

# SUBSCRIPTION ENTREPRENEUR



HOSTED BY ERIC TURNNESSEN, FOUNDER OF [membermouse™](#)

## EP 134: Everything You Need To Know About Promoting Your Membership On Instagram with Talia Koren

*"It took me 15 months after signing up to make my first dollar from Workweek Lunch. During that time, I was building my audience, thinking about what products I want to sell, and just getting a lot of feedback from my audience. Mostly learning everything I could about their pains, fears, and desires that I could help them with. And then my mom sat me down and was like, "Listen, you need to make a subscription." So, she actually gave me the idea. This was the best decision really. I didn't realize how good and healthy my business would feel. And finally, I feel very secure, because of the recurring revenue."*

### **INTRO:**

You're listening to Talia Koren, our guest on today's episode of the podcast.

Talia is an online entrepreneur who recently launched her first subscription business. It's called Workweek Lunch and teaches people from around the world everything they need to know about meal prepping.

What's so unique and interesting about Talia is that she uses Instagram as her primary marketing channel to promote her subscription. In fact, she grew her Instagram following from ZERO to almost 400,000 followers in just over three years. And, when it came time to launch her subscription, she was able to grow to over 2,500 paying subscribers in a little over a year's time.

Pretty impressive, right?

Talia joins us on the show today to talk about...

- The journey she undertook to start, build, and grow Workweek Lunch
- Why she ultimately chose the subscription model for her business
- The exact strategies she uses to promote and sell her subscription on Instagram
- And much more.

Talia and I have a really fun and engaging conversation and I think you're going to learn a lot in this episode. If you've ever wondered if Instagram is the right marketing channel for you and your business, this episode is for you!

As always, I'm your host Eric Turnnessen. And this is Episode 134 of the Subscription Entrepreneur Podcast.

**Eric:** Hey, Talia. Welcome to the show.

**Talia:** Hey, Eric. Thank you so much for having me on.

**Eric:** Now, just to kick things off here, I recently checked out your about page, and under your interests, the things that stood out to me are Peanut M&Ms, bullet points, and puzzles. So, let's start with Peanut M&Ms. What is that about?

**Talia:** I love Peanut M&Ms. They are far superior to all the other kinds of M&Ms if you ask me. And I eat them all the time. I really know what I'm talking about. And I guess my love for M&Ms came from my dad giving them to us on the ski lift to warm us up.

**Eric:** So, he gave you the regular M&Ms or the peanut ones?

**Talia:** Both, but I just became very fond of the peanut ones.

**Eric:** To me it was just really interesting, because usually M&Ms is such a strong thing on its own. M&Ms is known for their chocolate with the candy cover. But you're like, "Yes, I like M&Ms, but I like a peanut shoved in the middle."

**Talia:** Absolutely. Got to get that protein.

**Eric:** And then bullet points, which by the way, your blog is awesome. I've read a number of the articles on there. Not surprising that you're a really great writer. We'll get into that. But you profess an obsession with bullet points.

**Talia:** Yes.

**Eric:** When did this start for you?

**Talia:** Probably in school when I was too lazy to write full essays and just wanted to bullet point everything. It's just way easier and faster and got the information across.

**Eric:** Yeah. I actually think that that's one of the aspects of your articles that make them so nice to read is because you have a natural bullet-pointed layout to your articles where you break things down based on categories and headlines. And it just gives it a way to navigate your articles that makes them enjoyable.

**Talia:** Thank you, I really appreciate it. Thanks for taking the time to read them.

**Eric:** Of course. And then the third one, which stands out to me because I also enjoy puzzles. Is there a particular type of puzzle that you like doing?

**Talia:** The hardest ones possible, but for fun. I'm not crazy competitive, trying to... They're just really fun to do with my family and my mom's really good at them, so it's fun.

**Eric:** Yeah. See, for me, I like doing puzzles that aren't too hard. If there's too many blocks of color, of the same color, or not enough diversity in terms of what's going on in the picture, then it's too stressful for me. I like something where I can continuously make progress. For example, my sister is doing a puzzle now and she's doing one that's a 2,000-piece puzzle and it's a picture of marbles.

**Talia:** Oh, god.

**Eric:** And I'm like, "Why? Why would you do that?"

**Talia:** I usually would just do it when I'm on the phone and I'm a pacer on the phone so I'll walk around and look at the puzzle. I'm always doing stuff. I have a lot of energy. So, it's a good way for me to do something while multitasking.

**Eric:** Well, thanks for sharing the answers with us about that. Let's get into why we're here today. So, you run a website called WorkWeekLunch. But that's not kind of something you set off to do in your career. You were a journalist originally, right? Can you tell us about the transition from being a journalist to where you started your own business?

