

Scaling Up Services

Episode 246 - Emma Tessler

www.scalingupservices.com/podcast/246-emma-tessler-founder-ceo-of-ninety-five-media

Emma Tessler, Founder + CEO of Ninety Five Media

Emma Tessler is the Founder + CEO of Ninety Five Media; a digital marketing agency that builds results-driven marketing strategies for scaling brands. With 8 years of marketing experience under her belt, Emma helps brands connect with ideal clients, build community, and convert audience members into paying customers through social media marketing.

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<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/stop-scrolling-start-scaling-podcast/id1635151196>

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Bruce Eckfeldt

Welcome, everyone. This is scaling up services. I'm Bruce Eckfeldt. I'm your host. Our guest today is Emma Tessler. She is founder at 95. Media. She's also podcast host, we're going to talk to you a little bit the work that she does in marketing, digital marketing, how to scale businesses. I think this is an interesting and often challenging space for companies in general, but certainly services companies, how do you generate leads? How do you build awareness?

How do you create demand for your services as a big one, and Emma has some real experience here and understanding of really how things work, both, you know, from a philosophy point of view, from assistant point of view, but also where we are in terms of digital marketing, these platforms are changing and evolving. And under legal reviews like that, at various points, this is gonna be a very challenging space, but also going to be a really lucrative space up, figure out how to really use it and set up the systems and kind of tap into it. So I'm excited for this inside of the conversation, see what we learned. With all that. Emma, welcome to the program.

Emma Tessler

Thank you. I'm so excited to be here today.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Yeah, it's a pleasure having you on. Before we dig into what you're doing today with 95 Media and a podcast and digital marketing. Let's get some background. How did you get into the space? What's the backstory? For

Emma Tessler

sure, yeah, marketing was not the avenue I thought I would take with my life by any means. Certainly not social media. Because as we all know, 10 years ago, the landscape of social media marketing really didn't exist. And it was very, you know, small, if anything, my career actually started in interior design. And that was, you know, my first path. And through that industry, I really discovered the social media marketing space at a job that I was at, and this person back in 2015, was looking to grow her business. And she said, I think I've heard of people using Instagram for Business.

Can you like, look into that and figure that out for me. And so that was just kind of how I got thrown into the weeds with it. And it just opened my eyes to this whole new world. And it was really inspiring, because I could see where this was going to go. It just seemed like so much potential. And you know, of course, over the past nine years, since then, we've seen just the absolute explosion of social media marketing. So today, I am the founder of 95 media, and we're a digital marketing agency really specializing in organic social media marketing.

And what we're able to do is infuse strategy into content for our clients brands on social so that you get out of that, like hamster wheel of constantly creating, constantly posting and actually start seeing the results. Because that's the big shift that we see a lot of brands really going through is that everyone's creating content today, but very few brands are actually seeing that ROI. And so that's really where we come in. But we're woman run agency, our team is all women. And we're really just lit up by this work, because we're able to support brands and actually growing their businesses through the power of social media marketing.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Yeah, interesting. And I'm always fascinated for folks that kind of transition into these new careers and stuff, like, what did you find were kind of skills that you had that allow you to be successful when starting the business? And what were some of the things that were kind of challenging that you had to learn as you started things and started to grow? Yeah,

Emma Tessler

I think one of the biggest things that I was able to leverage as I transitioned into marketing from design was, as an interior designer, people don't realize how much psychology really goes into interior design. And you know, like, when you step into someone's home or their office, I was doing a lot of corporate design at the time, you really kind of need to look around and capture the essence of who someone is and how they want their space to reflect them, because they're not going to be able to put that into words. And so it's kind of this underlying personal branding that I was always tapping into whenever I was doing interior design work.

And the same really goes for businesses, you know, as I began to step into someone's business and essentially act as their entire marketing department, you know, they didn't necessarily know what I needed to know, they didn't have the materials to pass that off, especially in those early days when no one really

understood what was needed for social media. And so even today, you know, being able to come into someone's brand and capture their brand voice and represent who they are in a different way that actually connects with their audience has just been really integral to our brand and just the work that we do. But I mean, one of the challenges I had was definitely building the business, I would say, you know, I left corporate when I was 25.

