



Channel Mastery Podcast, Episode #69: Kristin Carpenter-Ogden Interviews
Margo Aaron, of Argotics, Inc. and Arena Virtual Co-Working

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- Kristin: [00:23](#) Welcome everybody to another episode of the Channel Mastery Podcast, Kristin Carpenter-Ogden here. I'm so excited to re-[00:00:30] introduce a guest who I think it's been about a year since I've had you on Margo, but please meet Margo Aaron, who is the founder of Arena Virtual Co-working. Welcome to the show.
- Margo: [00:41](#) Thank you for having me. It's good to be back.
- Kristin: [00:43](#) Yes. So, last year we had a really awesome show. I'll put links in the show notes, where we really talked a lot about how to target the right consumer and we really spent a lot of time utilizing your incredible background where you really helped a lot of big brands understand [00:01:00] who they're serving and what's important to that consumer, and again, I think there's so much in that show that was evergreen.
- Kristin: [01:06](#) So, I'm gonna go ahead and put that back in there, but today, I'm really excited to talk with you about what you're doing with Arena. So, can you first describe what it is, because it's a co-working space, but it's virtual and there's a whole foundational story to this that I think is gonna be delightful for my audience to hear.
- Margo: [01:24](#) Absolutely. So, Arena Virtual Co-Working is a community and the reason we call it "co- [00:01:30] working" let's be clear, there is no physical space. It is virtual, because we found that founders often are spending most of their time alone.
- Kristin: [01:41](#) And CEO's as well.

- Margo: [01:45](#) Well, the advantage of CEO is you have a c-suite allegedly that should be your counsel or you have a board that you can talk to, but often with founders, there aren't people on your level that you can really chat about what's changing in your industry [00:02:00] or what you see or what's frustrating you or where you're stuck, where you need to learn or even to brag. I don't know if you've had this experience, I certainly have, where I've bragged about something to my husband and he has no idea what I'm talking about.
- Kristin: [02:12](#) Yes.
- Margo: [02:13](#) Totally deflating, because it's like a huge industry win. Anyway, so I created a space using tools that we already use, because most of us, if you're like me, hate logging into new things.
- Kristin: [02:27](#) Yes.
- Margo: [02:29](#) And [00:02:30] it's where we facilitate what I call the "paradigm shift," so a lot of founders, at least in our space, have come from a more corporate or traditional background and have sort of found their way accidentally into entrepreneurship for a million reasons. And I know a lot of specialty resources have a similar story of how they sort of ended up there, but today, the world has changed.
- Margo: [02:55](#) And often, we are the odd men out in seeing that the world has shifted and [00:03:00] there's not people that you can talk to about it or understand how to navigate it. We actually have one guy who just joined, he's a CPA by trade and when he came in, he had never used Slack before, he had never heard of Calendly [00:03:14] and he came in and he said, "Listen, all of my best clients are reaching that age of retirement and I need a new steady stream of clients, but the young people, I don't know how to talk to them. I don't know what's important to them. They don't wanna sit down and have coffee with me. They just wanna email, [00:03:30] I don't understand how to build these relationships."
- Kristin: [03:33](#) Or text.
- Margo: [03:33](#) Or text, right. And so, I was really inspired by him, because this is exactly what we talk about when we say the paradigm shift is that you need people around you who normalize what the modern economy looks like and know that this is the future and one of the constraints I saw, at least in CPG was that you were only surrounded by industry veterans who are looking at what it used to be and are either ignoring or putting their head in the sand [00:04:00] over all of the shifts that are happening.

Margo: [04:02](#) And so, we can definitely talk about that, but the Arena is the place that we hang out online to deconstruct a lot of these issues and talk through them and also, just ask each other, I call them "dumb" questions, because that's what it feels like, but obviously they're not dumb, of the things that you're supposed to know, but don't.

Kristin: [04:19](#) None of us know it, really. I mean, it's all being invented as we're going, so this is a very rich topic for us to dive into here today, because the reason this show is created [00:04:30] is to address the issues that you're addressing live in your virtual community. So, maybe we should talk about how we might be able to develop a chapter and ...

Margo: [04:41](#) Yeah.

Kristin: [04:41](#) ... you're absolutely right about, especially retailers, but there's also sales reps, there's brands, there's service providers, all of us are wrapped up in these communities that have been functioning together as industries for a long time and now all of the sudden, we're competing for an omni-channel consumer, we're competing for their [00:05:00] attention, for their trust, for their loyalty, and we don't have as big of a megaphone or as many dance moves as Amazon and Facebook and Google have.

Kristin: [05:09](#) So, that's really where I kinda wanted to point our paradigm shift today is around that digital divide, the whole month of January 2019 on Channel Mastery will be devoted to that. We have a panel at one of our main trade shows at the end of that month where we're gonna be diving into it in person and having you here today to kind of tee it up and as a paradigm shift topic would [00:05:30] be so fantastic.

Kristin: [05:31](#) So, I realize that you're not necessarily in our markets, which is why this is such a fantastic opportunity for my people. I love to bring in experts from outside of our market to illuminate them and give them inspiration and that's what we're gonna do here today. So, let's talk about your paradigm shift and how you guys are speaking about competing in today's economy as we're about to wrap up 2018 and step into a brand-new year that's going to be another blender of change, I'm sure.