**Talia:** Sure. So, I was working at Elite Daily as a staff writer, and I knew that I just wanted to set up another stream of income for myself. So, I was side-hustling and I was doing all kinds of different side gigs just to make extra money. And I came across Ramit Sethi and his whole course catalog. And one of his courses is Zero to Launch, which teaches you how to build an online business. So, I signed up for that not knowing how that works at all. And WorkWeekLunch came out of that course. I didn't have the idea or desire to do a food blog before going through that course and seeing how I could build an online business and create this other form of income. At first it was totally supposed to be this side, passive thing. But I found while doing it that I loved it, and I also loved being my own boss, being in charge, controlling everything about my time. And I really wanted to make it full-time.

**Eric:** With that course that you took, what were the important aspects about that course in terms of getting things in motion for you?

**Talia:** Sure. So, it helps you map out ideas. That was a big one, finding a business idea. It's probably one of the most helpful things in that course. They teach you how to mine your own skills and interests. And one of my skills was meal prep. My peers had no idea how I was bringing these beautiful cooked lunches to work every day, saving money. And they're all broke, and they're like, "How are you doing this?" So, that was the first thing I picked up on. And then after I came up with my idea, it helped me have a really strong and solid framework for developing content that people would just get hooked on, which obviously worked because my Instagram blew up. So, I took everything in the course and kind of applied it to Instagram, even though the course said not to go on social media.

**Eric:** Interesting. Where did it stop for you, the course aspect, and where did you need to go off-road and kind of, "Okay, I got what I needed, the ball got rolling, but now, here are the things I know need to be done, but I kind of just need to buckle down and do it on my own"?

**Talia:** For sure. I went through all the material, and it took me 15 months after signing up to actually make my first dollar from WorkWeekLunch. So, during that time I was building the audience, I was thinking about what products I want to sell, and was kind of getting a lot of feedback from my audience mostly, just learning everything I could about their opinions, fears, and desires that I could help them with. So, after that, I launched a few different products, and my goal was just to make investment back. I wanted to make the money back I spent on the course initially. And I did, within the first launch, which is great. But I realized after a couple launches that, you know what, this style of kind of doing these quarterly launches doesn't work for me. It was paying the rent, but it wasn't that jumping off point where I could make it full-time. So, I knew I had to do something different.

**Eric:** Yeah. I think that that's interesting. Basically, that first year was somewhat and R&D situation for you where you were getting to know your audience, getting to know what they wanted, listening to that, and refining the offering, which, I think is natural for a business. But, so many people ditch at that point in time because they think, "Oh, I put something out there, somebody should have given me money by now."

**Talia:** Yeah.

**Eric:** Was that a natural aspect of your personality that just helped you to go through that? Or was somebody helping you work through that period of time?

**Talia:** I naturally want to help people. I don't mind doing it for free. I love talking about meal prep and I love helping people figure out how easy it is to cook, because it really clicks for them through my content. And that just really drives me, it's just so fun to see them have this evolution as a home cook and really start meal-prepping and seeing those results. But I knew going into it that I wanted to make money. And I still give a lot of free content, so I'm able to do both. It's not like an either/or.

**Eric:** Right. And is your free content, you mentioned Instagram, and Instagram is a big part of your ecosystem right now, a big part of your strategy for promoting WorkWeekLunch, was Instagram something that was always big for you? Or did one of these courses turn you on to it?

**Talia:** Yeah, in the course, like I said, they were like, "Don't go on social media, it's a distraction." They wanted students to do the guest blogging route, and I was like, "I think this is a little outdated." I don't think that bloggers in my niche are savvy to this whole guest blogging thing. I dabbled in that strategy, it just didn't feel right. So, Instagram, I love it, and I have a degree in some photography. So, it was always a really good fit for me as a platform. And I started it the second I started the blog too, so they kind of started together. And there was a

point where I liked the Instagram more than I liked the blog, so I was like, "Maybe I'll just have this Instagram and the blog will just kind of die." That was definitely a moment I hit before I started selling products, and then eventually I just committed. Because I was like, "I'm spending so much time on Instagram, I'm spending so much time just talking with my audience and creating content for them, it's time to get serious about it." But yeah, Instagram has just been really fun.

**Eric:** Well, in a sense I actually think you were listening to what the course was saying, because you mentioned that they said, "You want to take stock of your strengths and interests." The fact that you had experience with photography, which is something really valuable on that platform that makes you stand out, the fact that you're good at writing, so all these things combined together makes sense why you ended up going with the things that you did.

**Talia:** Totally. And another thing is also just going where your audience is. And I knew that people who were... There's already a meal prep community on Instagram.

**Eric:** So, when you first started WorkWeekLunch, you mentioned that there was something that you were doing in the beginning, you were doing launches. So, were you doing more course approach, product approach? How were you focusing on it in the beginning to generate revenue?

