

FT: Shama Hyder, welcome to So Money. So honored to have you on the show.

SH: Thrilled to be here, thank you so much.

FT: You know you are such a dynamic leader and influencer in the world of marketing. I just want to brag about you for a second. You're the best-selling author of The Zen of Social Media Marketing. You were a Top 30 Under 30 Entrepreneurs in America by Inc. Magazine in 2013. How does it feel to be so honored like that? I

SH: Yeah, you know, it is an honor and I feel like a lot of it is right time, right place and just, you know I'm feeling really lucky and grateful for so much which has happened in my career. Yeah, it's always been a very humbling experience.

FT: And, the White House identified you as one of the Top 100 U.S. companies. Your company I should say was identified as one of the Top 100 companies to be run by a young entrepreneur by Impact 100. Tell us a little bit about your business and how your journey unfolded.

SH: Yes. So, my company's called The Marketing Zen Group. We're an integrated online marketing and digital PR firm. So, what that essentially means is that we do all online marketing for client's contents social search, so forth, getting them leads and visibility. Started the company right out of graduate school, did my thesis on Twitter when it had 2,000 users, was really excited about social media and grateful for the opportunity to be somewhat of a pioneer in the social media marketing space and ended up writing a book called The Zen of Social Media Marketing which is now on its third edition, going to be in its fourth edition soon and grew from, you know, the company from being a social media consulting company to being an integrated online marketing digital PR firm. We're a team of 30 now and have just grown in just about massive growth since our start and it's just, it's been a great experience, a lot of learning, a lot of growing, a lot of hopefully giving back too.

FT: What would you say is the biggest mistake that companies big and small make when it comes to their online branding presence and I guess also their social media?

SH: Sure. You know the biggest thing that comes to mind is consistency and consistency isn't very sexy and I know that. But, so much of online marketing that you see that's done badly or doesn't give people the ROI is its one-shot marketing. You know, where people think "Oh, we send an e-mail once and it should do something" or "We set up a Facebook page, it's not doing anything."

But really, online marketing to be successful like so many other things in life takes consistency. It takes patience. It takes strategy and you really have to pull all these pieces together to build something and to get true ROI out of it and I feel like a lot of businesses still miss that.

FT: Well, I love bringing people with business smarts and entrepreneurial know-how to the show because I think that you guys know a thing or two about money. You know how to make it, you know how to build it, you know how to reinvest and so would love to start off the So Money Q&A with you now, Shama. The first question I always ask my guests is what is your money mantra? You know, your financial philosophy that guides you, that keeps your money safe and protected.

SH: You know, if I had to sum it up in one word, Farnoosh, it would really be abundance. I think there's just two mindsets people come from, a mentality of abundance where there's always more

where there's, you know, there's always more where that came from. You're going to keep growing or there's a mentality of lack. You know, there's the let's hoard it, let's hang on to it. I'm not saying not to be smart and save but I think just always coming from a mindset of abundance and that somehow, you know, whatever you want, the needs will be met. I feel really grateful. I think I have my parents to thank for that sort of mentality but it's definitely an abundance mentality.

FT: Yeah, you talk about your parents and sort of parlays us into the next question, which is, you know, talking about your upbringing, maybe an experience in childhood that shaped your current sort of ideologies about money and philosophy on money. What's a money memory for you that really sticks out?

SH: Sure. You know, what's so funny, is that I think all kids of immigrant parents have certain commonalities when it comes to money and they're not even first generation. You know, I came here to the country when I was 9 and so I feel like I grew up with a lot of respect for money without necessarily seeing it as the end all and be all of things. As always an entrepreneur, my sister, actually my younger sister compares me to Dora the Explorer when I was younger. If you're familiar with the Dora who has the backpack and a monkey and a plan and is kind of a little hustler on her own right and I was definitely like that. I remember starting a club at church where I collected a dollar a piece until the parents complained to my mom and I learned my first lesson which is to collect money if you give something of value in exchange, something that other people value as well. That was my first lesson in money.