Margo: [05:59](#) Well, the [00:06:00] first thing I always say is that people are often intimidated by change ...

Kristin: [06:05](#) Yes.

Margo: [06:05](#) ... or reluctant to even admit it exists and part of that is because they feel like there's so much to learn and I definitely saw a lot

of ageism in moving from a brick and mortar to a more digital economy and a connection economy. My argument and what we preach in [inaudible 00:06:24] is it's not actually the skills you need to learn, it's what you need to unlearn, and the things that you need to let go [00:06:30] of that no longer work in today's world.

Margo: [06:34](#) And, so an example I like to give, this is a silly one, but it's real: no one that is in our space uses business cards.

Kristin: [06:44](#) You mean in the Arena?

Margo: [06:46](#) Yeah, like a lot of the founders in our space, a lot of the people in the startup world, a lot of people, pretty much I don't know anyone below 45 that's ever handed me a business card. And so, it's funny, because when I talk to [00:07:00] more traditional industries like law or finance or medicine, people are always like, "Can I have your business card?" And I'm like, "Why don't you just give me your phone and I'll put my Twitter in it and I'll put my email address and you can have all the things," you're gonna have to take that card and put it into your phone anyway, so let's just make this more efficient.

Margo: [07:21](#) It's a silly example, but it's a little thing that is indicative of a bigger cultural shift that's happening, which is there is a new ... it's not necessarily [00:07:30] a new approach, it's a more efficient that speaks to how we do business in a modern economy, which is building real relationships, focusing on efficiencies and using the digital tools not as a barrier, but as an increase to connect. Like, even right now, everyone's listening to us on audio, we're looking at each other. We're not in the same state, right? That is so cool that we live in a time where that is possible.

Margo: [07:55](#) So, I'll get a lot of questions like, "Don't you spend all day alone?" I'm like, "I'm on Zoom all day long. I [00:08:00] am around people all day long," but these are the very real tools that are creating the basis of our new economy and the basis of how we shop and how we think about business, how we think about the decisions that are in our lives and a lot of that ... in order to be a leader in your space, you do have to be able to predict with some accuracy, which is hard, what some of these changes are gonna be that are gonna last and a lot of that comes from unlearning and letting go of what no longer works [00:08:30] or witnessing for yourself what you're holding onto, because it's worked for the last 30 years or because it's how we've always done things.

- Margo: [08:39](#) Having meetings for the sake of meetings is another one. I think for many, many institutions, you have days where it's just meeting after meeting after meeting with no efficiencies built in. Like, what is the purpose of this meeting? Why do I need to have it? What was the outcome of it? What were the tasks and takeaways? Anything like that is what I would call [00:09:00] existing in the modern economy and increasing the efficiencies and letting go of the old habits of what you thought business looked like.
- Kristin: [09:10](#) Right. And that is such an important point. So, let me ask you this: you have a lot of entrepreneurs, I bet a lot of them are coming in from leadership roles at more traditional companies and they're wanting to up their game just as you described your CPA colleague. Are you seeing themes, obviously [00:09:30] the business card is a simple example, a good example, but are you seeing other themes that they are struggling with? You mentioned Slack. In our market, how this might look would be a value equation around a sales rep, a value equation around how I need to be a brand and provide assets to a retailer, you know what I mean?
- Kristin: [09:50](#) They have a checklist or a punch list that they've had for a long time that has literally built how their weeks and months go throughout the year and oftentimes, it's been reverse [00:10:00] engineered from a trade show, which are also undergoing incredible shifts and change in our market and other markets. So, I almost feel like I don't know where to start, because ultimately what we're talking about is change management and I think what you and I might be able to bring in terms of clarity today is maybe we tie it to a couple of business goals that are not financially motivated, but maybe they're more motivated by change internally within an organization, okay?
- Margo: [10:26](#) Okay.
- Kristin: [10:28](#) Yeah, so that might be a good way for us to maybe [00:10:30] pull a couple of examples around if I'm a brand and I have a whole range of wholesalers across the country and I have reps who service them, that's an antiquated model, components of it still work. A lot of it needs to be up leveled. So, that's where I think a paradigm shift could happen and we also are gonna be diving into a sales rep 2.0 series on the podcast.
- Margo: [10:53](#) No, that's such a perfect example, because I think, listen, people don't know what we mean or if you do, this [00:11:00] is redundant, but like when we say it's a connection economy, what we mean is everything we do today, every sale you make is based on the relationship, the relationship between me and

your brand, the relationship between me and your sales rep, the relationship between me and whatever. And so, the old model works except it was transactional.