**Talia:** The first products I created were PDFs, just very simple meal plans, standalone meal plans for two weeks where you'd buy it and you'd get this pdf with pictures and a grocery list and all the recipes and all this other information. And it was \$20 for the two-week plan. And then I also made a couple recipe e-book collections, kind of like a cookbook but it's just pdf. And those did okay. People bought them. They sold passively. I had my email, my sales sequence through email. I promoted them on my Instagram periodically. And it was fine. But it just wasn't popping.

**Eric:** When you say it wasn't popping, what were the things you were looking at that was speaking to you? Was it revenue numbers? Was it interest from the community?

**Talia:** It was both, but you could tell by the way your audience is talking to you, what they're talking to you about. No one was saying, "I love your e-book. Oh my god, this is so amazing. This helped me so much." There was just none of that, and that's what I was looking for.

**Eric:** I see. And so, at that point did you start asking questions then?

**Talia:** I survey my audience a lot. There's quick surveys you can do on Instagram, but then I also do the whole Google Form thing. And they are so responsive, luckily. So, eventually I got to this one point where I wanted to put together an accountability program, where it's like an eight-week thing with meal plans and this accountability aspect. I kind of pitched this idea to them, and they were like, "Yeah, it sounds great. This will help me stay on track." But then I did it, it was priced too high, and it tanked. It totally tanked. So, I was like, "Okay. Got it. You guys aren't

going to buy premium products, and this isn't really what you want even though you said you wanted it." So, it was pretty bad.

**Eric:** So, you scrapped it? You didn't reprice it?

**Talia:** No, I totally scrapped it, yeah.

**Eric:** Oh, okay.

**Talia:** I could tell that it just wasn't going to work for them.

**Eric:** Yeah. And then where'd you go from there?

**Talia:** After that whole thing I launched another quick e-book. I kind of had that already to go right after. And then my mom, who is also an entrepreneur and my business coach, sat me down and was like, "Listen, you have this six-month period..." I was living in Colorado at the time and I was going to move back to New York. She was like, "You have six months left in Colorado. You need to make a subscription." So, she actually gave me the idea. Because her friend was doing a subscription for cheerleaders, elementary school cheerleading program, a fitness program for them. And she was like, "You can just do this. You're already kind of doing it. You already kind of have this meal plan. You're posting your recipes on Sunday and people are making them. Just throw a paywall on there and make them subscribe." And I was like, "Okay." So, I did it. And two months later I had it up and running.

**Eric:** I think something that's clear just from hearing you talk about the steps that you've gone through is one of the important aspects of your personality that's probably been very helpful on the entrepreneurial journey is your willingness to try things and also your willingness to let something go if it doesn't work. I can't tell you how many times the opposite of those things has stood in my way, or made something... like stubbornness, like, "No, this is what it should be. They should want it." Two years later I let go of it. I'm like, "Well, okay, I could have done that two years ago and saved myself a lot of heartache and money." And then the willingness to do something, so many people sit around and talk about having ideas about something, but until you actually are willing to put yourself out there and try something, nothing can potentially happen.

**Talia:** Yeah. I kind of don't think about it, you're right, it's very much part of my personality. I've always been pretty okay with taking risks. It's fun, it makes things interesting. And a good thing is usually on the other side of it, whether it's a lesson or a success.

**Eric:** Yep. It's essential in the entrepreneurial journey because so much of it we can't see what's going to happen. Literally, you're taking risks. So, if you're not comfortable putting yourself out there and not knowing precisely what the outcome's going to be, then it's going to be tough.

**Talia:** Oh yeah.

**Eric:** And I think that that might be why you enjoy snowboarding so much because it's kind of like a manifestation of that path, you're just hurtling yourself down a mountain. And you have some stability, you kind of know your instrument, but really there's a lot of things that can throw you off.

**Talia:** I think about the correlation between snowboarding and business a lot. If I'm scared of going down a trail, I'll do it just because I'm scared of it. And I also have a mindset of, "I've been snowboarding for 20 years, I can handle any terrain. I might not be pretty, and I might fall, but I can handle it."

**Eric:** Right. Do you hit any jumps?

**Talia:** No, not anymore. I've gotten two concussions. So, no more jumps for me.

**Eric:** Yeah. I broke my top rib going off of a jump when I was in high school. It's not fun. Getting back to that conversation with your mom and her recommendation to do a subscription business. In terms of your mindset, what needed to shift for you? So, you were used to doing this product-focus way, doing the e-books, getting them out as they came. So, what did you need to reposition in your mind when you said, "Okay, I'm going to do a subscription thing now"?

