

TRANSCRIPT:

Ep 068 Elise Darma on Making an Income from Instagram, Creating a Digital Product Suite, and Separating Yourself from the Pack

Intro Clip, Elise Darma: My messaging, my approach has changed to the point where I don't talk about my success, or my results on Instagram, I only talk about my students, my students are the best example of what you can do when you're starting in whatever niche and starting from fresh to attract the right people who would become a customer so 100% even in 2021, you can start a new account or a new business on Instagram. Start with the right foundations in place, you'll attract quality real people who will actually become customers and that's what counts.

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

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Hi, everyone, welcome to CEO School, the podcast. I'm your host Suneera Madhani and today I have the treat of having the expert, Instagram creator, digital entrepreneur, and coach for so many women on and men on how to scale their Instagram and actually monetize it. So it's not just about the followers. And it's not just about vanity metrics. It's really how you're taking showing up online, different Instagram growth strategies to actually monetize your feed and monetize your Instagram to drive a thriving business. And the founder here is Elise Darma. Elise is a seven figure entrepreneur, she built this business from scratch. She's been online for ages. And she's always on top of the trends and what's happening. And so I'm so excited to welcome her to the show. Because I know you guys are going to take away and I'm going to take away real time tips and tricks that I can't wait to apply. Elise, welcome to the show.

Elise Darma: Thanks so much, Suneera. I'm so excited to chat with you today and share what's been going on.

Suneera Madhani: Yeah, no, I'm so pumped to have you because our entire business at CEO School was built off of Instagram. So I know the power of connecting online and I actually didn't know the space prior. It's funny because you and I actually met at a wedding a couple years ago at one of our friends weddings. of we have a mutual friend who got married, we met in New York, and I was telling the lease that I'm dabbling in Instagram, my Instagram is growing and I kind of don't know where to go with this. And at the time, my handle was mom Boss, I had the mom boss co handle. And I was I think I was pregnant with Ana at that time in Florida. And I

knew that this feels so it feels like I have no idea where to begin. And the thing that you told me you're like, Suneera, you're perfect for this. You just just start like I believe like that was probably the first advice he gave me was like just show up and be you. It's going to work out and here we are a couple years later. And I get to interview you on the show. It come full circle I'm so excited.

Elise Darma: I remember that too. Because also your handles are amazing. Like momboss and CEO School such good handles however, whatever magic you have to get these handles congrats for getting such great handles. But it's been really interesting to witness your evolution on social media over the last I think it was three years ago, we met I think it was 2017 I don't know, maybe 2018. But you have embraced it as someone who is clearly busy with multiple businesses, a family and yet I still love to see you show up on reels and tic tocs you're making the time you're learning the tools, it just goes to show that it's not too late. And you're never too busy to pick up a new school skill, especially when it can grow your business like this.

Suneera Madhani: I couldn't agree with that more. And I will say that you are not too busy to do this. And I would not be able to do it if it was hard. Like if it truly wasn't achievable, or something that you could do. You just have to show up and make it part of your cadence and it's actually so fulfilling because I think one of the elements of it is I was always a content creator at heart so you know you have to have a love to say you love your business but also you like to be creative and this was actually a creative outlet for me. And it was I didn't realize like how much it actually fulfilled this creativity that I couldn't let out other ways in my day to day business right in tech and and in in what I was in payments and finance like I was not able to be creative But I had so much creative energy. And actually what ended up happening is, by me, utilizing the other side of my brain, letting out all this creative energy, it actually helped my other side of my brain operate better, and even my business flourish even at Fattmerchant. And so it's just, it's it was a, it was a really great decision, obviously, that I was really excited about, but it actually isn't part and even as busy as you are, you can make time. And so Elise, I would love to maybe start with one your story because I want to know how you got started in this space, how you built your way all the way up to becoming a seven figure entrepreneur, less than 2%, less than 2% of female founders ever break a million in revenue. And that statistic is the reason why I started to do school with Shannan. And why we're here today is because that number should be like 98%, or it should be the complete opposite. So let's start with your story. I'd love to hear how you did this. How did you achieve this?