- Margo: [11:20](#) Today, you have to build that trust. So, you still need those sales reps. It's just the approach to sales has to be more ethical, more transparent, more [00:11:30] real. So, I meet a lot of people who think it can be a checklist and often, a lot of the things aren't a direct ROI, right? It's a long game, it's a long tail game of adding value, showing up, remembering someone's name, these things are actually core principles that worked for most of time. What's changed is that you can't dupe people anymore.
- Kristin: [11:53](#) Right.
- Margo: [11:53](#) So, when you ask are there themes that you see, I think one of the themes I see within that is there's this [00:12:00] blurring of the personal and professional that is happening today that is really difficult in terms of how you manage a company and how you manage yourself within that company and if you're a sales rep, for example, do you connect with someone on Twitter, do they see pictures of their family? Does your brand have that personal side?
- Margo: [12:20](#) And today, the answer is yeah. You have to have both of those. We're talking right now and you can see there's a crib behind me, because it's late and I'm home [00:12:30] and I am like holed up in my nursery as my office today. But like that's real life and it doesn't make you less in the business world, it makes you more relatable and that's an important component to this. I think we have a tendency to show up in an inauthentic way and in today's economy, it doesn't work. It just doesn't work, because we are so connected and we are so everywhere all the time that you have to show up fully as you.
- Margo: [12:55](#) And I don't mean that as being a hot mess and telling your clients your problems. [00:13:00] It's simply being a good person who isn't just on and trying to make the sale, but really investing in what's best for that person and trying to add value and viewing sales in that way, sales as I have a solution to the problem that you have and my role is to connect the dots. You need to identify that you have the problem and then you need to identify me as the solution and that is my role as the sales person. It is literally to add value to you. It is not to push things on you, not to force you into anything.
- Margo: [13:30](#) [00:13:30] I think that's what we mean by "it's a connection economy," it's "I'm building this relationship, but in a genuine way," and also, I need to have the backbone to be able to say,

"You know what, this probably isn't for you," and I think specialty retailers can really relate to that, because if you are nerding out into archery and you meet someone who really should be buying ice skates, they're not gonna be a good customer.

Kristin: [13:51](#)

Right.

Margo: [13:52](#)

And you have to have the ability to see that and to see people. And so, when you ask what are some of the shifts, I think when you look [00:14:00] at that old model of my customers are just numbers, that's the piece that breaks down. It doesn't work anymore.

Kristin: [14:07](#)

Right. For sure and I also am thinking as we talked about last year and I remember this, because we talked about Starbucks specifically, but in our market, we continue to have a lot of the mothership brand coming from the brand itself to the market, to the end consumer, it's still heavily on for the brands that I think are really resonating emotionally, there's a lot of co-marketing components there. So, I feel [00:14:30] like that might be something that's interesting to tie into this conversation, because again, I think it makes a brand fit in better with the right point of distribution no matter if it's e-comm or a physical store, whatever.

Kristin: [14:43](#)

It's more about being there for the consumers that are aligned with that cause. That's another example. And then I also am thinking about the fact that a good sales rep today should be focused on helping their buyer: the omni-channel consumer. It's [00:15:00] not about, "Hey, you sold x amount of this brown shoe and this green shoe, you know, you should order this much more," that consumer is constantly changing and so, I love what you said about the long game versus the short game, because so often brands set up their rep partners to fail, because they're like, "Hey, you gotta hit this quota this quarter," and they're going to not be the best business partner to their buyers if they have that.

Kristin: [15:25](#)

But if they're looking more long lead, long game and it's [00:15:30] relationship-based and not transaction-based, that's a great example, I think.

Margo: [15:34](#)

There is a great, great book on this. Hold on, I'm getting the name and linking ... Dan Pink's book, "To Sell is Human" is one of the best books that explains how we've shifted the economy. Have you read it? You're shaking like you know it.

Kristin: [15:49](#) I have and I'd love to have him on the podcast actually. [crosstalk 00:15:53]

Margo: [15:52](#) Dan, if you're listening, you should come on and talk. But it is, it's one of the best articulations, because one, he goes through the science, [00:16:00] he goes through the history. He goes through all of the case studies of why this approach is actually the more effective one and has really concrete examples of both CPG and just product based businesses that are doing this well, and right.

Kristin: [16:14](#) Right. Okay, that's awesome. That'll be a very important, very relevant part of the paradigm shift. Let's also talk about publishing. Shall we?

Margo: [16:24](#) It's now or never.

Kristin: [16:29](#) Because, obviously, I run [00:16:30] a brand communications company. We were founded 17 years ago, helping magazines, connecting brands with magazines, and getting visibility and driving traffic, that old value equation. And we've had a completely ... We change probably every quarter, but we have a whole different service set with a core offering that is like our market fluency for what we do. But we have surrounded with all of the services that actually will create lift to the end consumer now. It's not [00:17:00] just through the magazines, that's definitely one component of it.

Kristin: [17:03](#) But let's talk about the paradigm shift there. Because I feel like part of what we're seeing with the way that that industry is continuing to evolve. And there's some bright spots that I think are going to be fun to hit, too. But what we've seen in terms of the consolidation of that, I think, is a huge byproduct of them being very resistant to a paradigm shift. They have a business model, they work vehemently to protect it. And that's why I think they're getting caught with their pants around their ankles. Pardon my [00:17:30] ladylike con there.

Margo: [17:32](#) Oh, yeah, I mean, it's burning. Listen, I am not someone who thinks publishing is dead. I think it has reached a new evolutionary stage and it is evolving. But the classic publishers are not going with them. We're going to see the rise of medium and their membership model. You're going to see these new companies pop up. And there's a reason everyone says, "We're all a media company now," because every company [00:18:00] worth its weight in gold today tends to have a blog and it's publishing. So if you want to learn about marketing, you don't go to Fast Company, you go to hubspot.com. You go to the companies that are supposed to be leaders in their space, and

you expect them to have the content that matches. So the landscape is shifting in that way.

