



channel mastery

Channel Mastery Podcast, #118: Jennifer Kriske, Machines for Freedom

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Kristin: Welcome back my friends to another episode of the Channel Mastery Podcast. I am absolutely stoked to introduce Jennifer Kriske to you who is the founder of Machines for Freedom, one of my absolute favorite brands of cycling apparel. Welcome to the show, Jennifer.

Jennifer: Thank you so much for having me.

Kristin: It's awesome to have you here. You have so much to share. Let's start by having you give a bit of your background and I guess a self-introduction so that we can kind of set the stage for the conversation we're going to have because I feel like you're coming into this world with such an interesting vantage point. It's such a cool approach to building community and product and I just feel like you have a lot to teach, so take the floor and give us a bit of your background and an introduction.

Jennifer: Oh well thank you so much. That's so sweet of you to say. My background is a little bit eclectic. I do come to cycling from a very different point of view. I started in college in film, in film and branding and worked in the entertainment industry in my younger years, which then transitioned to an interest in design and architecture. I spent most of my career doing hotel and restaurant design. Always had been interested in building things and taking ideas and things that just don't exist in the real world and turning them into tangible products. So I think that's been the through line of my career from when I was really young.

Before starting Machines, I was most recently with a group called Hillstone Restaurant Group, which is probably one of the more successful restaurant groups in the United States. They have about 50 plus restaurants, but have never really fallen into that "chain restaurant" mentality. It was family-owned by a very, very bright entrepreneur named George Biel. I really had the opportunity to learn a lot from him and learn a lot about an entrepreneurial mindset and sticking to your values and that tenacity that he had. So I feel like that was really a great jumping off point for me for when I started Machines for Freedom is I really had this really great insight into what makes a successful brand.

That was my career background. I got into cycling when I was working in the restaurant space as most people have ever had a waitressing job, they know how demanding that environment is. Working on the corporate team and on their design team was not any easier. The hours were insane, the pressure was insane. If bar stools were breaking, I was getting calls late at night like, Hey we need a fix ASAP because we need to get these before lunch the next morning. It was really, really intense and you just have people pulling you in every other direction. So my way to have some reprieve from that was really riding my bike and there was nothing better than just being in the mountains where it was just quiet and peaceful and I did not have cell phone service. Just to be out there for hours just to have some time to myself with my thoughts was really... I refer to it as my extreme self care. That's sort of where I really fell in love with the sport and the more I got into it, the more I just kept increasing my training goals as a lot of us do.

It's like, okay well now I just did a century and now I want to do a century with all this elevation and now I want to do three centuries in a row. The goal is just grow and grow and grow. I got to a point where I wanted to train for a ride through the Pyrenees, we were going to do six days and 60,000 feet of climbing over the course of the trip. So I started training pretty intensively and that's when I very quickly realized how the clothes just did not work.

I was working really hard with a bike fitter to get my bike fit dialed, but he got to a certain point and he's like, the complaints you have are what I hear from almost every woman I fit. I just got so frustrated because coming from a design background, I was just like, this can't be that hard. My male counterparts aren't having the same complaints. It just seemed to me that there wasn't the same level of thought and care that was going into the women's product. So to be blunt, that just pissed me off. It was enough to light a fire in the belly to say, this is not okay and I'm just going to go out there and design a kit that I wanted to wear and that worked for me and then in the hopes that other women would enjoy it too. That was really the launching pad for Machines for Freedom.

Kristin: When was that?

Jennifer: That was, gosh, that was way back in 2013.

Kristin: Oh, awesome. Okay. How did you roll the company out? How did you make it so that other women could enjoy that?

Jennifer: I left my job at Hillstone pretty soon after that because I realized that job was so demanding. I was like, there's no way I'm going to ever get this off the ground in a reasonable timeframe if I don't go all in. So I left pretty quickly. First thing I did was hit up Inter bike. I was used to the trade show circuit and I was really used to sourcing because that's one thing that you do a lot of when you're in the interior design world. So I just hit the pavement and started looking for materials, looking for a factory. It was a lot like trying to build something for the restaurant space where you're looking for

materials and finding a craftsman and a contractor.