Elise Darma: Yeah, well, just hearing you speak about that the percentage and reaching a million in revenue, it was almost giving me chills because I've been working for myself since 2013. So eight years now, and full time since 2014. from doing math correctly, so seven, and we're relatively new to being in the seven figure range of business. It was a good five, six years of not making seven figures and still being perfectly happy and okay. And, you know, going back to my story origin. I started as a nine to five employee, I finished my degree in Radio and Television Arts, but I really started to feel the dredge of being in an office every day of only having two weeks to travel. my desktop screensaver was of Bali, there's a co working space there called hooba. It's basically a tree house for adults. And you work from this tree house. And it was my dream. It was plastered on my desktop. And luckily, I was working in marketing at the

time. And one day one of the entrepreneurs in the space because I worked in a tech incubator. So I was in a good spot. One of the entrepreneurs asked me, you know, Haley's I'm looking for a marketing Rockstar, do you know of anyone? And at that point, it had been a year that I'd read Tim Ferriss four hour workweek and I was like, Okay, do I do a product business? like Tim? Like, what am I going to do? I've a video background, should I start a video production company, and this friend reached out and that was when the light went off. And I was like, wait, I have marketing experience. Let me put myself forward. And that was actually really big step at the time. I was 2526. And I was really just developing my own inner confidence in myself in my own abilities. So I put my name forward and said, Hey, I'm actually looking to take on clients on the side. So one week later, we have an assigned agreement. I'm charging them \$1,000 a month. In my mind, I'm like, this is incredible. \$1,000 a month on top of my salary. Yeah. And so I continue to work with this client, they were a fashion brand. And my my goal was to grow their Instagram. And so in six months back in 2013 2014, we were able to hit 100,000 followers very quickly. We did a lot of influencer marketing. It's a very different landscape then. But word of mouth spread. And then I had a handful of clients. Nine months later, after my first client, I had my fork in the road decision, it was time to quit my job or take on another client. And it was actually a more difficult decision than I thought it would be. Because there's a lot of pros to having a nine to five job. But I did get in my notice. This was in 2014. So I officially went on my own full time started an agency and back then my goal was location independence. Bali was the goal. And so January 1 2015, I landed in Bali and I went to this co working space and it was just like this incredible full circle moment. backstory I was also on an Eat Pray Love, because I was going through a breakup. So that you know, there was a double benefit to being there. But I started my own business, I actually felt incredibly lonely. I was not prepared for being on my own working for my dining table. I had no home office setup. And then I went traveling so that first year was really learning like what who was I as as a CEO, I don't even think I called myself a CEO. I barely called myself a freelancer. This is how much I was just barely tiptoeing into this world. And so that was my life. For the first few years, I had a location independent business, I was making more than my salary as an employee. As an employee, I was making 55 60k a year and then with my own business, I was upwards of 75k a year, which was great. It was just me a handful of clients that allowed me to travel in 2016. That's when I kind of got itchy feet and I thought, you know, my business is sort of just static Like, how do I make more money? And I realized, well, I need more clients. So that was the first time I decided to build a personal brand. I opened up the Elise darma Instagram account, I used all my travel photos to tell stories. And I actually experimented to grow my own personal Instagram. By the end of that summer, I had 30,000 followers. By the end of that year, I had 50 or 60,000 followers, which was great. But now all my followers were like, you know, they didn't want my agency services, they wanted to know, hey, Elise, how are you traveling so much? And be how are you growing your Instagram. So the light bulb went off again. And I thought, oh, there's like a whole other business here. And I don't know what I'm doing. So the next light bulb went off, and I realized I could hire a business coach, I did, I launched the Elise Darma personal brand. In 2017, I created my first digital product, which was an Instagram marketing course, it still exists today called Insta growth boss. And that's when my business hit six figures for the first time adding in a digital product. So I was kind of removing myself out of the whole exchange of, you know, I'll put my time in and get paid for it. With a digital product, I was able to hit six figures. And that's how I've scaled my business.

Since then, I've really moved out of one on one services, our agency is now close. And we've built up a product suite of digital products. So over the years, we went from 100,000, revenue to 300 to 400. And then just in the last year, we were able to break through that seven figure mark. So I'm still like, you know, getting used to it, I still kind of have chills talking about it, it's still not the most comfortable topic to talk about. And maybe there's something there, you know, talking about money openly. But that's been my journey, and not so short of a nutshell.