**Talia:** Sure. There were two things. One was making all my recipes private. That was the one really scary part for me, that I was worried I would get some backlash because who does that? There are so many recipes available for free, and then people generally buy them in cookbooks, physical cookbooks. So, I'm now making everyone pay for my recipes, which is just unheard of. And that was the biggest thing for me. And I was scared of that up until the day I launched. And the first week that I opened it I was terrified to get some comments online. I only had one comment, one negative person on an Instagram post said something kind of nasty, but that's it. Everyone else was like, "Oh yeah, this makes sense." And I still have some free recipes. I didn't make them all behind a paywall. So, there's still some free stuff available. But I think they're happy as long as I show up and still give them free content all the time and ideas. So, it worked out.

And then the other thing was knowing that I would have to talk about this subscription every single day on my platform. And I was a little wary about that because every day it's talking about the same thing over and over again. How is this not going to get boring? So, those are the two big shifts.

**Eric:** And did it get boring? Or did it work out?

**Talia:** No. I talk about it every day. No one has ever complained. And if they want to mute me on stories, if they want to unfollow me, fine. But no one's ever said, "You talk about your program too much."



**Eric:** Diving more deep into this Instagram aspect, if somebody wants to use Instagram for marketing their business, what are kind of the fundamental basics that they need to think about in order to use it?

**Talia:** I think the most important thing on Instagram is consistency. You have to show up every day. It's a daily grind. And you have to know that going in. Even when you don't see anything happening, you might not get some followers someday, you might not get any comments some days, things might be quiet, you don't really know what's going on. We don't know what's going on with the algorithm. People love to blame it. I think just going in with the attitude and being consistent is super important. And using your content to either inspire or educate, those are the two kinds of content on Instagram, so I'm obviously educational, I'm very how-to focused. Whereas I would say anything in the meme category is more inspirational, it's funny, it's shareable. Anything that's like a lifestyle aspirations or travel, those are inspirational. And travel can be educational too. You can do both, but you want to choose which one you're going to do more of. Because you can't just post testimonials, and you can't just post how great your life is. You have to give them something they can take home and use or think about.

**Eric:** And do these trends on Instagram change? Or is this something that you think has been around for a while and will continue to be around in terms of these categories that you're mentioning?

**Talia:** I think they're going to be around no matter what happens on the platform. You have to add value and you have to show up every day, no matter what Instagram does next with their platform.

**Eric:** Right. That makes sense. So, in some of your blog posts you talk about the journey, and you use number of Instagram followers as benchmarks, getting to 100k, then getting to 150, then getting to 300. Outside of the things that you just mentioned in terms of being consistent and all these other things, are there other things that you specifically did that you feel helped you reach that amount of people following you?

**Talia:** Yeah, I think the other thing that I did that's really important that people overlook is analytics. Instagram provides amazing free analytics for business accounts which are also free. And it tells you what is doing well in your account, meaning what's engaging, what are people liking, are people following from these posts? It tells you so much information. On the other side you can see what is not working. So, once I really used that as my compass to determine what to keep posting, what to stop posting, it just grew really fast. Because my account became a lot more specific. It was a little more niche. People immediately got what I was about when they looked at my profile. So, I looked to analytics, learned to use, learned to read them, looked at them every week. It'll tell you everything you need to know about your account. As long as you don't buy followers. If you buy followers, then the analytics will be useless.

**Eric:** And is that something you discourage or recommend that people do?

**Talia:** If you buy followers, they won't buy from you. If you want to buy followers just to have a big number on your account, that's fine. But just know, they're not going to engage and they're not ever going to buy your product. And people can tell, people can sniff it out. The average user knows when this account bought followers because no one's commenting, no one's really liking, but they have a million followers.

**Eric:** Right. And the analytics and the algorithm uses some of those engagement stats to power how things work, right?

**Talia:** Absolutely. Yeah.

**Eric:** So, it's not going to help you out in terms of those areas.

**Talia:** No.

**Eric:** Can you explain the impact of the bio link versus the swipe up link?

**Talia:** Yeah, so everyone has the bio link no matter what size your account is. And you don't even need a business account to have one. But for the swipe up you need to have 10,000 followers. You don't need to have a business account, but you should if you're selling. So, the swipe up feature is actually I think better for free content, blogs, articles, things you want to share, codes, stuff like that. But when it comes to selling, for me, the bio link has been my main source where they really convert. And I think it's because if people are watching stories, they want to just keep watching, they don't want to stop and sign up for something and then come back to Instagram. They'll see it, they'll read the sales page and they'll come back later to the bio link.

**Eric:** I see. That makes sense.

**Talia:** That's my story.

**Eric:** In your bio link, are you using just a link that goes straight to something? Or are you going to a link tree or something like that?

**Talia:** Yeah, my link is always the program. It's been that for over a year now, the sales page. That was something I learned through promoting the program, everything, I've learned that that just has to stay there. And my bio needs a call to action to that link. It's very clear and it shows that I'm selling something. This is a product, this is a service you can buy. So, the bio link has definitely been really important. I probably could not use the swipe up feature at all and still make the same amount of sales.

