business.

[00:15:41.690] - Michelle Vogrinec

Didn't take long. I think in the first twelve months I had to prove what I thought I was going to do. So I kind of thought and at the time I'm here and now and I think, gosh, I was thinking, oh, if we make one hundred thousand dollars in the next two years, I'll be really happy. And we smashed it within three months. So in three months we opened ninety pharmacies and that was me out on foot. So there I was pregnant, thirty six weeks pregnant with my second child and on foot going into farms is going, this is the brand we have.

[00:16:10.050] - Michelle Vogrinec

This is why you should have it and this is what we're going to do for you. So we really smashed that. And I think it was about three years that I was like, shit, what have I done?

[00:16:20.820] - Michelle Vogrinec

My husband's going to be in the business at that stage.

[00:16:23.580] - Michelle Vogrinec

But he was helping behind the scenes and we were working through it that way, but that's when I realised we actually had something tangible.

[00:16:30.280] - Aileen Day

That is amazing. I love hearing. I've come across the few times where ladies and business start with this tiny little hobby. And then a couple of years later, their executive husbands are being told by the accountant mate get out of that job, go help your wife, because that's going to blow up and be huge.

[00:16:57.620] - Aileen Day

So this is brilliant. I love that. So am I.

[00:17:01.960] - Michelle Vogrinec

My husband was a sales marketing as well. So we had a really handy equilibrium. And I remember thinking, I've got to get him into this business, how I'm going to do that night. And I did. And I did. So what I did was I had a presentation of the dollars and cents, got my boobs out, got my best, you know, hey, honey, this is how it's going to be.

[00:17:19.930] - Michelle Vogrinec

This is what I need from us and this is what we're going to get out of it. And he went, is what's in it for you?

[00:17:31.150] - Michelle Vogrinec

But it was really cool. So I created that family, the family business. I love that.

[00:17:36.190] - Aileen Day

Which really just aligns to the whole purpose behind it in the first place, which was to look after your family and their health and their well-being. So, you know, oh, that made me laugh. Are going to hear my story. Goodness me, watching this is going to be like she ok? No, no, that made me laugh. So GAIA gets huge starts looking after lots of baby skins and adults. Case in point. And then what happens?

[00:18:11.580] - Michelle Vogrinec

So I remember being at, so we launched the pregnancy baby children expos around Australia, and I just found that that was a place for us to be able to connect with our audience, talk to Mums in a space that wasn't led, most market research that people would do in focus groups is very much led down a certain path and and people aren't actually themselves.

[00:18:36.180] - Michelle Vogrinec

So when we were in a situation where people just wanted to chat, I found that was the best place for us to launch and to actually connect with our audience to make sure we're giving them what they needed, what they wanted. And to eb and flow with that sort of thing. And I think as a first my first lot of packaging was terrible. And after that 12 month period, we then upgraded all of our packaging design and everything else to to reflect more closely what what our customers wanted.

[00:19:04.530] - Michelle Vogrinec

So staying in contact with our customers. It's really important to me. I wanted to make sure that we were connecting with them not only from a product perspective, but also that I could identify with me. I just had a baby, so I had two children. At this stage, I wasn't sleeping. My second child did not sleep, all he wanted was boobie juice and no sleep so I could identify with other Mums going when they ring me.

[00:19:31.380] - Michelle Vogrinec

And I remember, I remember this woman. Oh, she gave me a hard time. She rang and she was like, oh, you gotta remember we're dealing with hormonal women. So this was, again, that customer interaction was really important. And she had a crack at me because my parcel didn't arrive. And I need your stuff. And I'm like, oh shit I'm sorry, you know, I'm getting in my child. I'm not sleeping. I'm just doing this. And she was like, OK, sorry I get it.

[00:19:58.560] - Michelle Vogrinec

The people identified I didn't hide that part of my life where I was also I went to sleep school with number two and I didn't hide those things from people. So they felt like we were a brand that they identified with, that there was a person behind the brand, not just a corporate company making a brand to make money. Hugely, and I really wanted people to know what was happening behind the scenes that I kind of got where they were at and their problems, and I know I had them, too.