So I did that and started to develop prototypes. Worked with a friend who did have a lot of apparel background who was in the surf industry for a very long time. His knowledge of wetsuits and bathing suit construction and stuff that was really helpful. I worked with him really closely on the technical side of things. We did lot of prototyping on the first kit. God, we probably did at least a couple dozen samples and developed that over the course of about a year before we launched in August of 2014.

Kristin: Okay, that's awesome. I was hoping to get, how did you launch? In my time at Verde, helping a few brands go literally from zero to launch, and this has happened, I'll cordon off these examples to the last four years because the landscape's changed so much.

Traditionally, obviously, you'd launch through the trade show and you would look at wholesale. I think that you came into this with a non traditional mindset and I'm curious to know if you felt like you needed to build a community first and graft this product on top of it and the value proposition on top of that or if you actually crowdsourced that. I'm just curious, what was your approach to actually taking this either national or global?

Jennifer: The one thing that was really apparent right off the bat, even being this newbie into the cycling space, was that there was such a huge disconnect between women riders and the industry. All the industry speak that I was hearing did not align with my experience of riding a bike. This idea that women don't want high performance kit or they won't spend money on top quality gear and all that kind of stuff. I was like, I will and I'm looking for it. It's just that I'm not spending the money on it because it doesn't work and I'm not going to drop a bunch of money on something that doesn't work or it makes me feel awful when I put it on. That just didn't gel for me.

Right off the bat, I knew in order to be successful I was going to have to go directly to the consumer and not have our message get lost in this game of telephone. That was my plan right off the bat. As we developed, because we were on this year timeline of product development, there's a lot of idle time when you're waiting for samples to come back from the factory. So I would do work on the product side and send it off and then I'd be waiting 2-4 weeks to get samples back to test. In that time I'd be like, okay, well what else can I do? I don't have any money. Right? Because this is all being bootstrapped, but what can I do? That's when I started to develop our social media feed. I would host a lot of rides locally, put on clinics. Anything I could do to get myself out in the community, engaging the riders I started to do and then I started documenting that. We slowly started to build our following around the community component of cycling long before we had product. The idea being, then when we did launch, we had a community built in that we could launch to rather than relying on a bike shop or relying on a trade show or relying on a third party to bridge that gap for us.

Kristin: I have a question. How did you build... This might seem like captain obvious, but I have to ask for the benefit of myself and the audience, okay?

Jennifer: Yeah.

Kristin: I think a lot of people listening to this right now might think that the community comes from the bike shop and it sounds to me you're building a community that maybe the bike shop, you're in Los Angeles?

Jennifer: Yeah.

Kristin: Maybe you're tapping into a group of women who are not necessarily tied to a shop. I'm just curious did this all come from organic social media growth and then you do meetups? What was your strategy there?

Jennifer: That's a good question because a lot of community does happen at bike shops, but that community is still very heavily male dominated. In the LA scene, we're a giant sprawl. So you go to a bike shop and you go to a ride led by a bike shop and there might be two or three people that are not men in that entire ride. So that's fine. I would jump in and I would ride and I was pretty strong back then, so I can hold my own. I would always pick out those one or two people that I was like, you are my people. You know what I mean?

Kristin: Yes I do.

Jennifer: We'll have fun riding bikes together. So I was like, okay, we're going to be friends. Then I would make sure to introduce myself, get to know them, whatever. They were of the same mindset where they're like, Oh my God, I'm so glad I found you. Right? Okay, cool. Then I'd go into another part of Los Angeles and do another local ride and find that other friend in that ride. I was hopping all over LA doing that and the more and more I did that, the more I realized we're out here, we're all spread out and it's really hard to find a concentrated group of riders that are like minded in the way that I like to ride and things like that.