Suneera Madhani: Now, that was incredible. I mean, there's so many places I want to I'm gonna come back to you right now, because I think so many women are in that position. So many women like everything you said, getting to your journey wasn't anything, I think that it's very relatable, it's very relatable to maybe the woman who has all this expertise, and a stock, she's stuck in her nine to five, but she's not happy with, but also doesn't even know how to get started, I think one of the biggest challenges is taking that risk and taking that leap of faith. And I will say some people are able to do it and some aren't. But you it's not, the first step is being able to take that risk. But also you have to be kind of those one of those people that light a fire under your butt. And you have to press go because now as an entrepreneur, what you kill is what you eat. And so otherwise you're not eating. And so, you know, taking that risk is a huge piece. And that's part of every founder story, right? There's always that element of taking that risk. But then it's what you do with that. It's not just about the billion dollar idea, I always say it's the billion dollar execution. And so you're you knew firsthand that the way to scale. And it is and I do believe in this principle, it's that one on one services to start with, right? It's, it's understanding your customer, I see people go the complete opposite. And they want to start with digital products, and they want to go straight into their courses. But if you haven't really understood your customer, and you really haven't understood and solve problems for them for them firsthand, you know, I think that there is a there's value to that and building in that crawl, walk, run. And so you get your services, and you're getting high ticket clients, but then you're capped at a certain point, right? You're you're limited to the number of hours that you have in the day for how many clients that you can take on, and then you're turning into an agency because you're then you're scaling on human capital, you don't want to scale on human capital, right? Because then you're always kept on hours. And what you did was so extremely smart to say, Hey, I have this expertise. You've proven it out through in tech, we call it an MVP, right? So you're using yourself as your own beta, you're like growing your Instagram, you're growing your clients, Instagram, and then you're like, I need to reach more people. And then you do that through the digital programs and digital passive income and scaling that. And so it is it is definitely it didn't happen overnight. And I think that that is something that is so important to kind of pull out of this, because it took you that six, seven years to get there. And some people may get there faster, and some people may never get there. But hard work is the shortcut. It wasn't because it just happened one day and you went viral online. And then that was it. That's very rare on how that happened. So your journey is well deserved. And because you put in the work to get there and now it's not going to go away because there's a foundation every single step.

Elise Darma: Yeah, and definitely like on that, that point of going viral. Some of my competitors in the industry that I'm in that was their jumpstart in the industry. They had one post one video go viral and they leveraged it and that's brilliant. Like if you're given that gift, do it but I would say

from my experience and majority of the people out there, you're not going to go viral overnight and be featured on yahoo.com and have a million views on your YouTube video. You are going to have to put in the consistency and the work and the learning. I mean, when I look back on my journey, I just see myself as a somewhat scared, insecure person who was tepidly taking those steps forward when it came to my first client or when it came to hiring a business coach and investing \$1,000 a month, which was like crazy to me at that time, but I did it anyway, when it came to doing my first live webinar when it came to pitching live for the first time, the video is actually on my Facebook page, at Elise Darma if you want to scroll back and see it, my voice is literally shaking. And I play that video to share with people. You might see me on YouTube today. You might see me today and think, oh, she's she's there. But like, look at my beginning. I was scared. I was awkward. I was stumbling, but I still did it anyway. And that first time I pitched live 50 people bought that course, which at the time was just an idea. And I literally felt sick afterwards. I was like, What if I die, and I put an idea out there and there's people gave me money to make it like it was quite the journey that I wasn't internally prepared for yet. But I just kept taking the steps. And then my internal stuff kind of had to catch up. That's how I see my journey.

Suneera Madhani: That's amazing. Because that is that's the truth of it. Right? I mean, we're all afraid. And if for anyone that looks at anybody even looking at my Instagram right now in whoever's watching, and following that, that was three years. And every day, if you look back, like I'm getting better every day, the more content I put out, the more reels I do, the more whatever I do. And it's it's you're learning as you're growing. And so having that you're like the fact that when you go back and you look at your first it's a humbling moment, and it shouldn't be one that's brushed over, because there's no we're never going to be perfect. We're always going to chase what's the next thing, it's just about putting yourself out there. And then developing that skill further right developed doing it better than next time. And the next time I'm just getting that little bit of validation, right, getting that first customer into the door, the turn into 50 customers, even when you thought you were awful, right? Even when you thought you were like this, this was so hard. If you didn't put yourself out there if you did it, almost make yourself sick. You wouldn't have this business today because that stuff was needed in that validation of that journey. And that's human growth. Right? That's, that's not even just business. That is anything we do in life. It's practice, right? That's for every athlete. That's right. It's just practice and you and that's where confidence is actually built. I don't believe that anyone's just born with confidence. It's actually a build trait. And that's part of entrepreneurship, and you just have leverage that so gracefully. I mean, I watch your videos all the time. And I'm like, how does she do it really like that is what comes across, and you're so quick. And you're so snippy. And you're so funny. And you're, it's just beautiful. So that's amazing. And I'm just so proud of sharing the story, because you leveraged it, even in a market that's so competitive. And I think that that's also some place that a lot of women fear that they can't come into, because there's already somebody else. So can you talk a little bit about how you really stood out from the pack?