[00:20:30.370] - Michelle Vogrinec

I was over weight. You look amazing, I thought I was overweight. I said, I've got no time right now to worry about that. I'm trying to be a parent. So, you know, behind the scenes and connecting with them from an authentic perspective was really important as well. And I'm not the kind of person to kind of try and play that Superwoman pal thing. It made me quite unwell. And I think there was a little there's a lot of pressure on Mums in business, particularly to to play that part.

[00:21:00.400] - Michelle Vogrinec

And you don't have to pay people much prefer to see the the raw, the ugly, the good, the bad that goes with the brand. So connecting with my customer was so important and letting them know that I actually understood where they were at, I understood it when they sat there and said, my child skin's a mess. I understood what they when they said to me, what do I need? It's like, OK, let's look at the basics and talking to them about their skincare routines and understanding the structure of skin.

[00:21:32.350] - Michelle Vogrinec

And so really relating to them was something that that I found I just had to do. I just couldn't lie to

them. I couldn't make shit up to sell product it was just not how I worked.

[00:21:45.730] - Aileen Day

And I think that's a really good point, is that if you're authentic and you are coming from a place of genuineness and you're in that position yourself, you don't need to lie. If your product is that good, then it will do the job for you. Why? Yeah like, why have to bullshit to sell? Because ultimately you're just going to get found out if you were, you know.

[00:22:12.880] - Michelle Vogrinec

Absolutely, people do. And it happened.

[00:22:15.310] - Michelle Vogrinec

So we had the guy from Coles. The buyer from Coles comes through the expo and he's looking at this product line. I didn't know who he was and he goes I love this stuff, oh awesome that's really cool.

[00:22:26.020] - Michelle Vogrinec

What products do you use and we're chatting and he goes it's actually one of the only products my child can use. I'm like that's that's that's a shame. But that's that's great that we can help you.

[00:22:35.180] - Aileen Day

Good for you!

[00:22:39.250]

I was always and it used to excite me.

[00:22:41.530] - Michelle Vogrinec

I used to get really, really touched by people inside. Thank you so much for helping, helping me. That drove me. That was one of my drivers. And he said, can you hand me this business card and said, hi, I'm the buyer of Coles and I'm just like, holy fuck, sorry.

[00:22:56.860] - Aileen Day

No, no, we're keeping it real. I bet I would have said even more than that.

[00:23:06.350] - Michelle Vogrinec

And I'm here I am standing there like, oh yeah, that's really great. Yeah, no worries. Thinking, Oh my God, oh my God, how are we going to manage this and freaking out behind the scenes but going you know what, that's where the people were. And we wanted to make sure that we we were providing all these people with access to skin care, not just the ones that can afford it. Also having that conversation was a very big turning point for us.

[00:23:33.010] - Michelle Vogrinec

So we sort of met with all of our managers and everyone else. We needed to make this happen. And Coles took it on in what they call panned ink. So it went in in between a review. So normally they have reviews once a year. But he said we have to have this product. I've read about it. I've heard about it. I need it. We need it in our stores. And we went into, I think, like ninety five percent of the Coles stores and about seven hundred stores, freak me out completely.

[00:23:58.990] - Michelle Vogrinec

But between us, we got it done. We met with the right people and we set a strategy and I think planning is hugely important. So we put strategies in place and then it came down to how the hell we were going to pull it off the shelf at Coles. But so working through those journeys and those customer journeys is really important. We wanted them to know, you know, so Coles would say to us, we need you to spend one hundred thousand on an advertising campaign.

[00:24:24.400] - Michelle Vogrinec

But what about a what?

[00:24:31.500] - Michelle Vogrinec

We had to operate on a shoestring. We were these teeny tiny operator with all these massive companies. And so we spent most of our time making sure that those connections were in place. That our strategy was about small often. So we made sure we spewed every little piece of information that we had across multiple platforms. And back then it was more print media than it was social

[00:24:55.880] - Michelle Vogrinec

I can proudly say, we came we we started before social media making sure that information was in place.

[00:25:04.330] - Michelle Vogrinec

If you went you were pregnant and you went to the gynecological office, information was there while you were waiting, if you were going into the pharmacy, our information was there, if you were going to the hospital to actually have an open day, our information was there. We make sure you saw us every single touch point of being pregnant, having a baby or being in the baby space, so making sure that those old school integration marketing. Absolutely.