- Margo: [18:19](#) There is certainly a romanticism in the publishing world. And I think for all of us who love reading, and who loves publishing, people still love a written book, people still want this. Yes, [00:18:30] that's all true, but that doesn't change the fact that how we read is still evolving and there's no shame in it.
- Margo: [18:36](#) And what the publishers are tending to do wrong to your point about the business model is they've only tested one business model. And that's the ad model. And the problem with the ad model is that you've eroded the one asset you had, which was attention. And when you get rid of attention, you can't sell your space anymore. Will people understand this? I'm I making sense?
- Kristin: [18:59](#) Totally. [00:19:00] I talk about attention, trust, and loyalty constantly, with the today's consumer. Yes, that's what we're all competing for.
- Margo: [19:08](#) Right. I used to write for The Observer. One of the reasons they stopped was if you go and try and read one of my articles, you literally can't scroll down, because there's so many pop ups coming up and it's distracting you. And if you are a person who is used to a much cleaner and finer reading experience, say in a book or on Medium or on the Atlantic, [00:19:30] or all the different ways that are forward facing, you're going to get so frustrated that you are going to abandon the page. And so that's how the big models die.
- Margo: [19:40](#) I don't want people to hear this as, "Oh my gosh, she's a millennial, and she's just anti everything traditional!" That's not the case at all. I still read physical books, I am one of those people, trust me. It's more that you just have to follow the money and you have to follow the attention. And when you look at the model, it stopped working. Your people aren't getting ROI on their ads. The only [00:20:00] reason a lot of these models and media and publishing existed, is because there was no way to track. And today you can actually track attribution.
- Margo: [20:09](#) So, if you're finding attribution and it's not working, then all of a sudden you have a collection of people going, "Okay, well, this isn't working, so we're taking our ad spend elsewhere," and that's how publishing dies.
- Kristin: [20:20](#) Right. And they're doing it every couple weeks instead of locking in on a three-year or six-year or a year-long contract. So, what

I've been seeing is they may try new [00:20:30] platforms like a podcast or like a YouTube channel, and they do it as a way to ... "Let's see if we can make our ad model work here." And that to me is not a paradigm shift. A paradigm shift is exactly what you're talking about. Like, the North Star is your consumer, give them what they want and make it clean and figure out how to make it work after you give them what they want, in my opinion. I know that's very pie in the sky.

- Margo: [20:55](#) No, it's actually working, that's the thing. Again, follow the [00:21:00] money. If you look at the top performing podcast, they actually are on an ad model but watch their ads. So, their ads are long, their ads are targeted, their ads are directly relevant and niched to the specific audience that is listening to that podcast. And so, it's an evolution of the model, in a much better way that is respectful to the consumer. Because right now, the only asset that people really care about is their time. And so if they're [00:21:30] spending time at your store, on your podcast, or whatever it is that they are focused on, the most respectful thing you can do to them is add value and respect their time.
- Margo: [21:40](#) And part of that can be through advertising, if you do it the right way. If you're a podcast about business and Fresh Books, they're big ones, does a four minute ad, or my favorite is ... I'm forgetting it, it's a hiring company.
- Kristin: [21:57](#) Oh, I know which one you mean. It's not Harvest, [00:22:00] it's-
- Margo: [22:01](#) No, the other one. Oh, this is driving me nuts.
- Kristin: [22:03](#) They're always on a lot of [crosstalk 00:22:05].
- Margo: [22:04](#) They're always on but they have the best ads because they sound native to the platform, they tell you a story, they're totally relatable, they're written in a format that makes you want to keep listening and they solve a very real problem that you have. So, they'll talk about difficult employees or what it's like to fire, all sorts of things that would be relevant to a business owner. The point is finding that [00:22:30] fit. It's not that the ads are the broken part, it's that they haven't shifted with the economy, they haven't shifted with the consumer. They're just thinking about what serves them and that doesn't work anymore.
- Kristin: [22:41](#) Okay, I got another one for you.
- Margo: [22:42](#) Okay.

- Kristin: [22:43](#) Influencer marketing. We've seen obviously there's actual regulation happening there. There's nano and micro influencers, there's obviously the YouTube stars who are pulling in. And I read an article this morning where I think the highest paid one was 152 million [00:23:00] or something crazy like that, meaning the content creators that my daughter watches, she's 13. But where I'm going with this is influencer marketing has become something that is like a plug and play. They're forgetting that these influencers are actually people and their audiences are comprised of people.
- Kristin: [23:20](#) I feel like brands today are like, "Oh, we need to do influencer marketing, that'll kind of put us where we need to be with this new consumer, in this new economy." And that may be true, [00:23:30] but I feel like the actual weight and the success that's waiting to be had is around connecting person to person, one to one versus one too many. It's like they're taking a tactic that's one to one and they're trying to make it one to many.
- Margo: [23:43](#) Well, you're touching on, I would say the core problem with marketing and I say this as a marketer, and I stole this from Gary Vaynerchuk. Marketers ruin everything. We do, we go in hard on whatever is working, and then we exploit it the [00:24:00] worst way and then we destroy it. So it's imploding. So the interesting thing about influencer marketing and I say that half tongue in cheek like, if you do marketing right, it will continue to work and you will evolve with it. But often that's not what happens. We just beat it to death.
- Kristin: [24:14](#) Well, we have to do the long game, right?
- Margo: [24:16](#) That's exactly the point. And so, with influencer marketing what's happening now is people are trying to templatize it. Whenever you hit a point of scale and you start to focus on the quiet side instead [00:24:30] of the call, that's when you start to see problems. Because spoiler alert, it's both, you need both. You can't focus only on one. And so, often what happens is you lose the thing that made you good. So, what built these influencers was exactly what you said before. The one on one relationships. Connecting with the person on the other side of the video screen or on the other side of the picture or whatever it was. And as soon as you lose that, and as soon as your audience [00:25:00] becomes aware of that, you actually lose money because your sales don't sell, your [podcast 00:25:07] don't work and your business model starts breaking down and it becomes the numbers game and then it dies and it will move on to the next thing.
- Margo: [25:16](#) The truth is, influencer marketing really works but it's labor intensive. And this is true of literally every channel. But