And I, no one knows what they're doing. I'd still know what I'm doing. I mean, like, we're all just faking it and figured out. Exactly. So I mean, as I transitioned into just really building a brand at such a young age and building a team and managing clients and team members and business. I think those were some of the challenges that were just the biggest surprise, I would say, Yeah. And they still, you know, we all still are faced with those challenges every single day. But I think now they're just less of a surprise. And they're just like, okay, got it. Like, we're just doing this again.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Fascinating. So talk to me a little bit about social media. I mean, you mentioned the 10 years ago, this didn't really exist, like, how have things evolved? Where are we today, give us a little bit of the kind of the journey that social media has been on.

Emma Tessler

I mean, I think that everything has changed. To be honest. 10 years ago, several of these platforms didn't exist, you know, tick tock didn't exist 10 years ago. And it's really interesting to take a zoom out on social media marketing, because there's kind of these waves that happen with social media, you know, I would say, if you're looking at the past 10 years, 2014 to about 2017, not a lot was really happening. Like things were just kind of staying the same. We were all just kind of learning what social media was posting bad filtered photos of sunsets and moving on with our lives. And by 2017, I would say there was more brand awareness of social media, and 2017 2018 really kicked off, if anyone listening was on social at this time, it kicked off the explosion that was to come of online businesses, which really, I would say exploded in around 2018 2019. But the beginnings of that definitely started in 2017.

So people were building these personal brands, primarily on social and growing these really large audiences, because you could and there was, you know, the algorithm didn't exist, it was so chronological, you know, and so there was a lot of opportunity at that time on these platforms to do a lot. And then we saw that from 2017, to 2019. And then when the pandemic hit in 2020, that just caused the most massive shift, right, because that was when tick tock came onto the scene, which then consequently impacted every other platform with regards to video content and the piece of content and the amount of content that is needed. And it's been this trickle down effect that we're still seeing the impact of even today, in 2024, I just saw a release yesterday that LinkedIn is now testing a video only feed on their platform.

So interesting. Yeah, you know, like these platforms are still adapting, and they're changing faster than ever. And that's really why it's so important to be in tune with what's going on, because the strategy that you were using six months ago, is no longer going to be applicable in today's world of social media marketing. And it's really important to make sure that you're up to date and that your marketing is shifting with the consumers needs as well.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Yeah. I guess where are we in terms of some of these platforms? Are there certain platforms that are better for certain types of businesses or reaching certain types of audiences? I mean, how do you kind of navigate the myriad platforms that are out there and figuring out like, where should you be? Should I be on all of them? Do I need to focus? Where do I focus? Like, it helped us understand kind of the platforms at this point?

Emma Tessler

That's a really good question. I mean, a lot of people feel like they need to do it all in order to actually see results. And I don't think that's necessary. I think that if you can do one or two platforms really well, then you're gonna actually see higher conversions than spreading your content thin, and creating a diluted message across more platforms than are necessary. The way to determine this is kind of always what I go back to determining the platforms you should be on really comes down to two big factors, in my opinion. The first one is your target audience. Who is your target audience? And where are they what is their online behavior really look like? If you're targeting an audience, or the majority of your audience is 40. And under tick tock is still really relevant. I know that a lot of people look at tick tock still as this like Gen Z platform, but it's really not like the age range is really increasing on tick tock, and also something to think about is maybe your target audience is in their 50s, but they have children in their 20s.

And so if that's the case, their children influence their buying decisions, and their children could be sending them videos from Tik Tok, or saying, Hey, Dad, you really need to get on tick tock, you really need to be looking at these videos. So you also need to look at the influences in your target audiences life. So where are they what are they consuming? Where are they buying? Where are they searching? Because you really want to make sure you're coming up in those searches, no matter where they're doing that. And then the second piece of decision is what is your content and bandwidth? Because that is really ultimately that's gonna be your decision driver here because the amount of content that's needed really varies between platforms, but it's going up all the time.

