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FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT - CAREERFLUENCER PODCAST



099: Being a Positive Influence for Future Generations with Ava McDonald

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Welcome to the Careerfluencer podcast. This is Ava McDonald. I'm an entrepreneur and student currently based out of Austin, Texas.

You just have to have the drive and the motivation to say that this is what I want to do. And this is how I'm going to get there and take small steps. If you find something that you're really passionate about, and that you want to change or make better, I really encourage everyone to go for it.

I absolutely think that the fact that both my parents are entrepreneurs, that was the defining force in my life, they have always encouraged me to think critically and look at ways that I can make a positive difference or solve problems that I saw in my life. And I actually started my first company at the age of six writing and illustrating books that I would sell to my family and friends at holidays. So that was really my first entrepreneurial endeavor.

And you know, honestly, I, I really believe that all teenagers should start a business. And people look at me when I say that, and they're pretty confused. But I think that teenagers and entrepreneurs actually have so much in common, like a desire to innovate, the willingness to take risks, it's definitely hard to be a young entrepreneur, I started supplements when I was 17.

So there are a lot of people out there that were doubtful about my ability to start and run a business as a high school student, my biggest achievement academically It was a middle school degree. So it was definitely hard to be taken seriously, because it's not something that's so common that a 17 year old walks into a boardroom with a bunch of CEOs to pitch their idea. But you know, I quickly learned that data is so important, because that is something that can prove to huge companies that you can provide value and be an asset, no matter how old you are.

And I tell people all the time, one of the biggest things that I've learned is that the most important number is not your age, but it's the value that you can provide to your customers. So I actually began interning in marketing as a sophomore in high school. And from there, I just really loved

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what I was doing. So I was able to intern at a PR firm in my area. And I was the first high school student ever accepted into that program. And from that internship, I learned so much I made so many valuable connections, and really realized that this is what I wanted to do, I actually fell into entrepreneurship.

By accident, I really was just scrolling on social media, and I saw a blatant lack of authenticity and sponsored posts. And it really just came to me pretty instantaneously that there was really something to be done about this. And after doing market research, I found out that the solution that I wanted didn't exist. So I decided it was my role to create the solution that I wanted to see. And I'm really passionate about empowering members of my generation, to take a more active role in the social media marketing economy and utilize their authentic influence to connect with their friends and promote the products that they authentically love.

Every single business starts with just an idea, we all start at the same place. And I'm entirely self funded. Of course, nothing's really normal about starting a business at 17. But I think that's what's great about it. And as Gen Z consumers, we really have something to offer to marketing professionals to CEOs. But I really take every day of being an entrepreneur, like being a student, I'm looking at opportunities to learn, making mistakes is just an opportunity for growth.

So I think that it's important to look at every day, like you're in a class discussion or seminar, find ways to listen to others opinions, interpret those think about ways that you can learn and grow. And I think that that's really my entrepreneurial philosophy is to treat running a business like being a student, you know, what really drives me is the fact that I've found something that I'm authentically passionate about, which is making social media a more authentic place for my generation, and also something that I'm really good at. And I'm so lucky to have found that at an early age and people ask me a lot how I was able to do that. But really, it was from gaining that experience early on in high school through internships, finding what I enjoyed about a certain space, but also combining that with what I would like to change and what I would like to make better.

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So I think it's really important that entrepreneurs have a mission behind what they're doing, because that's really what keeps me going and I am a full time student as well. So balancing My time has been something that I've had to adapt to of course, but really reminding myself of why I started and what I would like to become in the next 5-10 years. Yours is what really keeps me going. I was recently actually named to the 2020 at age 40, under 40. And I was the youngest person on the list as well as the only member of Generation Z, which was such an incredible honor to be on the list with so many incredible marketing and media and advertising executives from huge companies.

But really, I was so honored because I hope that my place on the list can show other young entrepreneurs or young people who want to start a business but think that now it's not the right time that they can do it and they should pursue their entrepreneurial passions, no matter how old they are.