Once I started forming those relationships, then we started launching a ride that was called Bikes and Brunch that we led out of Calabasas, which was an area that was sort of as central as you can be to the LA riding scene. That's when I started promoting that ride. It was great. At the time it was, it was back when Rapha's Women 100 and things of that nature were just getting off the ground. Those rides would see a turnout of two to four riders. Whereas other cities we get a bigger turnout, LA's was always really small and it's because we're so spread out, we're such a sprawl, people won't travel. Then I did Bikes and Brunch and we had 25 riders the first day, the first ride.

Kristin: That's awesome.

Jennifer: It was sort of proof to me that when you invest in the community and in the people, it comes back to you. But it really took me traveling all over Los Angeles to form those relationships in order for Bikes and Brunch to start. I really just wanted to connect all of those people that I had met in the various corners of the city and bring them all together once a month to ride bikes. That got amplified with Machines over time where the riders that have our values and that enjoy bikes the way that we enjoy bikes, they're out there, but we're not necessarily together geographically. So Machines for Freedom has become a way that we can bring those people together virtually so that you can see that the community is bigger than what you're seeing outside your front door.

Kristin: That's amazing. I almost feel like they were influencers even though they were just wanting to come over and ride. Chances are probably pretty good that they returned to their corner of Los Angeles and talked up their experience and maybe if your product was available at that point, it almost became a part of their identity. Here's who I belong to.

Jennifer: Yeah and then next ride they'd bring a friend because they've tried out and they're like, Oh, you know who would really love this? It's so and so. Then they'd bring a friend over and then we would grow. I think our largest ride got up to over 40 riders, which in LA, in that scene, in the women's scene, it's unheard of.

Kristin: That's great. What were some of the channels that you started to use once you had this in person engagement? Obviously you weren't trying to engage in person. You were there to have fun and meet like minded riders. It feels like it was very authentic the way it started, but at the same time you evolved it to support what you're doing in your business. I'm curious, that's also a tough pivot, I think.

Jennifer: Oh, so hard. Honestly, I don't think we've figured it out. That's why we don't lead a lot of rides all over because it was really, really important to me that whatever people experienced in real life when it comes to the brand, that it aligned with the vibe and the tone of what you see virtually. For me personally, nothing was a bigger turnoff than when I saw all this stuff happening online and I was like, Oh, this looks fun. This looks a really cool group. Then I would show up to the ride and no one would even say hello. I almost felt lied to. You know what I mean?

Kristin: Yeah.

Jennifer: I was like, "Wait, this isn't what I was sold." And it would actually damage my view of the brand. So I was like, "I'd rather not do anything if we can't do it authentically."

Kristin: Right.

Jennifer: So this year we're actually ... It's our first year. We're going to tackle some, we're calling

it machines IRL, right? And we're really tackling some in real life activations where we can bring some of that digital vibe into the real world. So yeah, I'm really excited to see how that pans out over the next year.

Kristin: I am as well. And we're definitely going to talk about that more. So I guess one of the other things I'm curious, so from 2014 to where we are now, which we're at the very end of 2019, and when people listen to this, it'll be the beginning of the new decade, but you've had six years under your belt.

And when you broke onto the scene, I think that you brought a very different design aesthetic, and that has become, I think ... I just feel like the whole apparel market has changed in cycling so much.

Jennifer: Oh my god. Yes.

Kristin: And I feel like there's so many reasons for that, but one of the main ones is being able to find where you fit exactly online and not having to be like, "Okay, this is what's available to me at this shop." So I go into my favorite shop and they carry these brands and they're going to tell me that's what I should buy.

But in the case of cycling apparel, especially performance cycling apparel, it's tough to do that and not try it on and all of that other stuff. So I'm just wondering, first question is what was the competitive landscape like for you then from a brand standpoint? And then I'd love to talk about how you continue to build an experience when people maybe want to touch and feel or have that validation of somebody at retail or who knows what. So we're going to get into that as well.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Kristin: But first question is really competitive landscape oriented.

Jennifer: Yeah. So yeah, when we first started, it way less competitive. And that's why I quit my job and wanted to just go all in, because I was like, "I feel like now's our window." The women's scene, people are starting to pay more attention. And I was like, "It's really important that I get the brand out there before other brands with more money and more marketing power start to take up the airwaves."