Elise Darma: Man, this is a great question, a loaded question, because I just think back to two years ago, maybe three years ago, where I just felt like my business had reached a level where it had plateaued for several years. Similar to my Freelancer days, it had plateaued at a certain

income level. When I created my first digital product, I increased my revenue, but we weren't really growing. And I felt really stuck. You know, I was really working on a webinar funnel, and I was getting into automation, I was getting into ads. And yet I did not see the overnight growth that I saw a lot of my competitors have whether it was a viral YouTube video, or, you know, they launched their Instagram course and they made half a million dollars. I had a period almost for a year, where I was like, What am I doing wrong? And I talked to my then boyfriend now fiancé, and he would play the devil's advocate. And he said, Okay, well let's talk about this. Let's talk about what it would look like for you to go back into the workforce and work for someone else. All he had to do was suggest that for me to be like, Oh, you're right, I couldn't even do that. Like this is just a problem that I need to figure out. And for about a year I kind of tried things but I didn't really throw myself into something. What I was doing was reusing an old strategy that had worked once and I was trying to rework it for like a year trying to make it work, but I was not breaking through in terms of our revenue. So what I did was make two decisions. One was invest in a channel outside of paid ads at the time it was Facebook and Instagram ads, invest in a channel outside of paid ads. And in that case, I chose YouTube. YouTube has been a slow burn for me slow growth. I think we're close to 50,000 subscribers for now. At this time, but it's been almost two years, like, again, I never really had a video go viral that got featured on the homepage. And all of a sudden, I blew up my subscribers, not really, it's been a slow consistent burn. And now we have this larger organic audience who are finding us for free, whether it's on my YouTube channel or on my blog. So that was one decision I made back then, to help elevate me from my competitors, I needed to be beyond Instagram. Yes, I could have an amazing Instagram profile, but I needed to bring people in through search. So investing in YouTube was one thing. The second key decision I made to differentiate myself was to stop pushing a online course anywhere between 500 and \$1,000. That was the roadblock I kept coming up across because I had an email list of 20 25,000 people, I would promote my course I would launched my course it was anywhere between, I don't know 406 \$100. And people would not buy at the rate that I thought they would buy. And it really frustrated me. I'm like, Why are these subscribers here? What do they want for me? Do they just want free content? What is it, I really had to dig deep into this problem. And that's when I realized, you know, what, maybe \$600 or whatever the courses is just too much for people right now, maybe they need a bite size version, to get a taste of what my trainings are like. And then they'll feel more confident in purchasing the \$600 course, this was an idea that I had just over a year ago, and it has changed the game for our business. That's why we now have a product suite of courses that are less than \$100. In fact, most of them are like between 30 and \$50. And so you can call them mini courses, mini digital products, appetizers, whatever you want to call them, but they aren't full blown marketing courses. They are, I would say done for you or templated work as much as possible. So for example, the first digital product we came out with was called story vault. And it was it's it was 365 ideas. Now it's 800 ideas for your Instagram stories, so that you can actually grow your business through Instagram stories. So that's one now we have caption vault which is 300 done for you caption templates. And now we also have videos vault which is 300 videos for your business to grow on Tik Tok and Reels. So as you can see, it's not really like a full blown marketing course, which I kind of gathered from my audience they didn't really want, maybe they were overwhelmed by it. But instead, it's like, hey, I've done weeks of brainstorming here,

here you go, here are the ideas here are the captions have them. And that's what's really changed our business model for the better. And that's how I was able to differentiate myself,

Suneera Madhani: I love it, I love it. I love it so much, because we teach this in 2.0. On scalability, when you're hitting that Roadblock, it's actually customer lifetime value is what I'm looking at. So you're expecting your funnel to always buy just one product, and they may not be ready for that. And so and you want to be able to, you know, move your leads into into some sort of purchasing decision, give them the value, and they're going to trust you to then move on to the next phase and move on to the next phase. And so that is so genius. And I think every single person here listening needs to go apply that right away. Because we expect not everyone is gonna be ready at that right time at that right price point. And it's not that your price point, it's actually not about you know what I love about it, and you didn't discount your course, you didn't say that my courses too expensive. That's not what it was. They needed to get that bite sized piece in order to be like, Hey, you know what, this is great. I really want this element of it. And then I'm ready for that next level. And I love the done for you little appetizer that you called it because it's so simple. It's your expertise. It's what you're good at. And it's so quick. It's such a quick buying decision, at least for people that have been following you for so long that I haven't made a purchase, right, that are just consuming content all day long for free, which is amazing. And that is the consistent you have to put in that work to build that. And you are going to be putting out content for free for a long time. But now you have an offering for them to take that bite that first bite to say, Hey, you know what the story bought? Let me go take a look at that. And then they like it and then they want the Tik Tok as well, then they want the video. And they want the other things. And they're like, you know what, I have all of this. I'm ready for the marketing course. And I'm ready to go work with Elise on whatever else the next thing that you create, that is genius.