And so over We're on tick tock, you're going to need a lot more content. And it's going to need to be 99% video content in order to build traction on that platform. But when you look at Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, you can kind of push your video content to about 50% of the content you're posting. So say you have some photos on hand, and you have video content you're able to produce over time, those, you know, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn may be better platforms for you. So really being realistic about who can work with content creation, how much content can you actually be realistically posting, and do that consistently, too. And that's where a lot of people get caught up is, oh, well, you know, I'm not busy right, now I have a lot of time to shoot content, and then that content yields a result for you. And then now you're busy, and I don't have time to shoot the content. And so your marketing falls off again. And I see a lot of businesses just go through that cycle. But you really want to avoid a

Bruce Eckfeldt

feast and famine. Yeah. So I mean, you mentioned video here. How do you kind of choose? Or how do you look at the types of content that you can be producing? And what's kind of most powerful now and why?

Emma Tessler

Yeah, so the most powerful video content is going to be people focused, and even more specifically, more behind the scenes, storytelling focused. So oftentimes, we work with businesses who they it's them, we work primarily with small businesses, right, so we're talking about 10 employees or less, and the founders typically

front facing people know the founder, they're sort of the face of the brand, but they're very hesitant to get into content, because they just don't feel comfortable.

And we come in, and we say, Hey, you're gonna hate us, but you're gonna love us, because you're gonna see results are gonna make you get in front of video content. And what starts to happen is you can post about your service, you can post about your brand, you can post about what it is that you do all day, every day, but the content that has someone in it primarily the person that people know, so if that's the founder, then that would be who should be in the video content that is going to outperform any content that you post ever. Yeah, because what you're doing is you're building that human connection. And when we're going on social, yes, we're going online, technically.

And we're kind of dissociated from like the space around us. And we're not being you're not having human interaction, but we are looking for human connection. And we're looking to feel connected with the person on the other side of the screen. So when you can talk to an experience or tell a story that is going to do really well. So for a lot of the small businesses that we work with, we really encourage them to film some, like Come with me style videos. So we have an artist that we're working with. And you know, it's not service, but she is the brand. And she does a lot of custom projects. So people work with her directly, and she provides the product.

So she'll do like prints or turn her art into a scarf print or whatever that looks like. And she's going to an event this week. And so we laid out a bunch of videos that we want her to capture at this event, so that we can then turn that into, you know, do all the post production, editing and turn into content, because what we've seen in the past is that whenever we post like, hey, come with me for a brand, shoot, or come with me to design this new offer, or this new product, or, Hey, I'm going to a conference to learn things that are going to serve my clients better. These are the types of content that really perform best, because we're seeing things that make us think that we're not being sold to. But really, it's the best form of content to sell through.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Yeah. And what do you cover on those things? I guess how much are you trying to create personal connection versus explain your service versus give kind of educational insights? Like what is their kind of direction to this content that you find most kind of impactful? Yeah.

Emma Tessler

So in those types of videos, where we're really focusing on the behind the scenes, we're not talking about the service or offer at all, it's very much just about what's happening in the video. So for example, I was just speaking at an event in Chicago last week. And so I filmed throughout the entire day, I was just filming little clips about my day. And then we stitch that all together. And then I did a voiceover on top of it. Just kind of explaining the experience of why was I speaking at this event, who was the audience, the topics that we covered why we were so excited to be there. And what that content does is although it's not selling the specific service that you offer, what it's doing is building authority and leadership in your space. People are seeing that you're in demand that you're doing all these things in your industry that you're speaking to different audiences is and that you're able to support in a bunch of different ways.

And I actually tied that video back to the fact that we, at 95 media, we've never just dependent on social media marketing as our only marketing Avenue. But that speaking engagements are another form of marketing. And this is how you can start tapping into it. So like, we don't offer speaking engagement support for our clients, but it's speaking to marketing, which is what we do at the core of everything. So there's a bunch of different angles.