influencer marketing the most because it's reliant on people. So if you want to do it well, often you have to spend [00:25:30] a lot of time just researching, just looking up someone, watching their videos, knowing a lot about them and figuring out if their audience is one that you need to get in front of, or that your product should be in front of.

- Margo: [25:42](#) And that's what ... Actually, you could speak more to this than me, but that's what PR companies used to be able to do for you. And instead it's become like a spray and pray of like, "We're just going to get it out to 500 influencers." What's more effective is if you found like 15 or 40 or 100 that [00:26:00] actually had an engaged audience and really, really cared about the thing that you're trying to sell and got it in front of them, then it still does work. But engagement is the key here.
- Kristin: [26:09](#) Yes. Thankfully, I can't speak for the other agencies in our space. But our little special snowflake communities are very much loud and will voice their opinion on any social platform they can when there is ... Where you're taking a spray and pray approach. And it's [00:26:30] interesting because I do feel that we're starting to see experiments. Because a lot of what we do is that we have to spend a lot of time experimenting and trying and being nimble. But I feel like a recent case study, this is a funny one in a fun one. Literally, it's in process right now, here we are, first week of December.
- Kristin: [26:49](#) We are helping to launch a Gravel bike race event in Steamboat in August of 2019. And Gravel is a very popular discipline in cycling. Everybody [00:27:00] is like, "Oh, thank God for Gravel, that's going to save everything," like the people in the core bike industry. But there's a whole community around it that isn't fitting with everything they're hoping for. And it's been very interesting to take this event that, looking at its brand profile and trying to launch it without ever having, there's no race, it's brand new for next year.
- Kristin: [27:22](#) So we've had to be very creative and literally multiple times a day often. We're changing tactics, strategies, and people we're trying [00:27:30] to do outreach to, we're incorporating some traditional, and it's been really successful within ... I think we're 30 hours into the launch of this, and we're almost sold out in this race that hasn't even existed yet.
- Kristin: [27:42](#) And that's an example of just blood, sweat and tears. You know you have like a sense with your market fluency that you know what is too much to push and you know what is appropriate and how to ask for it. You really do have to have this market fluency that I think we've always had in these markets. [00:28:00] And I think that the CPG, one too many, Consumer Packaged Goods,

one too many approach is, is going to be just going down in flames.

- Kristin: [28:09](#) Even they're discovering the power of these micro communities, and I feel like when they can give people in their brand departments like power and authority to make decisions for the consumer, that are right for the consumer, that's when I see the win happening. They're taking what the consumer wants back to the brand, and the brands that are listening, and that are the ones that I think are making the most traction happen.
- Margo: [28:30](#) [00:28:30] I completely agree. And I think, unfortunately CPG is in a really disadvantaged position having to rely on retailers as they're kind of barrier between them and the buyer. And I don't mean buyer, I mean, literally, the customer, the shopper, I should say, I don't remember my CPG language.
- Margo: [28:54](#) But yeah. And that is a huge disadvantage because you're not on the front lines, you don't get to see how [00:29:00] people are interacting, why they're making the decision they are. And so you don't have the data that you might have that other small and nimble or companies would have, especially online. Because they can watch what's happening as it's happening. But you also don't get the advantage of being able to talk to those people. So once you can integrate that information into your brand, it makes a huge difference.
- Kristin: [29:21](#) Well, and let's talk about that. I feel like those larger brands that are sold on Amazon or Walmart.com are almost [00:29:30] like building their houses on borrowed land, right? Instead of owning that audience, even if it's like a small effort internally where there ... Again, giving the power over to the consumer with an advocate in house of the brand, that to me is where you're going to create longevity, whereas if you just count on distribution and reach through walmart.com or Amazon that is a very, very dangerous game too.
- Kristin: [29:54](#) So, I just feel like you're seeing it on all around us. But you're really bringing up some important core tenets [00:30:00] and it really comes back to knowing who you serve, which I think is so part of your DNA as an entrepreneur, isn't it?
- Margo: [30:08](#) Totally. And I also think that's the advantage, the specialty retailers have actually. Is that you have these tribes, I mean, that's what I created, I know that's what they have. Like, if you are in specialty, your people obsessed with running, obsessed with like bow and arrows, obsessed with whatever it is that is your little niche and corner of the world, and that is actually more competitive advantage.