Elise Darma: Yeah, and at the time, it was against conventional advice in the online business space, which is, oh, your business's plateaued, launch a high ticket offer launch a mastermind charge someone \$10,000 to work with you. And I just felt like a I didn't know if I wanted to give that much of myself to someone and have that weight of them being like I gave you \$10,000 now help me, you know, help my business grow. But be I just didn't think my audience would really resonate with like a \$10,000 offer. So I decided To go the opposite way that I was being advised to go. And that was to create, you know, a \$27 \$37 product. And it's exactly like you said, it gives people a taste of what I'm like, as a teacher, it's specifically designed to be a no brainer decision so that it's not that hard. Especially if they just meet me through an ad on Facebook, they don't know who I am. It looks like a good offer, you know, I want it to be easy. And now they're in my world. And the difference is, instead of having an email list of 25,000, people who joined from a freebie, we have an email list of customers, and there's so much strength and power in that.

Suneera Madhani: Ooh, I love that that's so true. Because that's the lead like the lead magnet isn't actually the freebie magnet, it's your customer base. That is incredible. That's so good. Elise. That's such a that's so incredible. Tell me a little bit about Could you share some tips and tricks with the audience of one, let's talk about Instagram growth strategies, because obviously,

this is where you're an expert in. But I'd also like to come back to some of your ad strategies or other ways that you're growing from an organic standpoint. Let's talk about growth there. And then let's talk about the inorganic as well. Sure.

Elise Darma: So when it comes to Instagram strategies, this is something that I came up with through my product story vaults. I brainstorm this product idea for six months before I made a move, because again, I wanted to make sure it's different than anything out on the market. And what it is, is prompts and ideas for your stories. You know, this already existed on the market, but I wanted to make sure mine was different. And it hit me one day when I was riding my bike, that it was the summertime in Toronto, and I realized that my business also has seasons, just like the weather seasons, my business also has seasons. And sometimes you're in a season of needing visibility, meaning you need eyeballs, you need followers to know who you are. Sometimes you're in a season of engagement, meaning you have enough followers, you just need to know why they're there. Right? What they're wanting from you, I went through this period when I grew my Instagram initially. Next, you could be in a season of lead generation, you have enough followers, you know what they want. Now you need to know who's interested in what you could potentially offer. And then the last season is a season of sales, we all go through a season of needing to sell whether we're launching an offer, or you know, booking out our call calendar to make sure we're booking and coaching clients, whatever our business model is. So I realize there's these four seasons, so I actually called it I called it the story seasons method, it's baked into my product story about meaning the ideas you get are divided by the season that your business is in. So most people are in a season of visibility, most people need to be known most people need followers. So when you're in a season of visibility, there's certain things you can do on Instagram to be seen, more like better by more people, new people. And this is part of my teaching to Instagrams a busy platform, it could be a part time job if you did all the things every single day. So with the story seasons method, I like to teach my students Hey, if this is what your business needs the most right now visibility, you can ignore some things about Instagram and just focus on certain features. So as an example, when it comes to your Instagram stories, and you want to be found by new people, what I like to do as a strategy is shout out other key accounts in your stories and make sure you tag them because when you tag their handle, they get notified that you have mentioned them. But you want to shout out other key accounts that have a similar audience as you or a similar audience that you want without being a competitor. So for example, if you are a yoga studio, it would be really awesome if you shout it out the local juice shop, because likely you have a very similar audience. But someone who's buying juice isn't going to the juice shop looking for yoga, right? Like you're not competing, but you're trying to go after the same market. So as a yoga studio, you can easily say hey, today we're going to shout out some local businesses who we love, shout out to Pete's green juice shop down the street, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And then you tag them in a story. What this does is on Pete's account, let's call it Pete's juice shop, I think I said Pete is going to see hey, the yoga studio mentioned us in a story, he then has the option to reshare that story to his followers, and voila, you have just gotten your content in front of Pete's audience, which ideally is the same audience and now they're exposed to your brand and now they can go follow your account. So that's just one tactic you can use to get more visibility, especially when you're looking to grow in a strategic strategic manner.

Suneera Madhani: That is so good. That is amazing because that is it makes sense and it's not necessarily the competitive side. It's literally complimentary is how you're viewing that just one strategy that is just such an amazing Except right there. What are some other things now from? So that's from like a visibility standpoint? Can we maybe get a few more tricks on the other elements of it? Maybe engagement? And then from a sales perspective as well?