**Eric:** And is there anything specifically that you do to encourage your followers to talk or share about your subscription on Instagram?

**Talia:** Yeah. To talk about it, I think there's just this cyclical incentive where I tell them to show me their meal prep photos, and they know I'm going to share it on my stories, and they love that. So, even though they're not all trying to become Instagram influencers, it's a big deal when I repost them because I have so many followers, which is mind-blowing to me. But it is a big deal for them. So, that's I think the number one way I encourage them. And if they share a post on their feed of their meal prep photos, I will go and comment. I'll actually go and engage with them there, and that keeps them in the flow of posting because they want that engagement from me.

**Eric:** Do you have an idea of the traffic that you're getting specifically coming from Instagram and those efforts versus other avenues, maybe Google searches, etc.?

**Talia:** Yes, I would say over 50% comes from Instagram. I do have very strong SEO on my site and Google loves my website. So, I definitely have a lot from Googles. But Instagram is the top place where I get all my traffic.

**Eric:** You mentioned that you have a lot of experience in photography and film. And the aspect of your business is that you're making food, and therefore there's a tangible aspect that lends itself easily to being photographed. If somebody is in a different business and maybe they're not dealing with something specifically like that, is Instagram still something you would recommend? Or are there ways that you can determine when somebody should decide whether or not to use Instagram based on their business?

**Talia:** That's a good question. I think that the factor that's more important is who are you targeting and not is your business photogenic. It's more are your people on Instagram? I would say most topics can work. And it's great because right now Instagram loves text on photos. You can do the whole thing with just square photos with text on it, you don't have to actually do images. And you could still win. Because for whatever reason people love reading that way too. It's so interesting to me. I don't do that on my feed, but memes and all these text posts are really valuable as well. You can just communicate a lot in words on a square photo. So, yeah, don't be discouraged if your business isn't as visual as food or travel or fashion, which are very good on Instagram. If you have business in those verticals, you should definitely be there, no matter who you're targeting.

**Eric:** And do you have alternative revenue streams set up on your site? For example, doing affiliate marketing based on maybe products that you recommend to people that they use in order to do the meal prep stuff?

**Talia:** Yeah, I use Amazon Affiliates. It's okay, it's nothing I really focus on. I probably could focus on it more. On my new website which is coming out in a few weeks, we'll have a product page with all these links. I don't have that now, and that'll help a lot. And also I work with brands. So, brands can hire me to do a sponsored Instagram post or story or blog. So, those are

two of my main additional streams, as well as one-off in person events that I've done throughout the year.

**Eric:** Oh, cool.

**Talia:** Like meal prep workshops, cooking classes, or live events.

**Eric:** Is that something that you get invited to? Or is that something you plan to create for yourself?

**Talia:** I plan them. I planned my own community event in May. I'm a guest cooking instructor at a cooking school based in Newark. I'm getting paid for that. Just the school is paying me to teach. And I'll go to the occasional event if a brand wants me to be there to post on Instagram.

**Eric:** That's interesting. Did you study cooking? Where did this come in for you? And you're teaching at cooking schools.

**Talia:** It's called Home Cooking New York, which is perfect for me. It's not like ICE – international culinary, you know... No, I am self-taught. Just a lot of practice, a lot of trial and error, taking risks in the kitchen. And then I've actually taken some cooking classes myself. So, I was a student at this school and the teachers noticed my whole business and noticed me and they wanted me to come teach meal prep.

**Eric:** Nice. I want to take a step back here going back to when you launched your subscription business. Launches have usually particular activities that go along with them. So, I'm wondering, were there particular strategies that you did specifically at launch time?

**Talia:** Yeah. I treated like you would if you were launching a course. I built up some anticipation before, I hinted at something coming, built up that energy, which is definitely easy to do on Instagram. And then I did an email series and aligned an Instagram content schedule to go along with the email series. And I had all this relevant content to just do what any other sales copy should do. It's risk-reversal, describing the benefits and the features, and addressing your desires. And really that's what I learned in that course I took. And I read a lot of copywriting books, and I studied casually on my own. So, I just applied a ton of copywriting techniques to Instagram, which again, makes me stand out so much because my competitors are not doing that at all.

**Eric:** And where you're doing that, are you doing that in text in the photos itself? Or are you doing it in the actual comments?

**Talia:** In the captions. So, the image is like the hook on the story, and the caption's where you do all that fancy stuff.

**Eric:** I see.

**Talia:** And there's always a call to action. So, that's one activity I did. I also had a YouTube video and I made an Instagram story highlight. And within that first week, I got 250 signups. And to me, that was a real pop. That was like, "Okay, this is something they want." Even though it was on Google Docs, the meal plans were on Google Docs.

**Eric:** Right. Are they still on Google Docs? Or has that changed?

**Talia:** No. We have a better system, and then we're continuing to improve that, which is again part of their attention that I have to work on.

