

Taking the Work Out of Networking with Sara Alepin from District Bliss

SPEAKERS

Sara Alepin, Lara Schmoisman

Lara Schmoisman

This is Coffee N° 5, I'm your host, Lara Schmoisman. Hi guys, welcome back to Coffee N° 5. And today I want to talk about smiling because I know how much a smile can make your day. I remember one day I was, I think I was young. I don't remember if I was a teenager or young adult, but I had a bad day. And that day I was walking on the street. And there was this guy, I don't even remember if he was cute or not. But the fact that he had this huge smile, and that smile that it was...he made my day and changed my day. And from that smile, but my bad mood just disappear. And that's the power of the smile. And that's the first impression I got from that person. Again, I don't remember if he was handsome, young or old. I just remember the smile and how it made me feel. And today we have here Sara Alepin, which I love her immediately with her smile. We just zoom... because I met her on zoom out a while ago. And I said, Oh my god, I have to be friend of this woman. I have to have her in my life because she has a best smile ever. And she makes me feel at home. So welcome. And thank you so much for being here.

Sara Alepin

Thank you for having me. I'm so thrilled to be here. And thank you for that wonderful inch.

Lara Schmoisman

He's just laughing. She always makes me happy. I love that

Sara Alepin

I'm trying to laugh quietly, because I'm actually super loud laughter.

Lara Schmoisman

I'm the one who laugh... it runs in my family that we laugh and we cry. And it's contagious. So I start, and then my mother goes, and then my mother grandmother used to go and we were like, three people laughing without able to express what they were laughing about.

Sara Alepin

Love it.

Lara Schmoisman

My husband hates it, because he doesn't understand what we laughing. And we're like, two or three stupid people just like crying and ugly crying.

Sara Alepin

He's like missing out on all the fun.

Lara Schmoisman

Exactly. Anyway, I...Creating this amazing platform, District Bliss, I want you to tell me a little bit about your platform, why you created it but I mean, please just say it's all about how we click with people, how we connect with people. So tell us a little bit more about what this is about.

Sara Alepin

So District Bliss is an events organization that specializes in networking and connecting people, we love to say that every event is actually a networking opportunity. So whether it's online or in person, so every workshop or co working session, or whatever it is, we always make sure that we connect everyone on their social media. And we encourage people to reach out to one another and collaborate it just every opportunity that you're showing up for you might as well meet people that are going to make you happy and that you can work with and collaborate with. So we do a whole bunch of business building workshops. We do some fun stuff like watercolor signature drinks, or creating paper flowers, just because we want to feed that creative side of ourselves too. But it's basically we bring people together.

Lara Schmoisman

I want to say something about the networking. It's okay. You don't have to click with everyone. It's okay that you don't have to work with everyone. But you never know who you don't click today because it wasn't your time. Maybe you'll do in the future. So I always say never burn bridges, because you never know how life will reconnect with people. But I want to go deeper into this first impression. Because I do believe that first impressions count.

Sara Alepin

Yes, I absolutely agree. And whether that first impression be from the actual event page, or from a person that you're meeting at the event, those impressions count because it's whether it's the brand and the event page, it's whether or not you're going to show up if you're looking at someone's marketing and and it doesn't speak to you then you're not going to show up to those events. And in terms of first impression. The thing you're always gonna find about me is that it is extremely rare to have me not smiling and it is extremely rare that I won't laugh or make an awkward joke or do something totally like just ridiculous and I'm just owned it

Lara Schmoisman

I absolutely I'm the same way. And we were talking about this before the podcast today that it's okay to say something that is not as long as you're respectful to everyone, of course. But it's okay to talk to someone about something that is not the weather, or the health, you can talk about other things. And you can be memorable, because I think that you need to make a positive first impression, but at the

same time memorable and say, Oh, yeah, that person was set apart from an other person, because I remember the conversation.

Sara Alepin

Yes, exactly. And I'm always wanting to, I mean, jump into a deeper conversation. That's more because I want to get to know you. That's how I can connect to people. So that means that I want to know who you are as a person. So I understand what you want. And I'm not necessarily going to talk to you about your business so much as I'm going to ask you about your life.