[00:25:34.360] - Michelle Vogrinec

What is it 18 touch points now? People have to see you before they'll act. So we made sure you saw us everywhere. And it was it was done on a shoestring. We had to make sure we were competing with these major companies without having the major company budget. So we were able to pull through. We were able to get customers on board because everywhere they turned as a pregnant person, they saw us and everywhere they turned as a Mum with a newborn baby, they saw us.

[00:26:02.690] - Michelle Vogrinec

And then people would see you everywhere we are. That was what our aim was. Everywhere little touch points and making sure that strategy was education, you know, making sure we connected with our customer. We touched and spoke to our customers. We were in constant contact with them. We worked with them by newsletters and all that sort of social media. But we worked through all these different facets and we had a strategy for each of those facets to make sure that they were talking to the audience in which they were intended.

[00:26:35.150] - Michelle Vogrinec

So talking to a maternal child health nurse, we had to talk in more professional had to be a little more professional than my, my crazy self, so we were talking to them in professional terms because we had the research to back it. We knew, understood skin physiology. We understood that eczema is caused by a disruption in the barrier of the skin. We understood that our products contained oils that would help with that, the the integrity of the skin and those sorts of things.

[00:27:06.320] - Michelle Vogrinec

We had to have very different language to each area that we were talking. I wanted to make sure and when we started getting staff, it was very, very important to me that that when they were dealing with us, they had to go away with a good experience. I don't give a fruit whether they were after directions in the street or they wanted and we had to. I can't use your products. I'm allergic to lavender. I'm like, mate I'm so sorry to hear that, here.

[00:27:31.490] - Michelle Vogrinec

Go and speak to this company, this company and try these ones. So the experience of dealing with us always had to be good no matter what it was. We were here to serve. We were here to make sure we were helping them, irrespective of whether or not our products could. So that was kind of a very important part of our branding strategy. And that, I think creates trust. It builds that connection, can have some connection is imperative.

[00:27:58.910] - Michelle Vogrinec

You don't have customer connection. You don't really have a brand.

[00:28:01.850] - Aileen Day

So that's what she just said.

[00:28:07.040] - Michelle Vogrinec

That's right. So, yes, it is a problem that drove me.

[00:28:17.150] - Michelle Vogrinec

I love it. Standing in an expo, it was nothing more fulfilling when someone came up, hugged me. Oh, pre corona. Thank you so, so much, because my child can now actually use a bath product and that

[00:28:39.910] - Michelle Vogrinec

that was amazing. That drove me. That was what, you know when shit got hard. That's what drove me every time.

[00:28:47.500]

Yeah, absolutely. I can see her as well.

[00:28:51.040] - Aileen Day

So we are here to learn about how we as business owners and entrepreneurs and leaders in business and just leaders of our own lives really go and create and implement our own value driven brand. And just listening to your business experience in creating and scaling and building, GAIA to the point it got to and still is.

[00:29:22.870] - Aileen Day

What are some of the key key drivers for you when it comes to delivering a value driven brand?

[00:29:32.800] - Michelle Vogrinec

I'm actually quite a strategy driven person, so I'm dyslexic. So it's like superpower I like to say I'd like to see all this shit that no one else can. I'd be in meetings going, stop, let's have a think about this, this and this.

[00:29:47.980] - Michelle Vogrinec

And they'd be going, oh fuck Michelle, this is going to take forever? I thought it was really, really important to me.

[00:29:56.740] - Michelle Vogrinec

It was really important to make sure that the values of the brand I actually lived and breathed. So was why that came through, because it was a natural thing that I did. So the values of the brand were really, really important. And when we employed marketing, I put a marketing company at one point earlier on in the piece we said, I can get you all of this stuff and I'll make you. And then said, we're going to capitalise.

[00:30:22.210] - Michelle Vogrinec

I'm going to make you money, I go stop. And she's like, What? Stop telling me about your money. I'm actually concerned with helping parents. No, no, no, no, no. If we go down this path, I don't want to go down that path. So I had many fights with a marketing company and I think I took one on board. And then I sacked them within a month I said no, get stuffed, I'm going to do this myself. I have a background in marketing.