**Eric:** So, this was how many months ago was it that you launched the subscription aspect of your business?

**Talia:** It was in June of last year, so just over a year now.

**Eric:** Okay, cool. So, given this past year, are there any surprises that have come from running the subscription business?

**Talia:** The only surprise is just how quickly it's grown and how this is the best decision. I didn't realize how good and healthy my business would feel. And I've been able to get a lot of contractors on my team. And just finally I feel very secure because of the recurring revenue.

**Eric:** But, you were kind of prepped from the earlier efforts that you did by the time you decided to do a subscription business, right?

**Talia:** Yeah.

**Eric:** So, a lot of that work that you did prior to actually turning it into a subscription business probably lended itself to that "overnight success" or quick success, right?

**Talia:** You're absolutely right. By the time I launched the subscription, I knew verbatim my audience's fears, desires, and what they really needed. It's ingrained in me now.

**Eric:** It's interesting to reflect, because it's also a little bit like doing a podcast episode. Having a conversation, until there's something that I know about you one way or another, I can't really ask very intriguing questions. I can ask basic questions. But those are exploratory. Until there's some rapport built, it's hard to really build a more intimate relationship with somebody, which I think is amazing that you, either naturally or from who you were studying with, knew that listening was such an important part of getting to success.

**Talia:** Yeah, and you're absolutely right. It's the listening really moved the needle in a way I did not know. Before this whole thing I even started WorkWeekLunch, I didn't realize that's such a

key ingredient, but I really love it. Even though I know my audience very well, I still love listening to them.

**Eric:** Yeah, you kind of have to. Not have to in a sense like you should think that it's like, "Oh, I have to." There should be a natural enthusiasm.

**Talia:** There is, absolutely.

**Eric:** Which definitely is the case for you. But I think a lot of people try and push themselves through something. They're missing the natural enthusiasm. But they try to push themselves through these cookie cutter steps. Because they're trying to get to the success point. But really, that's the fuel, that natural enthusiasm is the fuel that's going to get you there in my opinion.

**Talia:** Yeah. And to speak to that, it's always more fun when things are going well. It's kind of saving up that enthusiasm for the challenging times that I think is really important in pushing through as well.

**Eric:** Well, it's because it's only the enthusiasm that's going to help you through those. Because if you weren't enthusiastic, you would just peace out. You'd be like, "All right, this isn't good anymore. See you guys later."

**Talia:** Yeah.

**Eric:** So, in this vein, given the experience that you've had so far, would you have particular advice for somebody who's just starting a subscription business?

**Talia:** Yeah, I would say be open-minded. I've been able to mold the subscription to what my audience is telling me. In the beta I did before I launched and just now, I'm still kind of shaping it and molding it. And I think that's helping it grow and it feels alive. So, I would say have an open mind. It might not be exactly what you thought it would be when you're in it. I wish someone had told me to be ready for all the crazy challenges that come with success. I've had to do things as a founder that I just never saw myself having to deal with, think about. Right now, I'm talking to developers about building this website, and I'm a non-tech founder and this is just terrifying. I'm so in over my head with this stuff. Luckily, I have my brother is a mobile developer and my boyfriend's a web developer, so they're helping me. But it's really hard because they're not working for me. And I have to still figure it out on my own. And all this other stuff that I've had to... I had to hire someone to run my Facebook ads and getting into that, which is a whole... I didn't expect that I would be doing Facebook ads. I just hired two recipe developers. That's another, "What am I doing?"

**Eric:** Yeah. Well, it reminds me of your blog post about your career, how you had such strong visions about where your career was going to go, you had these plans. And of course, the predictable ending to that is those plans don't really go where you think they're going to go. It's the same with this situation. I'm in a similar place where I'm a software engineer by trade, so

MemberMouse was started as a product. But I don't develop anymore. I haven't done that for many years. And it's not because I don't enjoy development, it's just because like you said, with the success of the business... I look at it like having a child in some ways. Even though I don't have children, I can imagine. It's like when they're young, it's kind of more about you in terms of they can't do anything, they don't have a personality, they all need the same thing when they're very young. So, you give them what you can give them. But as they get older and vocal, they start asking for what they need. And we can't predict that. Even with businesses. So, for you, it's asking you to go and talk to developers now. For me, it was like, "Hey, you can't develop anymore. You need to start answering thousands of support emails." The faster the growth is, the more quickly those roles change for us as founders.

**Talia:** That's a great analogy. I don't have kids either, but I can imagine.

**Eric:** So, again, we were talking about the willingness to do new things, being open to it. The business will constantly test you because literally it becomes about letting go of full identities, which can be tricky.

**Talia:** I don't know if you ever feel this way, but sometimes, lately I've been thinking about my business as like another being. And that happened to me a few weeks ago when I was featured in the New York Times because it blew up. And it's like, "Okay, this is another being. It's not really my thing anymore."