Elise Darma: Sure, yeah. So if you're in a season of engagement, I usually tell my students, this means you have enough followers generally 1000, or close to 1000, which, honestly, most of my top students will make five figures from Instagram, with less than 1000 followers. So you don't need to be Insta famous. You just need quality followers. So let's say you have enough and you just want some feedback from them. The best aspects and tools of Instagram stories you can use for engagement, is there's actually engagement stickers built into Instagram stories. So you've probably seen the poll sticker, the slider sticker, the quiz sticker, question sticker, there's now a DM sticker. These are all built in tools that Instagram gives us to easily get engagement back from our audience. So one of my favorite Instagram story sequences is to show up and give context as to what I'm about to share, right? Like, Hey, I just had an astrology reading. The next part is share what you learn from, you know, the astrologers feedback. And then the last part, this is the key part that most people miss, is you need to ask for some type of engagement from your audience. It could be as simple as, you know, reply to the story, if you have any questions, or if you've talked to an astrologer, or if you don't want to do that, you can simply put up a poll in your last image or your last story. And just ask question, have you ever talked to an astrologer before yes or no. So it's as simple as using the built in stickers and the algorithm likes this, the algorithm likes to see people watching your stories, through and through and then engaging when you asked for engagement back. The quiz sticker is really, really good to use when you are launching something. Maybe you want to cover any objections that people have. I love using this sticker when I'm live launching my course. And I'll say, Hey, what's holding you back from joining Instagram with boss, and then all the options, I'll list out the typical objections I get like, I don't have time, it's too expensive. Not sure it's gonna work for me, whatever the main options are, then I can actually look at who answered what option, I can dm each person based on what they answered and give them customized advice. So if someone said, you know, it's too expensive for me, I can dm that person say, Hey, thanks for your feedback, I saw that, you know, you're looking for something a little more budget friendly. Here's the link for a paid plan. See if this helps, right. So you can get really granular in that sense.

Suneera Madhani: That makes complete sense. I mean, it's so easy for you to actually use in the stories. And I think that is where most of the people are living now. And it's not in the feed. And all these things are they they're actually pretty intuitive, right? Like, nobody ever taught me how to go do these things. It's just very intuitive that Instagram has it. But what's important is that it rewards you, right? So it rewards the active users. And it's so great that you said this, that you don't need to be Insta famous. Because I think that is something that holds so many women back from actually showing up on video on stories or asking questions, because they're like, I just don't have enough followers at least like I'm just not very, you know, and so tell me a little bit about do you see that often from your audience? And you know, let's talk a little bit about that

feeling of you have to be Insta famous? And or how to actually you're saying they make five figures just off of you. You don't have to have a \$10,000 you can get \$1,000.

Elise Darma: Yeah, if you head to my website, at elisedarma.com we have a whole section dedicated to case studies. And we've featured people who are doctors, real estate agents, digital marketers, copywriters, we've covered a few different niches to show that and actually they talk about the strategies they use for their niche to make five figures plus, but the overall theme is that majority of these people booked in \$1,000, up to \$10,000, from Instagram, even while growing and having less than 1000 followers. And that's because when you're growing and you start on the right foot, and you attract quality followers, and not just you know, spammy accounts or by accounts so that it looks like you have a lot of followers, who cares, who cares, but it looks like you have a lot of followers if they're not going to engage if they're not going to buy. So that's a message that I've been hammering home for a long time to my audience. And as a brand. As someone who teaches Instagram marketing, I actually see it as a detriment that my own account now has over 100,000 followers that happened in the last year. And I see it as a detriment because I don't want people to think like, Oh, it's easy for her to teach this. It's easy for her to say she's got 100,000 followers. So my my messaging my approach has changed to the point where I don't talk about my success, or my results on Instagram. I only talk about my students, my students are the best things example of what you can do when you're starting in whatever niche and starting from fresh to attract the right people who will become a customer. So 100%, even in 2021, you can start a new account a new business on Instagram, start with the right foundations in place, you'll attract quality real people who will actually become customers. And that's what counts.

Suneera Madhani: That's awesome. And I couldn't agree with that more. It's definitely the slow journey. It's definitely putting in the time and really not just getting the followers but getting the right followers in your niche, engaging with them, asking them the right questions to even build your offer, right? Even building through the process. You don't have it, you don't need to have it all figured out. You can ask them what they need and what they want and what's happening in their world to actually solve their current problems. I love that. I mean, we could literally sit here and talk all day about Instagram strategies, and I want to learn so much more from you. I really want to talk about YouTube because this is an element that even I myself so I have no presence on YouTube for CEO School. We don't have a presence here. It feels like a nother channels. So overwhelming. How did you get started? What are some tips that you can give us and the audience to say why we should be there? And what you feel about YouTube? So I want to know it all?