Kristin: Yeah.

Jennifer: So I was pushing really hard to launch. I really wanted to launch spring of 2014, but at least got it out the door before the end of summer, right? So it was really, really important to me that I got it up live that year.

And yeah, I think our design aesthetic was very unique and that set us apart. And I think

it still does actually, because someone told me there's like 168 cycling brands out there right now, apparel brands, which is just crazy because the market size is not that big.

Kristin: Yeah.

Jennifer: We're not looking at the 87 billion dollar global active wear industry. So it's just crazy there's so many brands. But we have all those brands because the custom kit business is so accessible. So a lot of times, most of those brands are really just like graphic plays on a very similar iteration of Kit.

Kristin: Right.

Jennifer: And where Machines is able to really remain distinctive is that we built Kit from the ground up. Our patterns are all built from the ground up. We innovate and we really rethink what riders might need and want in cycling kit. And so keeping that core value is really important. It's one of the reasons why we don't just launch a print every month and become more of this fast fashion business model. Our kit's really designed to be a piece that you have in your closet for a very long time. So I think we've been able to maintain a competitive edge by maintaining that really unique point of view and that really unique design ethos.

Kristin: For sure. And I think that that is ... it's almost hard to convey that. Here's the other piece of it that I just feel like you guys had done a great job with is, let's face it, I don't love shopping for bathing suits or jeans. Right? And it's because it's kind of like, for me, I have to get my head in the right place and ... You know what I mean? I don't know.

Jennifer: Totally.

Kristin: There's a lot self-judgment, and I don't know, as a female shopper, and I love shopping. But Kit, okay, this is a whole different ballgame. Let's say I learn about what you do, I go online, and I might be like, "Okay, that looks extremely tight-fitting." And I know at the cyclist in me is like, "I want that because it's going to perform better and I'm going to have better comfort et cetera, but what is that going to be like to wear?"

And you have done a beautiful job portraying everybody's shape, lots of different types of women, different nationalities. Literally, I feel like, even if I don't relate with some of the people that you're portraying, I do because it gives me permission like, "I can wear this because it's about my passion as a cyclist." It's not about necessarily like, "Can I wear that? Am I fit enough to wear that?" Not at all. You completely removed that piece of it out of the equation, that obstacle.

And I think that's one of the most powerful things that launching a brand online can do, and you've done a great job with that. So I just wanted to give you an opportunity to talk about if that was something that you did from the very beginning or if it's

something that you did because you also didn't see that out there and you wanted to make that be part of the process where it invites more people in.

Jennifer: Yeah. Well, thank you. Thank you for that compliment. And I do have to give a lot of credit to my amazing team, and my amazing team, primarily one of Ginger who's been a really driving force behind a lot of our marketing. And part of the ethos of the brand has always been to show what the sport looks like from a different point of view.

So the pictures that I would see through marketing materials through larger brands, that wasn't necessarily jelling with what I saw in real life in this sport. And so I wanted to show what the sport looked like from the rider's point of view and just change what the sport looks like.

So then that started to drift into all of the conversations that started to spark around 2016, right, where I think everyone started to become very critical of the messages that they were sending out there, which is interesting because then they boiled back to my old film studies background, right, about those subtle messages that are sent in the way that something is shot, the way that something is framed, your "casting choices," things of that nature. Suddenly, that language was coming back.

And so we started to look really critically at ourselves and what can we do to be better, and then that's what really drove us to continue to push the needle in terms of what the sport looks like. And it was something that was very well-received very quickly by the community. So then it made it really easy just to keep in that trajectory and keep pushing that envelope forward.

Kristin: So you got overwhelmingly positive response on your social media depiction of what you are portraying?

Jennifer: Yeah. And part of it was, I think ... I don't know about you, and we don't need to go back down a political rabbit hole or anything, but 2016 was very jarring and it was very like an aha moment and a like, "Holy bleep. What is going on here?"