**Eric:** Right.

**Talia:** It's taken its own life.

**Eric:** Exactly. And you've created something and now you're kind of along for the ride.

**Talia:** Yeah. I'm so happy my mom sat me down and gave me a real talk.

**Eric:** Yeah, that's super useful. What kind of entrepreneur is she?

**Talia:** She has her own company that does email marketing campaigns for healthcare companies.

**Eric:** Oh, cool.

**Talia:** She's been doing that for 20 years. And I only recently understood what she did. But yeah, she does email marketing. And she has said many times she just wants to come work for me.

**Eric:** Oh, that's nice. I don't know, how do you feel like that would go? Would that be a nice thing?

**Talia:** Yeah, we're very close. I think that'd be great. I would love for her to help, because she's had a lot of success. And she does know what she's doing. I can listen. I'm open to people who have walked this path before me. I'm wide open to listening to their advice. Of course, you have to be careful about who you listen to and who you take advice from.

**Eric:** Yes.

**Talia:** But I will still consider a lot of it and act on it.

**Eric:** Yeah, there was a time when I was really open to listening to advice, too open. It was kind of at a point in time where the business was growing faster than I could keep up with it. And so I was super overwhelmed. So, I was in desperation listening to advice. So, like, "Help me with this situation. Oh, you do this thing? Well, go do it. I'm just going to go on vacation, so I'll trust you to deal." And it doesn't work out.

**Talia:** No.

**Eric:** So, coming back to a point, one of the stages I went through is where the business becomes about, okay, it's not about us doing particular tasks, it's about us building the team. Because if things are going to be scalable and the business is going to grow to a certain point, we can't be doing all these things. We have to continue to do certain things, like high leverage things where you still have that in-touchness with... Well, not everybody. But I think you're similar to me in the sense that your personality does need to be involved in the business still, forever, for as long as you're involved in it. Because that's what people are connecting with. Whether it's how you take your pictures or how you word something. So, you don't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater, but we do need to find ways to replace ourselves.

**Talia:** Yeah. It's been fun. It's been a fun challenge. But I am with you there. And I still haven't let go of Instagram. I'm starting to. I just had my assistant post for me last weekend for the first time while I was camping. And it was kind of nuts but it was super helpful.

**Eric:** Yeah, learning to relinquish control and trust others. And also it becomes a mentorship too. Because you do have valuable experience, you'll guide people and help others learn those skills by allowing them to do it. One thing is about having a platform separate from the site that actually sells your content is you have to get them from one platform to another. They're not going to be able to give you any money if they constantly just engage with you on Instagram. So, we talked about how you post every day about your program on stories. You always have something in your bio link going to your program. Are there other strategies you use to kind of bridge that gap and help people transition from Instagram to your program?

**Talia:** Yeah, so there are two things I do. One is I post a lot of customer testimonials on stories. And that helps people be like, "Oh, there's people doing this. There's actually people who are very active." And so that's one way that kind of mentally bridges that gap for them. And the other thing I've done which has been helpful is taking them behind the scenes on stories,



showing how the meal plans work once you sign up and what you get actually. So, that is kind of pulling back the veil and I think that kind of helps them really understand what they're getting when they pay \$8 a month and what it looks like, how it works. Because I think that's a barrier too, is like, "What if I can't figure this thing out on my phone or on my computer? How do I do this?" My system that I'm using isn't perfect, but it's good enough. And once people see it, it clicks for them and they then sign up. They're like, "Oh, I didn't realize you can customize this," or, "I didn't realize you can just drag and drop the recipes." That's what I've done for it.

**Eric:** Now, you use Instagram a lot to communicate with people. Do you leverage email a lot? Do you leverage it for presales? Do you leverage it for your members? How are you using it?

**Talia:** Yes, I do, I've been really big on emails this year. I've been able to focus on it more now that I have a little more time. It's very similar to Instagram. I do a lot of free content, but then I also sell pretty much in every single email that goes to my non-member list. And then for my member list, I'm emailing them everything that's related to the program and only that. They don't get marketing or sales emails. So, I've been able to split it like that, which has been working really well. That's one thing I'm working on is how do I talk about the program; how do I recreate that launch of the program even though it's constantly open on a rolling basis. So, I haven't been able to crack that yet on email, but I have opportunities, like in January, that's a really good time for me. It was huge last year. So, I have to kind of roll with what our culture is doing, like holidays and different seasons and where everyone's mindset is. So, I kind of shape my sales strategy around that.