Lara Schmoisman

Yeah, I'm the same way. But at the same time, I think you need to make it fun, and memorable, and that people can relax and they don't feel the pressure that how are we talking about business I like, every week I meet with each one of my clients, and I don't go to business straight. It's like, we talk about fun things like the fun thing, good conversation we had today. It was what life is it's like about me finding a rat in my gosh, and I'm not okay with a rat. But I'm okay about talking about my real life. And then and then Sarah brought the cockroaches.

Sara Alepin

Yes, I did. Those are the two things that I really just want to go live somewhere else away from me.

Lara Schmoisman

So if someone comes to you and someone who is super shy and say I want to network, I don't know how to start, where to start? How would you guide that person? How to tell them, hey, these are... just how to get your feet wet into networking,

Sara Alepin

I would say there are two things, because there is in person and there is online. So and I know that we're going to eventually go back to our in person stuff. So we're going to imagine that the future world will be hybrid, and there will still be online and still be in person.

Lara Schmoisman

Please do, because I'm so done with driving.

Sara Alepin

I know sometimes I will also like you and I are not in the same space. And we have had an authentic connection.

Lara Schmoisman

Absolutely.

Sara Alepin

Even online. So well. First of all, let's debunk networking a little bit, because when you hear the word networking, it immediately brings anxiety up in everyone though same way that traffic does those two words. They're just horrible. Like you just imagine, it's like a god another networking event, I just hope

they cancel. And now online, the only way you're really getting out of it unless you're just letting yourself off the hook is if the internet goes down, because you don't have to get there, the weather can't get packed. You don't get a snow day.

Lara Schmoisman

Well, I live in LA. Everything in LA said two hours away with traffic. And in those two hours, there's so many events and so many times I want to meet with people, I just cannot do it because I only have so many hours in the day.

Sara Alepin

And you also don't necessarily live where your ideal clients live or your ideal people you'd want to hire. So you might live in Calabasas, and your ideal client lives in Long Beach.

Lara Schmoisman

Yeah, well, that's what they like a three hour drive each way. But what I was saying is Oh, besides that, I mean, right now I feel like something my company was yesterday because we were always digital. But now everyone is okay. And someone doesn't feel completely comfortable working with me being in New York. And I don't feel the pressure that I need to go to New York to meet them face to face.

Sara Alepin

Yes. Yeah, we definitely have kind of gotten a little bit over that.

Lara Schmoisman

also, which makes makes me my pricing tree more affordable someplace because I don't have to account for those trips.

Sara Alepin

Yeah, then not traveling for work has saved me a boatload this year. So networking can actually be fun, I swear. You just take the idea of work out of it. And so what I like to do when I go into a networking event in person, I'm an extrovert. So I will look for someone who seems like they're an introvert. And I'll introduce myself to them. And there are two reasons that I do this. Because they're generally standing alone so I'm not getting iced out of a circle and I'm not being a hover by myself because you know, you get like those, those lurkers on the outside of the circle. Like you said, you want to click without Being clicky. But sometimes those circles are clicky.

Lara Schmoisman

It's hard when you go by yourself to an event, and people know each other already. And so they're in the circle, and what are you gonna say, Hey, guys, my name is Larra, even if you're an extrovert, still awkward,

Sara Alepin

exactly. So I like to find an introvert and then I introduce myself to them. And then I bring them around with me. And because then I'm introducing myself and this other person that's lovely, and also excited to meet me because now they don't have to do all the heavy lifting that drains their battery completely,

then I'll introduce myself and that other person to the circle, and that immediately disarms the circle. So then immediately, everyone wants to welcome because I'm doing something generous by introducing another person that I just met. And,

Lara Schmoisman

But, but the most important is that you're not alone. You're already bringing someone else with you. So you have your own army.

Sara Alepin

Yes. But I didn't bring that person. So I'm not tempted to just stand in the corner with them and catch up about our rats and cockroaches dislike. Because that's tempting too

Lara Schmoisman

of course, of course, it's tempting, but because going on break into that, group, that circle thanks, gods. It does. It does. I mean, I'm a former introvert.

Sara Alepin

Now you're reformed?