[00:30:42.430]

I'm going to make it work. So, sticking strong to those values. And I had them written down. We had a vegan product. We had two products that contained beeswax. So we made sure not tested on animals is really important, helping somebody we want to help them, regardless of whether or not our products can. That was one of the values we have. I don't want to marketing bullshit people. So we're not going to sit there and tell you this is the amazing thing that is going to make you look no wrinkles.

[00:31:15.220] - Michelle Vogrinec

Amazingly soft if you find that.

[00:31:19.960] - Aileen Day  
However, if you find that, please let me know.

[00:31:22.030] - Michelle Vogrinec  
Let me know. But we weren't that we were the company.

[00:31:26.200] - Michelle Vogrinec  
I didn't want people to feel like we had the magic cream. We wanted to tell them if you do these steps and have a skincare routine by looking after it, like if you bathe, you moisturise. If you moisturise you've got nappy care, we wanted to make sure people understood how to look after their skin. So having that in place, that value. So those values were really important and those values drove everything else we did. So if you look at the purpose and the mission of your products, that was that's my catalyst.

[00:31:59.110] - Michelle Vogrinec  
So anything I'd had to shoot back to that.

[00:32:02.980] - Michelle Vogrinec  
And if they didn't love that, it has to align. Absolutely it has to align. And when I did put on marketing manager, they got kind of frustrated with me because I would go I want to call it the award winning. I know I look at our marketing as I would as a coffee. So if I'm having a coffee with you, Aileen and you say to me, so talk to me about your brand. We have an award winning marketing.

[00:32:26.080] - Michelle Vogrinec  
No one gives a shit. It's nice to have on the sidelines as a validation for the work you've done, but it's a case of having that coffee with someone and going, well, this is what I can help you with problem solving. This is the problem that you have. This is the solution that we have. Again, find problem solution.

[00:32:46.750] - Michelle Vogrinec  
Working through that as opposed to your shampoo is killing you or the negative

[00:32:53.920] - Aileen Day  
Fear factor marketing fucking kills me

[00:32:53.920] - Michelle Vogrinec  
We didn't do any of that, but back to over here, back to the vision and the values.

[00:33:00.130] - Michelle Vogrinec  
Did it fit in with the mission and the values and finding ways once you know what they are, you've got to understand your audience. And so many times I've spoken to I did a lot of mentoring across the course of time for the love of it.

[00:33:13.390] - Michelle Vogrinec  
So I just want to help people, because you're amazing, you're funny. And I would say to people, stop, you know, stop trying to give people what they want or what you want. Sorry. So I'm telling you, you need it like this understand then what is it that you need? What are the problems that you have that I can help you with? Really understanding your clientele is really, really key. And instead of having a scattergun approach, which is like shooting like this, and hopefully you'll get somebody, it might be a smaller audience that you're targeting but those audiences are the ones that fit in with what you got there, the ones who buy from you, tell their friends and recommend you.

[00:33:58.250]  
So keeping that smaller to the targeted audience, get to know your audience. The audience is key. They're the people that are important. And I did research. I spoke to them. I was at Expo's constantly talking to them, understanding them, and didn't matter whether I wanted them to have it a certain

way. What mattered was how they wanted to to be so. And that drove me again to make sure any product that we released fitted into the value, the mission, it aligned with everything that it aligned with

[00:34:30.790] - Michelle Vogrinec

what do they want? What do they need? Right. Let's fit it in. Not what I want to give them. Let's give them what they want and need and talk to them in a way that was human.

[00:34:42.490] - Aileen Day

What? Treat people like a human being.

[00:34:48.070] - Michelle Vogrinec

We are not algorithm's.

[00:34:49.870]

What? Deliver a human experience?

[00:34:54.910] - Michelle Vogrinec

Yes, very much. I know they're the key things because I know that you're a trendsetter. I know that sounds simple.