**Eric:** What is a launch to you? What are the elements of a launch?

**Talia:** There's something new to talk about and there's a scarcity factor. But I don't have that. That's why it's tricky for me. Because the subscriptions are open all the time. There really is no scarcity. And I don't do discounts. The product is so cheap, and I just don't want people to expect that, so I've never done any discounts. I've played with adding content, like, "Oh, if you sign up this week you'll also get this free guide for your pantry, how to build a good pantry," something that's an added content, it's a little extra. That has worked pretty well to get people excited, but that's all I've figured out so far.

**Eric:** Does your program have a lot to do with fundamentals of nutrition and anything like that?

**Talia:** No, I stay away from that because I don't have a background in nutrition. So, I don't teach that at all. And it's helped me stand out because I'm the one meal prep program out there that doesn't focus on weight loss or weight management or anything like that. It's just good food, you're going to save a lot of money, you're going to reduce your food waste, and you're going to save a lot of time, and that's it. It's healthy, but I'm not saying it's healthy and you're going to lose weight, because I cannot promise that.

**Eric:** Right.

**Talia:** And that's against what I'm about anyway. So, no, I don't. And some people are like, "Can't you just add macros and calories?" But most people appreciate that's just not there.

**Eric:** Yeah. Are there any common objections that people mention when they... not objections, but challenges that people who are first signing up, in terms of navigating the situation, your site or your program, getting started?

**Talia:** I would say I hear that... There probably are some I don't hear. I hear it more when they leave and I ask them why they left. And the common ones are I'm reducing all my subscriptions, they're just quitting a bunch of stuff to save money. And in my head, I'm like, "Okay, well, meal prep saves you money, so I hope you're still meal-prepping... I don't say that, but that's what I think. I have a lot of women on the program, so if they get pregnant they usually leave because they can't meal prep, it's all over the place what they want to eat. And then the other one is like if something happens medically to the customer where they have to change their diet, they will leave.

**Eric:** What I was getting at with that question is if there's something within the first week that people are struggling with, or maybe there's something that's overwhelming about it or whatever, that could be an opportunity for something that could help you get that launch feel, like, "Oh, sign up this week and get a free 30 minute consultation," or whatever, "With me to address this thing that I know a lot of people have challenge with," both could help with getting more signups, but also with retention because you're also addressing the challenge at the same time. Of course, there's a work component to that.

**Talia:** Yeah.

**Eric:** Yeah.

**Talia:** I've never thought of doing some kind of situation where I can help them kind of get acclimated. I do have tutorials that they get access to immediately when they sign up, like, "Here's a video walking you through the whole thing." That's super helpful. Right now, I just try and be as accommodating as possible. They can reach out to me. I tell them we have a support team. I give them a Facebook group. I have a couple of people moderating the group, and it's very active and people ask a lot of questions. So, I'm kind of like here are all these avenues to get help, and that's been what I've done so far. But I definitely can improve in that area. And I think some kind of orientation video session could be really cool.

**Eric:** Yeah. It could be a webinar with a number of people on it at the same time.

**Talia:** Yeah.

**Eric:** Yeah, these are the fun never-ending journey of tweaking the business.

**Talia:** It is so fun.

**Eric:** It's constantly doing things. So, I think we're pretty close to wrapping up here. I appreciate you coming on and talking about all this stuff. We've kind of alluded to it throughout our conversation, but can you give people who are listening just the place where they can find out more about you?

**Talia:** Yeah. I'm on Instagram @WorkWeekLunch, one word. And my website is WorkWeekLunch.com. So, that's where you'll find all the meal prep stuff. And if you want to follow me on Instagram just to see what I'm doing, how I'm promoting my program, that's a good idea, but you are going to see a lot of meal prep stuff. And if you just want Instagram-related content, you can go to my personal website, taliakoren.com where I'll write about Instagram and other business-related things occasionally.

**Eric:** And also, your love for Peanut M&Ms.

**Talia:** Yes, and puzzles and bullet points.

**Eric:** So, before we wrap up, is there anything that I haven't directly asked you about that you feel would be good to mention to people who are looking to embark on any journey that you've been on and some advice that you can impart to them?

**Talia:** Yeah, I actually want to say Instagram is a really good testing ground for all kinds of content because it goes away in 24 hours or people just scroll past it. The stakes are so low compared to a blog or YouTube or other platforms. So, you really can try things, and the feedback is instant. And that is just so valuable. So, I would say Instagram can really be a good place for you to just develop your voice and your messaging and all that stuff in a very low-stakes way.

**Eric:** Yeah. That's great advice. Well again, Talia, thank you so much for joining us. I really appreciate it.

**Talia:** Yeah, thank you so much for having me. And this is just such an amazing podcast, and I'm glad I found it.

**Eric:** Well, thank you so much.

## **OUTRO:**

That just about does it for this episode of the Subscription Entrepreneur podcast.

Thank you so much for listening to this entire episode and many thanks to Talia for her openness to share what she's learned with you.

I hope you're walking away with some information and inspiration that can help you grow your business.

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We'll see you next time!