And then we sat around the office, me and at the time Tracy was doing a lot of our photography and Ginger, and we were just in shock. And all of a sudden, making Kit really didn't seem that important to be quite honest. And I was just like, "Who cares? Who cares about our cycling clothes? The world is falling apart. We have bigger problems."

So I think part of what made us all feel better about the work we were doing is what can we do in our small corner of the world to make this world a more positive place and make this world a more positive place for people that are being marginalized. So our way of doing that was to make the sport of cycling look more inclusive. And what's really great is we get really incredible feedback by people that don't even ride bikes. They

follow our brand and they love our brand and they've never really been on a bike other than maybe a beach cruiser down the boardwalk on occasion. But they love the message that's being sent out.

So that in my mind is like ... Especially when you're in the early stages of a business and you have no idea what's going to happen, I was like, "Even if this thing crashes and burns, I feel good knowing that we've made that little bit of change in the world."

Kristin: You absolutely have. And within the community, it's definitely been, I think, something that has lifted up other people to realize that they can do the same in their own way. And I realize that sometimes that can be competitors positioning themselves doing that. But at the same time, I think there's a truth to what your brand depiction is that it's for the greater good. And even if there are competitors coming in trying to position themselves that way, there's a part of that that's positive too, because even through their channels it brings more people in and enables them to be part of it.

So we have to go, I think it's such a perfect place for us to talk about, Specialized. So when did Specialized enter the picture, can you talk a little bit about the process, the conversations, and ultimately where you are now as partners?

Jennifer: Yeah. So they came into the picture about, gosh, it was probably about two years ago now is when the conversation started. And it was during a time when I was really pounding the pavement for investment and I just needed help. I had been bootstrapping the company for a few years. I was working a side hustle, still dabbling in design and running design projects in order to fund the business. Obviously, that's not sustainable.

So I was just hustling, trying to find some fuel to really move us up to the next level. And then all of a sudden in LinkedIn, I get a message from somebody who at the time was in leading business development and was like, "Hey, we're looking for a women's business leader. Do you happen to know of anyone?" Right?

And I was like, "Is this person phishing to see if I'm looking for a job?" So I wrote back. I was like, "Well, I'm not looking for work." This is one of those moments where you don't necessarily answer the direct question, you just answer the question you wish you heard. So I just wrote back.

Kristin: That's awesome.

Jennifer: I was like, "Yeah. I'm not looking for work, but Machines is going great. But if you want to talk about, I don't know, strategic partnership or anything along those lines, would love to get together." So that led to coffee, and then the conversation started from there.

And from the time of that first message to actually closing the deal was probably about a year long process. We spoke for a really long time and the negotiations always take a

while. And then it ended up we talked about different ways of structuring it. It ended up being an acquisition, and it really was what we needed in order to get us to the next level. Right? Because it's like, as you're building these businesses, it's go, go, go, and then you hit this chasm and you're like, "Oh God. Okay, how am I going to cross this massive chasm?" And you need something big at that moment in order to propel you to the next spot.

So for us, Specialized was the answer to propelling us over that first huge, huge chasm.

Kristin: And so obviously that sounds a little untraditional, right? So I'm just guessing here, but they were able to see the absolute gold in enabling you to continue doing what you were doing, but potentially put a larger microphone in front of you and some efficiencies around you. Is that the way it worked, or how has it been since then, the two years?

Jennifer: Yeah. So they definitely saw how we were able to do something that they'd struggled to do. And it's really interesting now that I'm in it a little bit more. It's really interesting to see the strengths of the large companies versus the strengths of the small companies and how it's like this ecosystem where you need both, right? Because it's like one does one really well, the other does something else really well, and you need both to fuel the whole ecosystem.

So yeah, there was a conscious effort made to keep us very autonomous, which is great. We're still based in Los Angeles. They're up in Morgan Hill. They're not dictating our design. They're not dictating our marketing. That still very much comes from Machines for Freedom headquarters.