Lara Schmoisman

Ah, you know, that? I'm totally reform. Well, I was an introvert. And on top of that, I didn't speak their language. So I was totally introver, and that I had to say, Ah, ha, ha, ha, because I could understand most of it but I couldn't speak back. But you know, what one day just, I think when you're in your 40s, just you don't give a shit anymore. And just it clicks. And you just do it, and I say, okay, you're gonna speak English. I have a podcast now on now. I'm just going connect with people.

Sara Alepin

I love that. And I actually can relate because I have traveled a lot. And whenever I understand Spanish, but I don't speak it very well. And also the way you're taught to speak Spanish in school is not the way you actually communicate in Spanish.

Lara Schmoisman

Oh, wait, I have a whole conversation about that. I have kids in high school, learning Spanish, and we have issues here. And I have issues with the teachers. And I do not go quiet

Sara Alepin

is so hard. You know, there's a lot of like, depending on where you're from. There's a lot of slang, like just way that we speak. You know,

Lara Schmoisman

I failed the homework. I cannot do the Spanish homework. It doesn't make sense what they ask them to do.

Sara Alepin

I used to get so frustrated in Spanish class, because they could they would say that there wasn't an accent on my i. And it was that it would look too much like a dot and I was like, What do you want me to make? Like the whole page? Come on!

Lara Schmoisman

You saw me. So white that I can be a ghost, I do not look latin. And I have this weird accent that because I learned English from people from all over the world. And I when I learned the English, I learn it with their accents. So I'm kind of a weird accent. Then my son that speaks Spanish fluently. He has an amazing vocabulary. But he speaks like a gringo and he is super wide as they come. He can be a vampire for what people think. And he is like, they can never think that we're he's half Latino,

Sara Alepin

and talk about first impression there.

Lara Schmoisman

Exactly. So I found so many situations that even I'm in front of a Spanish teacher, that his first language was not Spanish, by the way. And is this arguing with me about my son's performance in Spanish. I said, Oh, really? So I kept having the whole conversation. The whole parent teacher conference with my son in Spanish. Let's guess whose one was missing out?

Sara Alepin

Oh, God, the teacher?

Lara Schmoisman

Yes.

Sara Alepin

Oh, no.

Lara Schmoisman

Yes, absolutely. And that shows you that one thing is what we learn. Another thing is what we do, it's about how communicate and that's even more important in networking, how you communicate yourself, even if it's with a video camera, or in person, not only that by but that you give also comfortable you are with the word of how you relate with people. I mean, I don't care if someone called me babe, doll, is how you said it. Not why you say

Sara Alepin

Yeah. That's a big thing right now because a lot of us are afraid to say a lot of different terms. And we're afraid to make mistakes, right? But sometimes, like remember that it is the way you say it. So don't kick your butt too hard later when you're like oh man I wasn't supposed to comment on how her hair looked good or something like, don't be too hard on yourself. Don't be...don't let yourself be too afraid to say the wrong thing.

Lara Schmoisman

And no, I mean, I mean, we it's all so subjective. Like, if you like the person's hair, even if the other person has an issue with it, you still like it, maybe you want to make a click with that person for more that you want because you weren't meant to click with everyone?

Sara Alepin

Yeah, not everybody can be your people, because you would have no time for anyone, especially yourself.

Lara Schmoisman

Absolutely. Talking about ourselves. Likely. I mean, this is Woman's Month, and we're recording this in March. And I been talking to a lot hoomans has said that there were like, a moment in their life, that everything changed. And they realize that the word of the end things, for orders for cultural values that they want to unearth for themselves. And I feel like networking is one of the things that many times women don't do for themselves. Like we met people in our kids call, we met people because we have toxic common. We were meet people at work, but not just for the sake of meeting people and find that maybe we have more things in common than just that activity, or our kids or dogs.

Sara Alepin

Yeah, or that we both have podcasts or both business owners, you know, we kind of, it's really easy to fall into friendships with people that you have something in common with, but they're actually not the right people for you.

Lara Schmoisman

Exactly. And at some point this, like, they were telling me that they opened their life and their mind and realize they have all these relationships, that they're adorable people, but I don't know if they are the people in my life and what I need,

Sara Alepin

and that changes through life.

Lara Schmoisman

Absolutely.