And I think the benefit of you know, working with an agency or working with a team member on developing that marketing material, which is, you know, what we do for our clients is that we're able to come in and say, Okay, we want you to shoot these clips. But then in the voiceover on this video, we're going to switch the angle, and we're going to talk about something different, because the way to keep people really engaged is when what they're seeing and what they're hearing don't necessarily correlate, which sounds a little confusing,

Bruce Eckfeldt

little psychological trick there. Yeah, it really is this annainsea

Emma Tessler

It really works, because you're listening to me talk about marketing. And you know, like, why speaking engagements are great. And in this specific speaking engagement, it I related it back to my interior design career, and it was like this whole story that I was telling. But in the video, it's just me like walking through a hallway, and then speaking at the conference, and then there's tables, and then me getting on a plane home. And it's completely disconnected. But it performed really well because it keeps people engaged watching the entire video because they want to hear what's coming next in the story. Interesting.

Bruce Eckfeldt

And so you mentioned that you do more than just social media, or people should do more than social media, when thinking about their overall marketing kind of strategy. What are some of the other things that you tie in or that companies should be considering in terms of creating a holistic marketing strategy beyond just social media?

Emma Tessler

Right? So social media is the foundation, I like to look at it as. So that is going to be how people find you, and probably decide if they want to work with you or not, because social media is the new search engine. So even if people are still going to Google the first place, they're gonna go, maybe it's your website, they're gonna go right to your social media links at the bottom of the site, or they're not gonna go to your website, they're just going to find your Instagram, your Tiktok, your LinkedIn, whatever that looks like. So you want to make sure that your social media presence is locked in, it's in a great place.

It's showing what you do, how you help who you serve. But at the same time, it can't be the only thing that we depend on, because we're building on borrowed land, right, we don't own our audience, our profile is going to disappear tomorrow, the platform could get shut down, we have no idea. And so it's really important to diversify and create that holistic marketing strategy, as you said, and the other elements to do that. Our favorites are email marketing, because with your email list, you do own your email list, of course. And so really, the biggest goal with social media is that you're building this audience to get them off the platform. So the easiest way to do that is get them onto your email list. And then, of course, podcasting is such a great way as well, because it goes both ways. So with a podcast, we're creating content that we can then share to social media to build the audience for the podcast.

But through doing that, we're creating more value for our audience on social, because we're able to create this long form, audio, maybe even some video from the podcast that we're then sharing with our audience there, whether or not they click through to it. But if they click through, then they can subscribe, and then we can get in front of them more often. Because really, what it comes down to is how often can I get in front of this audience in different ways, because we need to see a brand seven to 20 times before we typically want to buy or reach

out and consider buying. And so it always goes back to how many times can I get in front of them. So that's kind of how I look at it. And of course, public speaking speaking engagements, getting on other people's podcasts is just a really great way to again, tap into another audience that you're not necessarily having to build, but you're able to connect with people in a group that you know, is your target audience.

Bruce Eckfeldt

So I think most people I talked to that are in these kinds of companies looking to develop marketing strategies get pretty overwhelmed with kind of the options in front of them in terms of social media, and developing content and shooting videos and all these things. Like what's the process for kind of figuring out like, if you're a candidate, or if you should be using some kind of social media strategy, what kind of strategies you should be using what platforms usually. So help us kind of boil this down into a couple of steps people can take to develop at least a first couple steps on this.

Emma Tessler

Well, everyone should have a social media strategy. Let's start there. Let's not just post a social and hope for the best. We definitely want to make sure there's a strategy integrated into what you're doing. Because like I said earlier, you know, a lot of people get caught up in this idea that they're constantly creating but then nothing's coming out of it and that it's really discouraging. So where I would recommend you begin is going back to those decision factors of where you should show up, what's your content, bandwidth, and who is your target audience, right. So with that information, you can then decide which platforms you're going to be on. Depending on which platforms you're going to be on, that's going to then determine the rough amount of content you should be producing every week for those platforms.