FT: That's great. I'm also a daughter of immigrants and you kind of said it perfectly where, you know, you always grew up sensing a sort of a respect for money, not like, you know, I grew up wanting to chase after money or feeling like money was the end all but certainly had an appreciation for it because I saw how hard my parents worked.

SH: Yeah. Absolutely, absolutely.

FT: Well, not to be a Debbie Downer but let's talk a little bit about a financial fail that you experienced. As we know, failure often leads to success so what would in your life, in your experience be a definitive financial failure that you learned a tremendous amount from and that perhaps even turned itself around and became a success down the road?

SH: Yeah, you know what, I [inaudible] think it's a mindset thing and I'd heard this advice that I'd never really taken it to heart until I had an experience myself which was if you loan money, you know, to friends and family, just consider it a gift. Don't see it as a loan.

FT: And, you learned this the hard way.

SH: I did. I did. You know and it's so funny because it was paid back but it just so funny because I feel like it tests relationships in a way that you don't imagine and because people have such different views on money that's such a sensitive subject in so many ways. And, it's just, it's one rule that I have now. I don't loan. I'll gift it but I won't loan it.

FT: Yes.

SH: I just feel like it really adds a layer of complication to relationships.

FT: So, what was the rift? I mean without maybe, maybe you don't want to expose this family member but, you know, what was ultimately the problem that arose from "lending" money?

SH: Sure. I think it was just sort of the anxiety around it all, right, in terms of not necessarily being paid back when someone said they're going to pay you back and I just think it causes unnecessary tensions. Not that I think dramatic or [inaudible] about. It's just something I learned about myself during that process.

FT: Yeah, yeah, and it's hard to go to your friends and family and ask for your money back. I mean I always say it's like they had the courage and I guess the audacity to ask us for the money. We should have just as much audacity and courage to ask for it back.

SH: Yeah.

FT: But, we don't.

SH: I'm going to go with just [inaudible].

FT: Exactly. Yeah, I think a lot of us can relate to that sort of failure. Well, let's turn it around and talk about something you're really proud of financially, a So Money moment as I call it on the show, a time in your life when you had a financial win. Take us to that specific time. Tell us the story and share with us the steps that you took to achieve that moment.

SH: Sure. So, financial win for me actually was really young. I was 18 and I just graduated high school and I managed to cobble together so many scholarships that I got a full ride to school and for me that was such a financial win because it wasn't necessarily that I was earning money, you know, question mark in some way but it was so much more that I was proactive and you just don't realize like the power of small scholarships because I had some from a women's group and a local group and all these things that are applied for like a textbook scholarship and what not but it all added up, you know, and it allowed me to go to school and get out debt free.

And, for me, when I see a lot of peers who have struggled with student loans and debt, I feel like that I made some really smart financial educational decisions.

FT: And, I think the key for a lot of people, younger listeners and those of use wanting to go back to school, the thing about scholarships is I think we often feel defeated before we even apply, so we don't apply. You know, all this doesn't apply to me. I'm never going to qualify. I'm never going to win. But, you just have to go for it and really it's a numbers game. The more you apply for, the more likely you'll get some.

SH: Absolutely, so much of life I think is what would you do to better your chances.

FT: You know, that is so smart, Shama, because I think often when it comes to scholarships we feel defeated before ever applying, so we don't even apply. We feel like the qualifications are beyond us or we're never going to, you know, win because maybe there's too much competition but truly we just have to go for it and cast a wide net, right?

SH: So, well said, Farnoosh, and I think it's what you said earlier too, to having sort of the audacity and courage to go after certain things. And no, you know, you may get them, you may not but you're

really, I mean it's cliché as this is, you know, you miss a hundred percent of the shots you don't take and I certainly didn't expect to get those scholarships but sometimes just the pool of people was so small applying because, you know, they didn't, they weren't provocative enough to research it or a scholarship haven't done a very good job of marketing itself. So, I think in some way it pays to be a good researcher and to do your homework.