But there's a lot of brain power there that helps. There's a few individuals within the organization that are just really smart, bright people, that it's great because it serves as that mentorship that I needed as a new entrepreneur and a new CEO. There's obviously the financial help, which even just alleviating that pressure off of my shoulders allowed me to think creatively again, because playing that financial shell game as a startup was just so exhausting and it really ate up so much of my creative energy.

And then, yeah, a lot of learnings. It's like they have a very robust apparel group with so much experience there. So the fact that I have people that I can just call up and say, "Hey, how do you handle this?" or, "Hey, we're going to launch in this other country. What do I need to do?" So having those resources has been a huge, huge help.

Kristin: That's fantastic. I love to hear that. And I think an obvious question here on the show and the audience that we serve here is part of that might have been a way for you to create more of a touch and feel experience through wholesale, because obviously they have a very solid wholesale business.

I think, I'm not sure, but I'm assuming that they launch on a traditional launch schedule. They don't drop. Like when we worked with Athleta, we had 11-15 drops a year, and it was really great from a communication standpoint. We had all these stories and new product all the time. I imagine that you probably had the freedom to launch when it made sense for you or when you were inspired or when you had something cool. And yet they might have a different blueprint. So I'm curious to know, number one, around launches, and then I'd love to also talk about wholesale in that channel.

Jennifer: Yeah. So that's definitely probably one of the biggest learnings coming out of this first year together is how what works for one brand doesn't work for another. Right? And yeah, plugging into distribution was definitely something we were hoping would be super fruitful for us, but it hasn't panned out the way that we had hoped, and I think largely because of product launch cycles, right? We are super nimble and quick to market and it's better to launch a product at a time so that you have things to talk about rather than an entire collection so that you can sell in.

Kristin: Yeah.

Jennifer: And it's challenging because the brick and mortar retail is not used to working in that capacity. But then it also just like, it almost just like confirmed things I had learned earlier on in the process and was like kind of a lesson in like sometimes you have to just trust your gut even if maybe you don't have as much experience. Like that doesn't mean that your ideas about things are any less valid and there's still just those struggles there of shop, selling apparel. You know what I mean? And it's a really tough thing to like ... I sympathize with shops in this respect because you think about like a successful apparel retail environment and they're like these wonderful spaces with beautiful lighting and like lovely flowers and these very like soft inviting spaces where the clothes are like meticulously laid out and you get to like touch everything. And it's like a place where you feel safe and comfortable, like stripping down into your underwear to like put on something that might make me feel a little self conscious.

This is very like kind of warm and safe space, but a bike shops primary business is service And it's like, there's like grease and there's like tools and there's like hard surfaces and it's just like, it's so counterintuitive to a successful apparel environment. So I'm not surprised that they don't struggle in this area and it's not to anyone's fault, right. It's just, they're two very different products that you're trying to sell in the same space.

Kristin: Right. For sure.

Jennifer: So it's a bit of like square peg, round hole kind of situation. So I mean there's definitely been some like good relationships to form there, but I think it just sort of reaffirms that like Machines is a digitally native brand. We started as a digitally native brand and we do best when we can speak directly to our a community. So and then that also like the

messages just sort of get lost in translation when you're trying to rely on a shop sales staff to tell that message because they're just like, they're not trained in the product.

Kristin: Right.

Jennifer: And it's kind of this weird relationship to where, you have historically right bike shops has kind of picked a large brand partner with, right? Like be it Specialized, Trek Giant. They have their leading brand and then those brands really come in and sort of set up what that product landscape's going to look like, right. And like, here's what you can put in your store. And they offer them everything that they need to sell the rider. And it's like really this turnkey solution for them. And as a small brand, like we don't have the capacity to do that for them.

There's this shop, which I'm completely spacing on the name, it's down in Venice and it's this really, really great apparel shop. And it started when the owner or the designer wanted to open his own brick and mortar around his own collection. But his collection was pretty limited. So we didn't have enough product to fill the store.