And then you of course, then go into the actual content creation, building community, looking at your data, etc, I obviously am a little biased, I do think that you should probably work with the experts to determine some of this information just because they can guide you and shorten that timespan of how long it will take from beginning to post to actually seeing results. Because truly, that's what we're all after, what you're looking to do is you're looking to create content that builds an audience that engages with your content clicks over to wherever you're trying to send them and ultimately buys from you. And the goal here is to shorten that timeline, so that you're seeing the results in a few weeks, maybe even a few months, rather than a few years. And I've worked with so many brands who come to me and are like I have been on Instagram for five years, I'm so done, we're not seeing results, we only get Kotla referrals or word of mouth, and I'm so over it like it's not worth doing.

And if that's the experience that you're having, it's just because you don't have the right strategy in place. These social media platforms, 100% should be yielding results. But it really just comes down to creating the right content that speaking to your audience. But if you're not able to outsource bringing an agency like 95, media, I'd really just consistently go back to your data. Because your data is always going to tell you what you need to know it's going to tell you what your audience is enjoying what they're engaging with the most what they're just not liking from you, you got to scrap that and start doing the things that your audience wants to see. Oftentimes, people come to me and they're doing a lot of what they enjoy doing and what's easy for them. But it's not actually working for their audience. And so you really want to be in tune with what your audience is enjoying and engaging with because that is going to be how the algorithm begins to favor you. And your content begins to convert faster. Yeah.

Bruce Eckfeldt

And what are some of the common mistakes that people make? I mean, you mentioned inconsistency and posting, are there other ones that typically really hurt your social media performance?

Emma Tessler

Yeah, so definitely inconsistency is probably the biggest one that I see. You know, you get into that feast and famine, as we were saying, you're posting a lot and then the posts aren't working as a new stop posting all together. And then you have to go through that cycle all over again, once you are low in work again, the second one would be not posting enough.

And I think that a lot of brands that don't have you know, an agency or someone in house doing their marketing aren't really aware of the amount of content that's needed because it's gone up a lot. So for reference, the amount of content I'd recommend posting to Instagram and Facebook today would be five times a week. So that's five posts to your feed every week. And that also does not include you want to be doing daily Instagram Stories showing behind the scenes linking to your website, your services in your stories, because you can include those live links which are really valuable and showing more about your company culture, your team brand etc. Over on tick tock though, the content needs are a lot more I would say that four to five times a week is like the minimum you'd want to be posting to Tik Tok. But daily content if not three times daily content is actually really normal over on Tik Tok.

Yeah, so it's a lot of content. And if you're posting three times a week to Instagram and then trying to just cross pollinate that content over to Tik Tok, it's not going to work for you because not only is it not enough content, but the culture on Tik Tok is extremely different than the culture on Instagram. And that brings me to my last one, which I would say is that you're cross pollinating content without editing at all, specifically video content. Sometimes people think that they can take a video that did well over on Instagram, and just repost it over on Tik Tok.

And it's not gonna work that way. Not only does the algorithm not want to see text or any edits that from a different platform, but the trends and what performs well on Instagram is just not what performs over on tick tock. So that's just why you really want to make sure you're in tune or another reason why you want to make sure you're in tune with the platforms and what your audience is really looking for. Because you're no longer really able to just copy and paste between the different social media platforms. Yeah,

Bruce Eckfeldt

and what are their types of industries types of service companies that you find, do particularly well on some of these platforms and then types of service company is that just don't you know, like social media is just not a great channel for them for marketing.