FT: Absolutely. Well, that is amazing, a full ride to college. I think a lot of us could use that these days. You're So Money ritual, Shama, this is the part of the show where I like to inquire about maybe a financial habit or behavior that is consistent, that you consciously do that helps you keep your money where it needs to be.

SH: You know, [inaudible] speaking, I check my account every week, my bank accounts just to keep a good pulse on where things stand. I mean I think for different people it helps to do it at different times.

I guess it depends on if it causes you anxiety or if it makes you feel good about it or but I do a very good job I feel like of keeping a good pulse on my finances. One thing that I've developed a habit of which I'm sad to say that it took me longer than it should've was I didn't always check my credit card receipts, you know, or like the statements because I don't know why it just felt like, well, it all looks good. It's all I cared, I'm sure. But, recently, as I've gone through that I've noticed certain discrepancies and I feel like that's just a good habit to cultivate.

FT: Here, here. Well, this is a fun kind of finale to So Money where I ask a series of quick questions. I leave the last part of the, well, it's actually, so I'm going to start that over again. So, this is the finale of So Money. Shama, you've been a phenomenal guest so far and I would love to hear you finish the following sentences and please the first thing that pops into your mind just say it out loud. No filter.

SH: Okay.

FT: Alright, Shama, if I won the lottery tomorrow, let's say a hundred million dollars, I would _____.

SH: I would seriously do something about the Syrian refugee children issue. There's been about 2 million kids who've been displaced in the last 4 years in the Syrian civil war and if I won the lotto for a hundred million, I would definitely want to do something about that.

FT: Oh my gosh, that's probably the best answer I've heard so far.

SH: Oh, the best.

FT: So, yeah and I thoroughly agree with you. It's just so devastating what's happening over there. I was watching 60 Minutes the other night and they were talking about the lack of food in Syria and, you know, really the almost intentional, you know.

SH: Oh, yeah, it's and you know, Farnoosh, it's going to take another 2 generations for them to recover from this. I mean that's the worst part. The schools are closed and it's a very heartbreaking issue and if by some miraculous chance I ended up with a lot of moolah then that's, you know, I would love to set up a school there or pull kids out of that situation. Just, I mean it's, you know, it's terrible to see that generation. I just, I don't know what the future looks like on that side.

FT: Yeah. The one thing that I, Shama, spend my money on that makes my life easier or better is _____.

SH: Oh, food. Really, because even in school, I always ate well. I'm not a fast food kind of girl. I believe in enjoying a good meal. I feel like a lot of what I do is so I can enjoy a good meal in peace and if I'm not doing that then what's the point. So yeah, I enjoy good eating. I'm definitely a foodie.

FT: Now, are you cooking this food or are you ordering this food?

SH: Oh God, no. It's so funny because I do love to cook. I just, my travel schedule and work just doesn't always allow for it but I'm happy to pay tribute to some of the best chefs in the world. 'm good with that.

FT: Right on and someone who lives in New York, I concur.

SH: Okay, yeah, absolutely.

FT: Alright, so maybe this is the same answer but hopefully you can give us a different twist on this but my guilt, my biggest guilty pleasure that I spend a lot of money on, guilty pleasure, _____.

SH: Oh, that's easy. Easily, my wardrobe. That's easy.

FT: Indulge me, Shama. Tell me everything about how much you spend on your favorite designers.

SH: Yes, there's that. Yeah, I'm such a girly girl for people who know me. I enjoy shopping. I was joking with a friend the other day that if it was an Olympic sport I would take home the gold. So, yeah, I do enjoy. I think this just goes back to me being a [tourist], Farnoosh. I like food, I like clothes, you know, I like a certain lifestyle, so my guilty pleasure.

FT: Well, one thing I wish I'd known about money growing up _____. Sounds like you had a pretty solid foundation growing up in money and how to, you know, build your career but what would you say, I mean we all sort of have the woulda shoulda couldas or I wish I had known.

SH: Started saving even earlier, you know, I don't feel like I really started saving until I got out of school and I think it would have been smart. You know, even putting a little bit away. It's just, it's not a habit my parents cultivated, you know, because my parents were not big savers in that way. Kind of more like 'live for the moment' which is great, you know, great philosophy in itself but I do wish I started saving sooner.