- Margo: [30:29](#) I think when you try [00:30:30] and go mainstream and you go scale or you buy into the rhetoric that being in a Walmart is the thing that's going to change you, number one, you haven't talked to enough people who have actually been destroyed by Walmart.
- Kristin: [30:41](#) Right.
- Margo: [30:42](#) I mean, I have seen it happen to like big, big companies because of the buybacks and the returns and all the media you have to buy and the insert whatever, it's a whole another thing. But like you end up losing money just to say that you are a Walmart. My point is that there are mechanisms in place today where you can create [00:31:00] a tribe and you can utilize the digital tools in a way that allows you to ride out this paradigm shift and really succeed and really evolve.
- Margo: [31:11](#) I would say everyone who is a thought leader in the marketing space has been screening the same thing, which is we are stratifying in terms of a market. A mass market does not exist and you need to find your people. And when you become the leader of your people, that is how you win.
- Margo: [31:29](#) And these [00:31:30] tools that we're using as excuses to not succeed, I cannot tell you how many people I've talked to that are like, "I just don't have time to learn Twitter, I don't have time to learn Instagram," and they're not wrong. I mean, as a fact I feel the same way. The problem with that approach, though, is that no one's saying you have to be on everything. You got to use the skills that got you to where you are and apply them to today. So, if it's all about let's use like archery as example, because it's just top of mind, if you know [00:32:00] your people love, love, love bow and arrows, and you could geek out on it for hours and hours if not weeks, and weeks, and weeks. It will not take you that much time to actually write this out in a blog post and send it to your list or share it on social media.
- Margo: [32:15](#) It doesn't have to be sophisticated, it just needs to exist and people want that kind of thought leadership. And then, you cement yourself as the person who knows the most about this thing. That's how you ultimately differentiate [00:32:30] yourself as a brand.
- Margo: [32:30](#) Otherwise, the only ... You have to think about this in terms of decision architecture. The only thing people have to go in if they're going to Amazon.com is price and reviews. That's it. And then, pictures. Right?

Margo: [32:44](#) Those are the three things they're basing on, but if they have familiarity with you, and your core values, and they've been reading the things that are coming out of you ... I mean, yes. It sucks that you have to be a media company, but that's just where we are right now.

Margo: [32:55](#) You don't really have a choice, unless you want to compete on price. If you don't want to compete on price, this is where [00:33:00] we're living. So, you create the people ... Maybe you are the person who's the only one in the world that does metal bow and arrows. I don't know.

Kristin: [33:09](#) I was waiting for another bow and arrow. I'm sending you one for Christmas.

Margo: [33:13](#) No. It's funny. One of our Arena members had a question about an archery store, so it was just like the first thing on my mind. I've never actually been in one.

Kristin: [33:20](#) I love it. That's a good theme. Let's keep it going.

Margo: [33:26](#) Hunger Games, it's a good metaphor. Just kidding. [00:33:30] But, yeah. I think often there's a difference between these tools becoming a crutch and a reason for why we don't execute at all, and when some of the advice is truly unreasonable.

Margo: [33:42](#) I mean, the suggestion that you should be in every channel at all times is absolutely bananas.

Kristin: [33:47](#) It is.

Margo: [33:48](#) Yes. You should if you had a staff of 600 people doing it for ... I mean, it's just freaking insane. If you have your normal staff you have to find a way to make it work and do it imperfectly. Do it wrong, play around [00:34:00] with it, figure it out.

Margo: [34:01](#) One of my favorite, favorite examples is a woman who's an Arena member ... Her name is Talia and she wanted to figure out Instagram. She said, "You know, I think it's really sleazy that everyone buys followers." I don't know if you guys know about this, but that was the way people built their brands.

Margo: [34:16](#) She was like, "There's got to be ... That doesn't make any sense." She's like, "I'm not gonna buy followers, but I want to crack this." So, she got to 10 thousand by just playing. Just doing it wrong, playing around. She is now at 150, I think [00:34:30] thousand followers and she has now stopped consulting, does her full-time business through Instagram.

Margo: [34:34](#) She's actually becoming an influencer, all because she just played. That's a thing that I think we're so afraid to do. You will not break the new media, you will maybe look stupid a couple of times. That's fine, but-

Kristin: [34:48](#) We all do.

Margo: [34:49](#) We all do. I'm sure if you Google me enough you will find it, but I think the willingness to go out on twitter and not have a content calendar. [00:35:00] Just go, and tweet, and be a human. These platforms were created to facilitate communication and connection, so the more you sound like a human, the more you get this part is really important.

Margo: [35:11](#) If you guys take nothing else away, I really want you to take this away. Think about your customers, not your colleagues. I think so often we are held back, because we are thinking, "The competitors in my space aren't doing this. They don't sound like this, they're not using these words."

Margo: [35:26](#) The competitors in your space don't freaking matter. They just don't. [00:35:30] They are irrelevant to your market. Your market in your world is legitimately not sitting and deciding between you and four other brands every single time. They're literally deciding between you, and how hungry they are, and their crying baby, and whether they should get a drink with friends.

Margo: [35:46](#) So, what you're competing on is engagement, and depth, and realness. And so, you want to show up in the way that your customer is showing up. Part of that requires just being a real human being.

Margo: [35:57](#) So, showing up on social channels, [00:36:00] showing up on an email newsletter, showing up on website. All of it works better when you're real and when you're being a human, because ultimately you are talking to a human. You're not talking to a market.