Emma Tessler

I think the ones that do the best are the ones that have a face to the brand. To be honest, it's really difficult to create highly converting content that's baseless in today's marketing space. So if you are a brand without a face, meaning that there's not one person representing the brand, it's totally fine. But I would invest in content creators who can create a face for you and be the face of the consumer. Because if you don't have a face of the brand, you need to put a face to the consumer. And you need to get people showing or talking about what it is that you do that helps them or begin tapping into influencer marketing. Influencer marketing requires a bit more of a budget. And it's just a totally different strategy than utilizing content creators. But those are the

avenues I'd look at if you've done all the things and you're just don't have a face to your brand. And so it's creating that challenge for you.

Bruce Eckfeldt

Yeah. Other suggestions you have for companies that are interested in kind of pursuing this or investigating whether social media can be a good resource for them or a good tool for them,

Emma Tessler

I'd really recommend probably talking to some experts and talking to people who could support them, it's definitely not something that you need to be doing on your own, as you know, the founder or as the leader of the brand, there's just so many companies out there that can support with elevating a social media marketing strategy, creating one from the ground up, and really helping you see those results, you know, whether you want to hire in house or outsource that, that's totally up to you.

What a lot of our clients have found is that it's actually much more expensive to hire in house to handle all the marketing. And so it may be more beneficial to look out. But I would get some outside opinions, because we don't know what we don't know. And if you're really great at what it is that you do, I would say stay in that lane, you know, do what you're great at and outsource the rest. But don't let it sit and not do your social media marketing. Because it is 2024.

Right, and it's not going anywhere, it's only going to continue to elevate and your competition is marketing their brand on social media. So in order to stay competitive in the future, and in the next few years, it's absolutely crucial that you are marketing your brand on these platforms. And I do think that we're going to see a really large fallout in the next few years of brands who didn't take it seriously, and didn't market themselves here and then are trying to play that catch up game saying like, 2027, because it's just going to be such a different ballgame at that point. So don't fall into that trap. Definitely get into it now, if you haven't already. Yeah.

Bruce Eckfeldt

And you mentioned some of the future of social media here. Like, where are things going? I mean, I know we're kind of in the middle of this tick tock, you know, issue. We're recording the end of March here. But like, what do you think is going to happen with some of these platforms? Is there anything you're kind of keeping your eye on? What is the future kind of hold here,

Emma Tessler

I'm definitely keeping my eye on the way that content is shifting, because video content, the plot, so even tick tock that is heavily video, it now has some photo elements to it. And Instagram keeps going back and forth between photo and video, and what are they favoring? And all of that. So I'm really watching? How are these platforms adapting to the consumer needs? And how are they changing, because just because we look at Tik Tok as a video platform right now, doesn't mean it's going to stay that way. And AI is changing a lot in the type of content that we're creating.

And that we're seeing, like I said, at the beginning, right, we see these waves with social media. And typically these waves are like three to four years. And if you're looking at the wave that started in 2020, and 2024, we're closing out that wave. So I do think that we're going to be entering into a new wave of an unknown to us right now, of what social is going to look like in the next few years. And so I'm very interested to see how the platforms adapt. Shopping on the platforms has made a really big impact in the past 12 months. And so I think

that will continue to develop. And that's more on the product side, but how it's going to impact the service industry. That's really what I'm looking to in the next few years. Excellent.

Bruce Eckfeldt

This has been a pleasure, Emma, if people want to find out more about you more about the work that you do, what's the best way to get that information?

Emma Tessler

Definitely. So our website is 95 media.co not.com we are.co. And on our website has all of our information but we are super active over on Instagram, our handle is 90.5 dot media. And we have a podcast as well. It's called stop scrolling, start scaling, where we cover all things marketing, we really deep dive into all the platforms, different changes that are happening, updates you need to know and so it's a really great educational resource. whereas if you're looking to sort of learn more about what's going on and dip your toes in in at this point in the game

Bruce Eckfeldt

perfect I'll make sure that the URLs or all the information is in the show notes so people can get that Emma it's been a pleasure thank you so much for taking the time today thank

Emma Tessler

you for having me

About Scaling Up Services

Scaling Up Services is a podcast devoted to helping founders, partners, CEOs, key executives, and managers of service-based businesses scale their companies faster and with less drama.

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