Elise Darma: Mm hmm. Yeah, I made the decision to join YouTube in the spring of 2018, I want to say or 2019. I've lost track. And it is a huge undertaking, I'm not gonna lie, it's not as easy as opening up an Instagram account, doing a couple posts, couple videos, you need to have a production stream, I think if you want to do it, right. As someone who has a video background I've intended to get on on youtube since like 2016. But the proof was in the pudding. I never started a channel because it's intensive. There's the filming aspect, but then there's the editing and then the publishing and the promotion. And I was always getting stuck on one of those key

factors. So I didn't actually succeed with YouTube until I brought a system in place. And you're going to have to figure out what you as a business owner need the most based on your your mindshare and where your attention is currently at. But I needed a system and I needed team members. That was the only way I was going to get it done. So we use a project management tool called Asana. I love it. It's similar to Trello. But we have an entire project dedicated just to our YouTube flow. And we have the columns view. And so the first column is simply ideas to research. Then the second column is ideas to script, then the third column is scripts to review. And then we we just keep moving these topics along the flow after the script has been reviewed. I move it into the filming phase, and I usually fill myself now, if I'm in my home office, I love to meet with my videographer in person. But you know, that all changed in 2020. So I usually film myself, I'm traveling at the moment, and I have my cameras and my equipment, like figured out what I need. I'll film myself, then I'll send the files to my videographer. And after that, it's basically out of my hands. And that's the key. That's how we can continue this going. Because I need an editor to make me look good. Like you said, the videos, I look snappy. And I look at this, you know, that's all because of the editing combinations.

Suneera Madhani: I feel like what's the hard part? I mean, you know, getting up on camera is one thing. And then just the snappiness of like the the the bubbles and the letters, and it's so easy to go on stories, but I'm not a video editor. And nor do you have to be.

Elise Darma: Yeah, and also, it just takes up so much time like as a CEO, should you be editing your own videos, I sometimes when you're getting started, you do have to wear many hats, but at a certain level, you just got to outsource and my video editor knows animation way better than I could. So she's the one who makes the video look as good as it does with the music and the animations. So it's out of my hands, then then my other team member who's kind of my content manager, she'll review it, she'll make sure there's nothing like no mistakes, I'll review it, then it will go into our publishing queue. And then we have a certain list of tasks that we take care of in marketing the video, because that's another mistake that I find some people fall into is they'll put in a lot of effort to create the content. And then when it's actually published, it'll be like one mention. Yeah, no eyeballs. Oh, yeah, exactly. And yes, YouTube is a search engine. And yes, you will get views over time as it sits there. But the algorithm on YouTube prefers it that once you publish a video if you can send as many people to it as as possible. So I'll send it out my email list. I'll share it on my Instagram story sometimes to my feed. If I can drive as many people to that new video in the first 24 hours. YouTube, YouTube's algorithm is going to show it to more people just like any other algorithm. So that's our general workflow. Like I said, the key for me was team members and systems.

Suneera Madhani: That's amazing. And that makes complete sense because it definitely is. It's a new channel. Do you feel like if for somebody who's starting off, you feel like Instagram might be the best place for them to start and then moving into different channels, would that be kind of the advice that you would give?

Elise Darma: I think so like, I like to choose one social media platform and be really good at it. So Instagram is a great choice, because it's such a great relationship building tool. It's also a great sales tool. That's how most of my students can make \$10,000 plus with less than 1000 followers. So that's something you could definitely manage and grow on your own. YouTube is more of a search engine. And so if you're going to choose, let's say, Instagram as your social media platform, if you have the bandwidth, I would choose one other platform to be your search engine. So your options would be Google, meaning you publish blogs, and people will find your blog, YouTube would be video content. And then Pinterest is also a pretty good search engine. But it's more related to having a blog, right, you're gonna pin your blog posts onto Pinterest. So when I was a solopreneur, that's what I did. I wrote my own blog posts. I'm more of a writer. So I went that route. And then I cultivated my relationships on Instagram. So that was my start. And as my team has grown, I've been able to add in other social platforms.

Suneera Madhani: That's incredible. And you do it so effortlessly. I know so many women out here probably are thinking the same thing of can you give us your final takeaways on how to show up on video as it's like been doing video for so long? You're a video expert, maybe Can you give us some tips and tricks on how to show up on camera and some things that you could do to boost our confidence that we can get out there and actually show up on video?