Margo: [36:13](#) And so, I think people don't realize how good they can be at these platforms if they just get out of their way and let your brand manager or whoever it is ... Community manager. Just let them do their thing, and don't worry about how it's gonna look, and just start getting out there a little bit more so people can connect with you.

Kristin: [36:51](#) Okay. I have a question about what you just said, which by the way makes all the sense in the world.

- Kristin: [36:57](#) One of the things that I think as we're talking about digital [00:37:00] divide is Instagram and twitter. They are actually the constant bridge that are ... It's almost like what's bridging people to the retailer, or Amazon, or whatever, that's the channel where they're on all the time. Or, Facebook.
- Kristin: [37:16](#) So, is that kind of why this person whose cracked the code on Instagram is now kind of full-time there? Because, she found where her people are spending their time, multiple times a day?
- Margo: [37:26](#) Yes. Absolutely. She also figured out how. [00:37:30] She didn't listen to what the thought leader said, she just followed the people. One of the little ... I mean, you can call this a hack. It's not really, it's what happened.
- Margo: [37:40](#) She discovered that the power was in the DM's. It wasn't even in the Instagram feed, it was people literally ... Hundreds of people sending her notes and she took the time to respond to them. It was that simple, but it's so much work.
- Margo: [37:56](#) Let's also consider this in context. If you're running a company, especially if you have a supply chain, [00:38:00] that is almost an unreasonable ask. Right? It is insane to say you need to sit and respond to each ... That's crazy. Who's gonna have time for that?
- Margo: [38:09](#) But, that's the same task as any founder's task. When you're the founder you ... Or you're the brand manager, whatever it is, you have an unreasonable amount of things on your desk and you need to think of 80-20. "What are the things that I can do that are actually going to yield results?"
- Margo: [38:28](#) I do want to say on [00:38:30] the same not that I think part of what intimidates people about this conversation is they think that what they know doesn't apply here, like it's a world they don't understand. I would actually ... I also just told you, you have a lot to unlearn. Right?
- Margo: [38:47](#) That's true, but what's also true is that you built a company, and you have a brand, and people like it. There's something there that works and your job as the founder is to take the things [00:39:00] that you know work, and to take your intuition, and your gut, and all the things that made you build this in the first place and apply it now in these new channels.
- Margo: [39:08](#) The same freaking rules apply as if you were talking one on one. That's the thing that's key here. Is that you don't have to relearn anything new, you just have to figure out the technology a little bit. And then, the same rules apply.

Margo: [39:22](#) So, if you were good at business, if you were good before, and you understood these concepts they're still gonna work. You can read a book ... One of the best [00:39:30] books on marketing was written in 1920, because human behavior is still human behavior.

Margo: [39:36](#) We haven't actually evolved passed our own psychology, and our desires, and our fears, and our wishes, and all of those things still apply. And so, if you're understanding that about your customer, if you're understanding that ...

Margo: [39:48](#) Let's go back to the bow and arrow. They're afraid about how they're gonna look in front of their friends, they don't know which one to buy, they don't know which fabric is better, they don't know which material they should use, and all of a sudden you become the brand that has those answers?

Margo: [40:00](#) [00:40:00] It's the same thing you were doing before, just not in a physical store.

Kristin: [40:04](#) Right. Exactly. Or, in addition to a physical store as we're seeing with Amazon and their physical stores, and 3000 Go stores. This is also ... There's evidence everywhere around how people are ... They're changing and they're not changing.

Kristin: [40:18](#) They're changing, because they're learning how easy it is to tap into the convenience or the lowest price or whatever. But, there's also just that human need to have storytelling, to belong to a tribe, and to go talk [00:40:30] to somebody about your decision, and to feel like you're part of something when you sign up for it.

Margo: [40:35](#) Yep.

Kristin: [40:35](#) I have a quick question and I know we need to look toward wrapping up here, but the way that you're speaking here about founders ... I also want my people to think business leader or C-suite, because we have some medium sized companies that may or not still have the founders there.

Kristin: [40:50](#) There's also direct first millennial brands that we have in our space that are very much founder driven, but where I'm going with this is if I'm communicating on [00:41:00] twitter or even in my email is it coming from a brand in 2019 or is it coming from a person?

Kristin: [41:07](#) Because, I see some of the SAS companies are literally saying ... Twitter. Right? They're sending the founder from twitter. Here

are your updates on twitter in my inbox. Right? What's your take on that?

- Kristin: [41:20](#) Is it advisable now for a brand to actually put a person within their company ... Maybe it's a founder, maybe it's not. And, not just the brand name?
- Margo: [41:30](#) [00:41:30] Oh. Hands down yes.
- Kristin: [41:32](#) Okay.
- Margo: [41:33](#) But, I also would argue that the brand name should be personable. Like, personified and operate like a person in that realm. Otherwise, it doesn't work. If you are ... Oh. Gosh. I should have come prepared with an example to this, but-
- Kristin: [41:48](#) I have a good one, but you go.
- Margo: [41:49](#) Oh. Okay.
- Kristin: [41:49](#) No. You want me to-
- Margo: [41:51](#) But, there are great examples of brands responding to customer complaints on twitter as a human. [00:42:00] Like, "I'm so sorry that, that happened. Let us fix this for you." Just being a human.
- Margo: [42:06](#) It doesn't necessarily need to be like, Brad.
- Kristin: [42:09](#) Right. I think that-
- Margo: [42:11](#) [crosstalk 00:42:11]-
- Kristin: [42:11](#) Yeah. Go ahead. Sorry.
- Margo: [42:13](#) There is ... If you are the C-suite you are the new face of the brand.
- Kristin: [42:18](#) Right.
- Margo: [42:18](#) I think that, that's become ... Depending on the company, that's become pretty much an inevitability that the personal is professional. So, your tweets become the brand's tweets, your speaking [00:42:30] engagements become the ones for the brand.
- Margo: [42:32](#) I think that, that's started to intertwine in a way that is actually very useful, because instead of having a marketing department that is separate from everything, all of a sudden every single employee of yours is a brand advocate.