[00:35:08.190] - Michelle Vogrinec

So from there, I would work out how is it then that I could connect in with. And we declined. The opportunities are Priceline came to us and said, we're setting up our baby sections. We want your products and I drilled her much to the disgust of many people and said, tell me. I'd like to know the statistics on what percentage of the baby customers are, how you get them in store blah blah blah. And she said, we're giving you an opportunity here.

[00:35:34.890] - Michelle Vogrinec

And I go, that's great. But I want to make sure that successful. And at the moment we're still we were still a relatively new brand. I don't think that we'll be successful for you because we need to pull it off the shelf more.

[00:35:47.790] - Michelle Vogrinec

So I'm going to decline and they were like Pardon?

[00:35:53.190] - Aileen Day

Because I'm the motherfucking prize, Priceline

[00:35:58.230] - Michelle Vogrinec

In looking at those opportunities.

[00:36:00.120] - Michelle Vogrinec

Does it fit in with your values? Does it fit in with your audience? Does it fit in with where you are as a brand? And if you're over here somewhere, it's it's an amazing opportunity. Can you actually service that opportunity and fake it till you make it to me is not fantastic. I think you're better off working with going back to your supply chain. Going back to strategy is huge for me. I'm a big strategist on if I'm going to go Priceline how am I going to get people to come in and buy it off the shelf?

[00:36:28.910] - Michelle Vogrinec

Because in the major retailers, you have a hurdle rate, what they call a hurdle rate, so you have to achieve a certain amount of sales, per store, per week, to stay on the shelf and you have 13 weeks to do that. So if you don't achieve that in 13 weeks, I don't care how much money we put into it? Bye bye, sorry

[00:36:48.270] - Aileen Day

explains why half my favourite brands don't exist anymore.

[00:36:51.440] - Michelle Vogrinec

Yes. They come and they go, they come and they go. So exactly that's exactly right.

[00:36:55.730] - Michelle Vogrinec

So making sure that those opportunities, again, actually align with where your business is at is really important. That's really key. We had several, so they might have had several scenarios. One with My Chemist where they cracked the shits with us.

[00:37:14.120] - Michelle Vogrinec

And I did a little bit of a tactic, which probably I don't recommend you do well, including the buyers email address on our website, and if you want our products in your store her'es the buyer name, let him know

[00:37:29.780] - Michelle Vogrinec

and we were banned from every My Chemist store at that time and I drove around in my car and drive and gave stock out of the back of my car and did all these things. So it was under the radar, but My Chemists were one of the biggest supplies that we did. Well, yeah. I mean, obviously we've sold the business now. but prior to them with My Chemists and greatest advocate. So driving people in and driving demand by being authentic, providing value and not I wasn't driven by money.

[00:38:00.740] - Michelle Vogrinec

I think it was driven by the success of people and helping people. So aligning again with my values of supporting people.

[00:38:10.850] - Aileen Day

As I said, every every episode that I've recorded so far, your guest has said money is the outcome of creating a solution. It is definitely, being there for people of looking after someone other than yourself. And I think that is really the the first rule in business. And if you're doing it for money, you won't be in business for long.

[00:38:42.380] - Michelle Vogrinec

No, it's not. And I think I'm very much a heart centered person and and I know having we've had we had babies named after GAIA because they loved us so much.

[00:38:56.540] - Aileen Day

How did you come up with the name GAIA? Oh, people would actually be very mad at me if I don't ask this question. I think. How did you come up with the name GAIA?

[00:39:07.670] - Michelle Vogrinec

Well, I'm a bit of a greenie, so I live and breathe the eco thing. And I was reading a book by David Suzuki and Holly Dresel, called Naked Ape to Superspecies and it was talking about all the things that come together to form the earth, which is called the gaia theory. And I had everything in development going, oh my God, I've just found a name. So and gaia, means Spirit of Mother Earth, the Greek goddess of the Earth, GAIA.

[00:39:33.840] - Michelle Vogrinec

And it just went and there we go. And it rolled as soon as I had that name our, launch just went into place. I love that.

[00:39:43.070] - Michelle Vogrinec

Yeah. And encompass everything.

[00:39:45.200] - Michelle Vogrinec

It encompassed all those things that we were and what I wanted to achieve that is so beautiful.