Elise Darma: Mm hmm. Yeah, funny that you asked me that, because I'm actually an introvert. And I'm camera shy. And as I look back on my 20s, and 30s Yeah, I actually see myself as being someone who was quite unsure of themselves. You know, I'm not someone who's naturally wanting to perform and, and wanting the eyes on me, I have a way of overthinking things, right. And so what I've done over the years, especially as an introvert, my very first website was I was dressed up in characters. So I was dressed up as Carmen San Diego, I was dressed up as what I called travel printer, I was dressed up as a tourist, like my first brand as a personal brand. Wasn't really Elise, it was characters of myself. And that allowed a protection for me to not have to show up as myself, but show up as a version of myself. And that concept has really worked for me over the years. In fact, Elise Darma is a brand's name. It's not even my real full name. It's a version of my full name, but it's intentionally a brand name. So that when I'm sitting here at my desk, and I'm talking to you, I can show up as the persona of Elise Darma. Now, it's not a made up version of myself, it's just the version of myself that I am okay to put out there. But there's other aspects of my wife that I don't put out there. You know, if you look at my feed, you don't see a whole lot of my relationship life or my family life. That's intentional. I don't want to like put my family on online if they don't want to. So Elise Darma is a persona of myself. In fact, I think I even called it Elise effing Darma. Like if I have to really put myself up, I'll do the Superwoman pose. And I'll just like remind myself that this is who I'm showing up as, and it's allowed a separation so that I can have my online life and feel comfortable and not worry, like, oh, who's watching my stuff? And then I can have my private life and keep that separate and keep that intimate.

Suneera Madhani: I love that. Thanks so much for sharing that because I actually did, I didn't know that I didn't seem that this was your persona. But that makes complete sense. And I relate to that so well, not actually on camera, but how I show up at work. I mean, my whole life I've

been called sunny la you call me Sunny when you came on videos or on our podcast show today. Because to my friends and family, I've always been sunny. And when I you know when I went to college, and I got my first job I had so much like I just wanted to show up as cinelerra which is my full name and that to me was my persona of like, this is my working persona. And funny is the fun the crazy the friend the sister that like I that's me at home, and Suneera who I am professionally and I'm competent and I really smart and I'm capable and like all these things that I like that I want to tell myself I was a mindset shift for me, shift for me to come like to for me to be Suneera Madhani in the public facing corporate world. And it's so interesting because I've never really thought about that from a visual ones of how I show up online for me right now, I show up a sneer Madani all day long and actually Instagram gets Sunny and Suneera Madhani cuz I show up as my full self but it is really difficult. It's difficult all the time to even think about kind of what what are the things you're going to put out there, especially as the audience has grown so much, right. And you're there's other things that I used to post when it was a mom boss account, but I don't anymore with my kids and my daughters and bath time and everything else, I just felt so natural, and it wasn't a big deal now is a big deal to me to protect my whole life. And so that is such a great tip for so many people wanting to show up, meeting that barrier, so that it doesn't cross that personal and professional world. So that's just such an incredible tool that you have. And you may show up physically in a character. But even by the change of persona, or mindset, or even the boundaries of what you share, you don't necessarily need to have a physical character that you put on it, it could even be a metaphorical character that you're showing up. That's really cool.

Elise Darma: Absolutely. And you know, I work in social media, social media has given me a business that is like a dream. But I know that the design of social media platforms is to keep you on it, to keep you sharing 24 seven to share all aspects of your life. And a lot of my students get overwhelmed by that, I get overwhelmed by that I don't want to share all aspects of my life on social media. I'm not, I'm not treating it like a reality TV show. And you know, you probably follow some people where you can tell like, they're kind of dramatizing things a little bit because it gets views. That's just not me, that's not my nature. And that's not my personality. And I always like to tell my students, you don't have to do it that way. And, you know, you don't even need to create a persona or a name for yourself. You could internally but what what I do recommend is choose themes of your life that you are okay to share publicly. And the other the rest, keep it private. So themes could be like, you know, your nine to five work hours, it could be your walks with your dog, it could be your gardening hobby. You know, if you don't want to share your kids online, you don't have to, you can totally keep that separate. You don't have to keep your relationship online. In fact, my partner is probably the biggest extrovert I've ever met. But does he love the camera? No. So I'm not gonna like force him to be on the camera. I just, it's just inauthentic that way. So choose the aspects choose the themes of your life that you are okay with. And the rest, you can keep private.

Suneera Madhani: I love it. This was so helpful. I know so many of us want to continue to learn from you. You've shared so much knowledge with us today. Elise, how can we support you?

Elise Darma: Well, I would love to connect on Instagram, of course, @elisedarma and you can check out my YouTube channel Elise Darma and my website Elisedarma.com as the main hub. But thank you so much for allowing me to come and chat with your audience whose actual pleasure so

Suneera Madhani: It was so fun. I know. We're hope to have you back for many more conversations. Thanks so much for being on the show today. And until next episode, I'll see you guys later at CEO school.

Thank you so much for listening. We hope you enjoy the show. Follow us at CEO school on Instagram for show notes, inspiration and exclusive behind the scenes that you won't find anywhere else. We also have an absolutely incredible resource for you. It's the seven lessons we learned building million dollar businesses. These are complete game changers and we want to give it to you absolutely free. All you have to do is leave a review of the podcast, why you love the show, screenshot the review and email it to Hello@ceoschoolpodcast.com and we'll send it your way.