Margo: [42:45](#) I think that, that has happened pretty much across the board.

Kristin: [42:49](#) Right. I agree and I do think that's something that people should look to evolve and pay attention to, whether they're doing that or not. Because, I do think it's gonna continue to change quickly.

Kristin: [42:59](#) I wanted [00:43:00] to just say my one example that I've encountered recently is MeetEdgar. Are you familiar with that?

Margo: [43:06](#) Oh. Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

Kristin: [43:06](#) They do a great job ... They actually ... I don't think they have a person ... They have people who do webinars, for sure. I did get ... When I signed up for my annual subscription I got something from a person there, thanking me. But, their brand itself is like this cute, cuddly character and all of their touch points are about this brand.

Kristin: [43:24](#) It's an octopus. You should go check out their website and look at their social, because it literally is the voice behind their [00:43:30] social media and it's very well-done. So, there is an example of-

Margo: [43:32](#) Oh, yeah. They're content is fantastic.

Kristin: [43:34](#) Isn't it good?

Margo: [43:35](#) I think Laura ... I forget her last name.

Kristin: [43:37](#) I can't remember it either.

Margo: [43:39](#) It's fine, but she's legit. She is fantastic, but yeah. That is exactly right and I would argue that it's her voice.

Kristin: [43:46](#) Yeah. I totally agree with you, but this is fantastic. Where can my people learn more about Arena Virtual Coworking?

Margo: [43:55](#) Absolutely. ArenaVirtualCoworking.com. You can also find out more on [00:44:00] my personal site, which is ThatSeemsImportant.com. And, if you want to-

Kristin: [44:04](#) The best website ever.

Margo: [44:08](#) Thank you.

Kristin: [44:08](#) I know you would never agree, because part of your job is to create websites. I'll put links for that too, you guys.

Kristin: [44:15](#) You have a very, very funny sense of humor. I love your content and That Seems Important is so good. The second you land on that page you're gonna be like, "Okay. I get it. This is amazing."

Margo: [44:26](#) Thank you.

Kristin: [44:26](#) So, I encourage you to visit it. I just love it. I'm a big ... That's [00:44:30] literally ... When I found your site ... I think I found an article you wrote on Medium, I went to your site, and I literally was like, "I have to work with this person."

Kristin: [44:39](#) I signed up to get some consulting from you, because I liked your brand so much. So, that's a great example of how your entire conversation we just had, it worked. That's how we became friends.

Margo: [44:50](#) Yep. That's exactly right. That's exactly right and I would also ... I'm gonna challenge your listeners in our conversation, the other way you can connect is on twitter.

Margo: [44:59](#) So, [00:45:00] if you're hearing this before the holidays and as you're making your plan reach out to either me or Kristin and say hello. Use your brand twitter, tell us something you learned, engage with us, and see if we can break the third wall here and show you that it's not so scary.

Kristin: [45:15](#) Awesome. I'll have links to all of this, so you guys can play around with it too. I love that you've brought all of this ... Honestly, it's scary, overwhelming. There's so many negative adjectives I can put on what you're talking about here in [00:45:30] terms of a paradigm shift.

Kristin: [45:31](#) My people are sometimes exhausted when they hear this, or when they hear apocalypse, or they hear correction. They go running for the hills, but the way that you kind of put this out there very naturally ... You used play, you used be yourself, you use, "Screw up. It's totally fine, people will like you more."

Kristin: [45:48](#) Boy, is that refreshing. It's so refreshing and you're talking to a legion of people who have built fantastic product and built tribes around it. It's meticulous product design. We don't [00:46:00] do, "Oh. I can mess that up." We are so type A.

Kristin: [46:05](#) Even though we love to have fun, and be outdoors, and play hard, sometimes we don't let that come into our businesses. I think now we need to do that. We need to take the spirit that we love so much about playing outdoors and actually play on our marketing and on our voice.

Kristin: [46:19](#) I just love that, so thank you.

Margo: [46:21](#) Thank you. Yes.

Kristin: [46:22](#) It was good. I'm relieved. Okay, every one. Well, you know where to find Margo and I would love to have [00:46:30] you back on the show. Let's not wait a year.

Kristin: [46:34](#) I do think there's an interesting opportunity that I'd like to talk to you about for my people with a virtual community for them, because, boy, I sure get a lot of requests for that type of a thing with this specific content on Channel Mastery.

Kristin: [46:47](#) There's just people who really want to go deeper, so maybe we can present together.

Margo: [46:52](#) Yeah, yeah.

Kristin: [46:54](#) All right. Well, thank you so much.

Margo: [46:55](#) Cheers, everyone.

Kristin: [46:56](#) Yes. Thanks so much, again.