[00:39:51.080] - Aileen Day

I'm so glad I asked, there you go, everybody listening. Now we know, it is a very unusual word/ name. So yes, that absolutely makes sense,

[00:40:04.940] - Michelle Vogrinec

but it's not so unusual now. So I guess one of the big things for you, if you are creating a brand, is to look after your IP. So back when we were there, GAIA was not a very known thing and luckily that we had trademarked adequately our name and looked after our IP, which is so important to the value, as well as protecting your brand.

[00:40:27.770] - Michelle Vogrinec

And we had many, many legal battles over the course of time, which we actually won because we were well protected and because we had a great brand name. Yeah, it's it's really important. So do your due diligence in terms of your legals, your trademarking and having those in place and even overseas. We had a big battle overseas, which we ended up conceding because it was in the US and and the company had four other companies in legal battles over the trademark and that had been there for years.

[00:41:01.460] - Michelle Vogrinec

And we just want you know what? It's actually I'd rather put my energy into focusing on what we do do well, instead of fighting this over here. But making sure that your brand is protected with trademarking proper trademarking is really important. Yeah, it will save you. Like an insurance.

[00:41:19.210] - Aileen Day

Yeah, it's quite funny because when I first started Meraki Business Solutions, Meraki was a highly unknown name.

[00:41:30.710] - Aileen Day

And I'm not now, not now. Literally when I registered the business name, there was two other Meraki's two other businesses in all of Australia called Meraki something. And so I was like the third, Meraki, something in Australia, and for about the first three years, people would say to me consistently, Aileen, you need to change your business name. Nobody knows what Meraki is. And I said, well, then let me educate you.

[00:42:02.670] - Aileen Day

And last year before I had to renew my registration and there is pages and pages and pages, a beautiful meaning, tell me your meaning. Meraki is a great verb and it means to do something with love and passion and creativity and to put a piece of yourself into everything that you do absolutely and being half Greek. So we have the Greek goddess of the earth. Yes, and and the love and passion and creativity. It's beautiful thing, so beautiful. So, you mentioned before, you've sold GAIA now, what are you doing?

[00:42:53.640] - Michelle Vogrinec

Oh, I'm trying to work out what my next passion is, so I at the moment, I really enjoy helping other people with their strategies, their branding, goals setting, planning and actually implementation of their small businesses. I've some clients at the moment that are in the Mum space that I know, like the back of my hand. So being able to talk to them about how that sort of things and when you when you're in business, I know the business better than any other industry.

[00:43:22.620] - Michelle Vogrinec

And when you're a mother in business, you're juggling so many balls and people get really worn out and they get I had an adrenal crash halfway through our journey. I got really sick because I wasn't looking after me. So I want to inspire those people to put the right strategies in place, plan properly, do it back to your mission and your vision. Everything's got to go back to that. If it doesn't meet, it doesn't happen. I don't care how wonderful it sounds, shelve it. Look after your health.

[00:43:53.010] - Michelle Vogrinec

And Mum are notorious for not looking after their health.

[00:43:55.920] - Michelle Vogrinec

So for me, that's what I'm doing at the moment, is trying to encourage Mums to well, not Mums. I do it with other clients as well in product development, helping with product development. But that's kind of where I'm at at the moment. I'm enjoying and loving that, watching things of watching things grow. I love being a part of that growth.

[00:44:14.670] - Michelle Vogrinec

So working with people at the moment on strategies and freelancing as a coach and I'm going to do.

[00:44:21.710] - Aileen Day

I'm going to have to get you involved in my Momentum Mastermind Group and come and teach them a few things. That would be, what a mentor, what a mentor to have the opportunity to learn from.

[00:44:37.110] - Michelle Vogrinec

It's amazing that I've always had mentors and I've always had business coaches for our entire journey. I think it's important to have that sounding board again, Mums in business are generally isolated people, small and not necessarily small business operators, but solo business operators and people building businesses tend to operate in by themselves. So having that sounding board, accountability partners, mine, the amount of times I would ring up my mentor and go, oh my God, I've got this amazing idea.

[00:45:10.190] - Michelle Vogrinec

Does it meet the vision of the mission?