So he went out and he found all these like obscure brands in Japan and things like that and he'd bring in these pieces and add that to his collection in order to fill out a store. And you go there because he created this really wonderful shopping experience and he's bringing in like that obscure brand from Japan, that obscure brand from Japan doesn't have to like build a market in the United States in order to sell the product. Like the product is selling through because the retailer knows how to sell that product. So that's sort of what was missing in the bike side is that, the shops that bring in Machines and then expect Machines to do a lot of the work to drive consumers to the shops because that's the way things have worked for these like larger brands that have more power behind them. But we just don't have the capacity to do that. We can do what we can, we can list you on our [Stockist page](#). We can like shout you out when you're doing a ride or like on our social media and stuff like that, but we can't like run your business for you. So then I think it just sort of creates a lot of tension because it's just like they're frustrated, we're frustrated and it's just like everyone's frustrated and then it's just like, it's not a very great way to do business.

So definitely a lot of learnings there. But I think, I don't know, I think there's just been a lot of interesting discussion happening around what the bike shop landscape looks like. With the online world right on its heels and I don't know, I'm really curious to see how it all plays out over the next 5, 10 years.

Kristin: And that was really like the question to wrap it up. It's like what is that evolution? And we can't really say because it's obviously like a work in progress. But I feel like one of the biggest takeaways for my listeners are just so committed to trying to figure out how to be remarkable to their target end consumer. And that to me is the takeaway for what we're talking about here today is yes you partnered with Specialized, they've given you great foundational pieces and you're still identifying “efficiencies” around the

relationship. But what I love most about this is they've let you really care take and grow your community.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Kristin: And there may be a way to do that through a retail, a bicycle retailer in the future or it may turn out to be a different semblance of it or it might be no set and forget, which is what my gut is saying is like we keep trying and testing and learning new things, right. And as the consumer is evolving and as the demand at the store, is evolving, I feel like the right path will present itself and then it will change. I mean the most successful brands, companies out there I think are really, really good at either saving people time or making that time fantastic. Right? And this comes from a Scott Galloway blog post and I'll put the link in, in the podcast notes page.

But essentially, he's talking about like trillion dollar market cap, Google, Amazon, Facebook and he's like Facebook won't survive because they are at times suck as they've developed their paid platform but these other, Amazon, Google and Apple I think is the other one. Amazon and Google primary are his focus, save time and train the consumer to want that. And so we're dealing with a consumer that's trained by these huge, huge companies and we all have time at a premium but we also all want to have self identification.

And so I feel like you found self identification artists in hand-built and then we have like a platform that's been built that you guys were trying to graft that onto. I can see how maybe the first swipe at that didn't work, but I bet you there is something that will work that may just not be turn key. It might be where it works. It might be pop up. I mean who knows what it could be, but I have a feeling the reach is the key, right? It's allowing people who might be in the specialized community or the community of the shops who identify with what Machines For Freedom is. That self identification is going to probably drive you to see the answer with your colleagues there.

Jennifer: Yeah. And it's really interesting what you bring up with regards to Google and Amazon and I have to check out this article right about like Facebook won't make it right? Like who could imagine that?

Kristin: That's what he thinks. Yeah.

Jennifer: A world without Facebook. What? But yeah, it is. It's kind of like people want the thing and it's like, what's the easiest way to obtain the thing? And they're going to go down the path of least resistance, the path of least frustration. And so if the experience is negative then they're going to try a different channel. And I've been thinking a lot about like the climbing scene, because I see a lot of parallels between like the climbing scene in the 80s, like the 70s and 80s and like what's happening in cycling now. And like how did the climbing world go from climbing being this like really obscure thing to then kind

of blowing up into the like just more broad adventuring, right? Family camping and, and you sort of saw like Patagonia and REI like grow side by side.

Kristin: Yes.

Jennifer: So you had the product and the brand leveraging the distribution channel and vice versa. And so they were able to kind of grow together and I'm like on the cycling side, like where is that that strong distribution that brands can then like tap into and like we can grow side by side and like really make the sport more accessible to more people. And, it is an exciting time because now that you see like e-bikes popping up and things like that, like cycling is becoming more accessible to people and people are concerned with transportation and things like that. So.