Sara Alepin

I have another podcast called Laughing With Gingers. And we actually talked about this on an episode recently, shockingly, I have a podcast where I laugh loud and have red hair. But we talked about the life expectancy of a friendship is about 10 years, you tend to if your friendship grows beyond 10 years, you have periods where you essentially have a drought in that friendship where you kind of fade out of your lives, and then you come back together. And that that's actually really healthy. Because you have different needs at different points in your lives. And you want to connect with people that satisfy those needs, and that you satisfy those needs for them too... what they you know, their own needs.

Lara Schmoisman

Now, there's a choice trade relationships, I found myself reconnecting with old friends, because life change so you can reconnect again. So it's not everything new, something old could be new.

Sara Alepin

Yes, exactly. And, you know, we can all, we all are constantly reinventing ourselves in every way. But especially as business owners, like maybe you're starting a podcast, or maybe you're transitioning to offering only online events, we actually have been hybrid for years at District Bliss. So we've had online and I was so lucky about that.

Lara Schmoisman

I didn't know that. But also it's about finding not only the right match, but also your right crew. And it's okay that we evolve as business owners show our Givens and our offerings as a business changed too because life moves all the time.

Sara Alepin

It's okay to do that, you know, it's it's okay to move forward and, and to have somebody go out of your life for a while and then come back in when it's the right fit again.

Lara Schmoisman

Yeah, I love that you just use the word recycle. Because I, I, it's an expression that I use all the time that I had to recycle myself so many times in this lifetime. I'm probably I'm still there for a few more. And it's okay to say this is not working for me anymore. And my question for you is, how would you recommend people to go about saying, Okay, I need a new set of buddies, I need a new set of so how, what do you start?

Sara Alepin

Well, if we're looking at it online, I would start by looking at the actual branding. And that means the colors, the words, the imagery, the level of professionalism, and if make sure that speaks to you, because that type, if you're going to an event, you want to make sure that if you're investing your time that you're getting a return on your investment. So make sure that each event you attend, you feel like there's a connection there because everyone else that goes to that event is going to be feeling like it's, you know, connected to them in some way.

Lara Schmoisman

And what about the intention because many people go to network to get out of something out of there, instead of just going have fun and learn something or meet people randomly. It's like I'm coming here to do business.

Sara Alepin

Yes. So definitely set your intentions, and then show up and actively engage with those people that are there. So whether it's a workshop, or whatever it is, or a networking event, show up with your camera on, show up and have a document ready, where you have the links to your website, your Instagram handle, if you have a freebie, because if somebody asks a question that you might have some insight into, then you can drop those links and say, Hey, I'd love to connect, I have some thoughts about what

you were just saying, you know, let's shoot me an email, if you're interested in drop your email, right. And so when you go in prepared, you have a little bit more of like a comfort level to begin with. And then when you you know, listen to what other people are asking. And if that's something that you relate to, or find intriguing, something you can offer insight into or a question that you also have, those are the people that you're going to want to connect with later. So go into it with an open heart, and an open mind and in it from a generous space

Lara Schmoisman

and come back with a list full of email addresses that you can follow up.

Sara Alepin

Yes, or Instagram handles, you can slide right into those DMs.

Lara Schmoisman

Yeah, that's true. And last thing before I let you go to that, because I know they are super busy. I want to talk about collaboration. I mean, it's not all about making money, the money, I feel like it will come back many times starts about giving in. Don't be afraid of having your toolkit of things that you can do, and also be able to write to do you're asked to give your asks because that's what's networking for say, hey, do you guys have anyone who can help me find a contractor or be free to ask? Yeah,

Sara Alepin

or any podcast that I can be interviewed on? I'd love to be a guest. I don't really know any podcasters personally, would anyone be willing to connect me?

Lara Schmoisman

Absolutely. So it's all about gifts and ask. So don't be afraid. Sarah, thank you so so much for being here and to join me with your amazing love. I really made my day and I will talk to you very, very soon.

Sara Alepin

Thanks so much for having me. It's always such a pleasure to see you.

Lara Schmoisman

Thank you for joining us. If you like the show, remember to leave a review. I will really appreciate it. If you want to know more about marketing and and myself, follow me on Instagram. My handle is Lara Schmoisman. Was so good to have you here today. See you next time. catch you on the flip side. Ciao ciao.