FT: And, are you diligent with saving? Do you, I mean, a lot of our guests they appropriate a specific amount every month to savings or their investments, are you like that?

SH: You know, I am extremely diligent about that. I don't have a specific amount that I feel like I set aside. It's more like, okay I'm going to limit my expenses to this and everything else will automatically be savings.

FT: I see. Alright, when I do donate money, I like to give to _____ because _____.

SH: I like to give to the Aga Khan Foundation. It's a really big non-profit that does a lot of work in 3rd world countries in education in rural areas. I like giving where I feel like it's going to make a direct impact in areas where I wouldn't necessarily be able to do so single handedly.

FT: And, finally, I'm So Money because _____.

SH: I think I'm So Money because I feel like I'm a student of life. I don't ever stop learning. I always feel like there's more to do and learn and be. I really am like I am the epitome of Dora the Explorer. I think my youngest sister, like she I think she totally got it. I think she gets me. Yeah, I see myself as an explorer and a learner and I just actually finished reading Tony Robbins new book on money and I learned a lot, you know, about index funds and so forth. And, I'm still new to the world of investing, aside from, you know, investing to companies and start ups. So, I'm learning a lot and I enjoy that process. I enjoy the process of being the student.

FT: Well, you know, I had Tony on the show and one of the things he shared with me was that people who think they know everything don't grow.

SH: Totally, totally agree.

FT: They don't go to the next level, so.

SH: This is why Tony's so smart.

FT: Yeah.

SH: And, that's so funny, yeah, I think it's, I think there's something be said about enjoying the process too and, for me, you know, so much of money has been a game. Like, work is a game, life is a game. They don't mean in the sense of like competitive must win game but really sort of enjoying the time that I have here on planet earth to play this game, you know, and in the end it doesn't matter because all the little pieces go back in the monopoly box anyways.

FT: Yes. Well said. Shama Hyder, thank you so much for joining us. We want to send people your way. So, tell us where we can find you.

SH: Oh, well, thank you so much for having me, Farnoosh, first off. They can find me at, well, my company site is MarketingZen.com. You can also find me on Twitter at @Shama S-H-A-M-A and you can also find me on Facebook at Shama Hyder profile. So, if you just, really if you just Google my name you'll find all the platforms and you can choose your poison.

FT: Hey, by the way, Shama, since you're the expert, how do we boost our Twitter engagement and how do we get more followers without literally buying them because I find that one of the scamming things people do.

SH: Sure, so happy to answer it. Here's what I would recommend. The old metric of even getting followers is so outdated on Twitter because people just don't engage on Twitter like they used to, meaning chances of someone getting followers no matter how awesome they are, are just slimmer now. It's not like a small town or a few thousand people all followed each other. There's better metrics out there and these are, you know, how many click throughs do you get?

How many views are you getting to your articles? How many re-tweets? These types of, you know, measuring engagement in this way and on this level is so much more fruitful and a better spend of your dollar and your time and it results in a much higher ROI as well. So, [inaudible] really look your driving people back to your site, getting them to click through, share, use hashtags which are great way. You know, people organize information through hashtags all the time. So, I may see someone's tweet if I'm following that hashtag but I may never choose to follow them and vice versa and that's okay. So, I really think this sort of notion of how to get more followers in its self is outdated.

FT: Yeah, so don't think of it as so much as a numbers game but making the most of the numbers you have.

SH: Yeah and the right number. So, how much traffic is Twitter, for example, driving your site, that's a big one.

FT: Okay. Alright, that's a really, really good tip. I'm glad I asked.

SH: I'm glad you did too.

FT: While I had you, I wanted to take it, seize the opportunity. Shama Hyder, thank you so much. Have a phenomenal 2015. We'll be watching you and we'll make sure to put all the links to find you on SoMoney podcast.com.

SH: Likewise, Farnoosh, thank you so much.

FT: My pleasure.