Kristin: And moving around cities and I feel like you're hitting on it because I think that it has been, we've seen it as business owners who are in the business of cycling and have been for some time. We have seen what we think is the market and I think there is a whole host of sub markets all around that, that are emerging right now. And I think, actually your story brings that to light, so clearly. Again I go back to one of our first topics today is like you actually built this community around a quote point of entry that already existed. Right?

Jennifer: Right.

Kristin: And so what other communities are out there that are going to be met and you know e-bike will be important to that. I think the way that you are inviting everybody in who wants to be in, right. No matter what they look like or where they're from, if they go to your site and they're a female interested in cycling, they feel empowered. Like I can totally do this. I feel like there's a lot of, if she can see it, she can be it and we need to expand that even to like different user groups, different ... I just feel like there's so much outside of what we potentially may have seen as an industry for a long time. There's a whole huge community out there that is still waiting to hear from us and wants to join and will have their own version of it.

And I just feel like the internet is what's making all that possible. And that's ultimately where you launched. I almost feel like you had a bit of a kick starter, the way you launched, even though it wasn't a kick starter because you were in the trenches, whether it was on a ride or looking at every post. You hand-built your original community.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Kristin: You really did.

Jennifer: Yeah. I mean, and I say it over and over, I don't think Machines For Freedom would exist without the internet and without social media.

Kristin: Yeah.

Jennifer: Because that's really what enabled us to get to the riders.

Kristin: It's really powerful. And so as we kind of close with looking at the future, of course we can't see where it's going. But I think expansion is a really important word to highlight and to be open minded and to actually go to your audience and find out what it is that they're missing and maybe some people who aren't in your audience and find out how you can serve them. I don't know. I just feel like it's a very dynamic time as we're going into this new decade.

Jennifer: Yeah. And it's exciting to see some of this like the industry being infused again with some entrepreneurial spirit, right? Like a little bit of that willingness to experiment and to push the envelope and to try different things. I think that's what the industry needs to kind of like shake things up a little bit.

Kristin: I agree. And I think you're a very important player in that regard. I hope that you will continue to be there and truly like hats off to Specialized for forming the partnership that they did with you and enabling you to continue to. I hate to use the word disruption because it's so overused. I think it's more inspiration combined with disruption. Like you made it work because you totally listened to your consumer and you built something with them. You know what I mean?

Jennifer: Yeah.

Kristin: And that's great proof of concept in terms of like the evolution and the widening of this community that we're experiencing right now.

Jennifer: Yeah. Thank you. Thank you.

Kristin: Yeah. I know it's not an easy job that you have.

Jennifer: No.

Kristin: But just know it's an important one.

Jennifer: Okay. Thank you. I'm might writing that down and tape it to my wall.

Kristin: Yes. Cool. Well I have to tell you, I was so excited to interview you and just share your expertise and just how you view the world and what you've gone through here. Like you have a completely unique story and I think it's going to touch a lot of people and inspire

a lot of people. And I'm just so grateful you were able to come on the show today. So thank you so much for your time.

Jennifer: Oh thank you. Yeah, I'm so glad we were finally able to connect after all these years. Because-

Kristin: Me too.

Jennifer: Your name has come up so many times and I'm like I must meet this woman. Thank you so much for having me on the show.

Kristin: And then before we completely hang up here, how can people in the audience learn more about you and maybe offer not only like where they can find you but also what one of your in real life activations might be that they might find you at in the near future.

Jennifer: eah. So you can find us either on our website machinesforfreedom.com or through Instagram, [@MachinesForFreedom](https://www.instagram.com/MachinesForFreedom). And then we will be at SBT GRVL this year, which we're really excited about. So if you're able to get in, congratulations, we can't wait to see you there. And if you missed out this year, like we're hopefully going to be at a few more GRVL events in 2020. So yeah, follow us online. And we'll keep you apprised of where we're going to be.

Kristin: That's awesome. Well, I look forward to all of that, and thank you again for your time.

Jennifer: Thank you.