[00:45:12.170] - Michelle Vogrinec

What is it on the plan, let me justify that? Nooo, it's kind of over here and I can sell ice to the Eskimos so I'm like

[00:45:20.300] - Michelle Vogrinec

so if we do this. It would be really amazing. And he's like, come back to the plan. OK, so and keeping that accountability so that accountability is really important. And I really firmly believe in having a sounding board, accountability partner, someone to help you unpack shit and go I'm thinking this is a good idea and they go have you thought about this? No, I didn't, actually. And people kind of jump to do things. But there's so many facets to a business.

[00:45:50.180] - Michelle Vogrinec

You've got to have a look at the onflow effects. What happens if I make a change up to customer service to the warehouse. So having that person to bounce that off and and say this is how we need to understand the impacts of the decisions we make and the on flow effects and so that sort of thing. So I want to help people in that space and have them enjoy what they do. And I laugh. I think when you have both done Kerwin Rae.

[00:46:17.480] - Michelle Vogrinec

I laugh when he says you go into business to have more time. How's that working out for you?

[00:46:23.600] - Michelle Vogrinec

And you kind of go, yeah, that's not so much. I want I want people. I want Mums I want business owners to enjoy what they do to put the right strategies in place to actually manage that and and have time. And so helping them do it.

[00:46:41.630] - Aileen Day

I love that. That is so fantastic.

[00:46:44.270] - Aileen Day

And I think if anyone gets the opportunity to be coached by you, mentored by, you know, they're in a very lucky position, that is all we have time for today. But I want to say thank you so much for sharing

the tactical tips that you put in place to create your own value driven brand. Baby, baby, baby brand GAIA. It is one of the most delicious products I've ever put on my body. It is amazing and my son loves it as well,

[00:47:19.280] - Michelle Vogrinec  
you know can I tell you, I never realised what I created until after we sold. Really. I was so knee deep in it that people would say to me, baby showers, oh my God, you're the GAIA lady.

[00:47:32.170] - Aileen Day  
I think said that to you. The first time I knew as well, my head exploded.

[00:47:34.600] - Michelle Vogrinec  
I was just doing my thing, I got, it made people's head explode.

[00:47:40.550] - Michelle Vogrinec  
And then I would go something like, but you're a normal human, yes I am.

[00:47:44.780] - Michelle Vogrinec  
And when when we sold and and when I stepped back from it was when I went, holy fuck, what do we create and realised we created an Australian iconic brand and but it was strategy. It was planning like it wasn't an accident.

[00:48:00.320] - Aileen Day  
It was all the things that you were purposeful like that on purpose.

[00:48:07.880] - Aileen Day  
We do it on purpose, not by accident. It's not luck. No, it's not. It's smart work. Yes. I don't like hard work for having I like smart work. My absolute pleasure. Thank you for taking time out of your morning to come and chat to us. I really cannot wait for this to go live and for everybody to share in your knowledge and your success and all of your experience and how you've delivered that experience to your customers as well.

[00:48:41.600] - Aileen Day  
Now, one of the things I will say is, as I do with all of my guests, I get them to fill out a profile form for me before they come onto the show.

[00:48:54.350] - Aileen Day  
And one of the questions that I get them to answer is what is the song that pumps them up for anything? You remember the song that you put down?

[00:49:04.520] - Michelle Vogrinec  
Absolutely Silenced by delirium. The DJ Tiesto remix is amazing, every day of the week.

[00:49:12.650] - Aileen Day  
That is brilliant. I love it so much that has been added. My guests don't know this until I tell them that has now been added to a special Aileen Day Official Spotify playlist. So it's awesome when this goes live, the playlist will also be available for anyone listening to download and by the time.

[00:49:36.340] - Aileen Day  
This is all done, I tell you. We are going to have one of the most shit hot success, value driven playlists there's going to be no excuse not to be pumped and ready for anything by the time you press play on that on that song list. Sounds amazing. Michelle, thank you again so much. I can not just show how appreciative I am of learning from you, and I can't wait to share this with everybody else. And until next time, stay tuned for everything coming up.

[00:50:12.790] - Aileen Day  
Have a great day, everybody.

[00:50:15.430] - Aileen Day

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