

THE POWER OF AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS WITH SELENA SOO

Hello and welcome back! I am so excited that you're here right now because we are joined by the amazing Selena Soo. She's the founder of S2 Group and she's a business and publicity strategist and a networking expert/genius. Honestly, she's an incredible connector. She helps people really stand out as leaders in their industry, get media exposure and connected to incredible people. She's built a 7-figure business. Honestly, there is no wonder why because when you hear her story and you hear the way she talks about the connections she makes, you will know exactly how she's done it. I love this. It is so thought-provoking the stuff that she shares about the power of connecting with people, especially when we do it in a really authentic way and we go above and beyond to delight and wow the people that we connect with. It's seriously powerful. Honestly, I feel like you need a pen and a piece of paper for this episode so you can make notes because it's that thought-provoking. Right at the end, she shares some details about something she's gifting to everyone. Definitely listen for that because it's absolutely incredible. I really, really hope that this episode inspires you. Enjoy!

Selena, it is so good to have you here. Welcome to the She Means Business podcast!

I'm so happy to be here. Thanks for having me, Carrie.

I am so excited to have you here. I was thinking earlier about the 10-minute master class we did on the website years ago it seems like. I think it was actually years ago.

It was.

We did 3 Tips for Connecting with Your Favorite Expert — it was so good. I'm really glad to have you back and to be hearing this time more about your story.

Obviously, I loved that 10-minute master class we did where you talked about how to connect with your favourite expert. I feel like it's something so many people want to do. I'll leave the link to that interview in the show notes if anyone wants to check it out. I'm really excited to hear more of your story about how you managed to become such a connector. This interview is going to be a little bit different. It's going to be fun I promise. This is what's going to happen: we are going to pretend that there is a movie coming out and it's called She Means Business starring Selena Soo. This movie is all about your entrepreneurial journey and how you turned your dreams into reality. First, we need to set the scene for everyone listening. What kind of movie would this be and what would be the vibe of the movie?

What kind of movie would it be? I think it would be —I don't know what you would call the genre— but I really feel like I didn't have a lot of advantages. In a way, I came out of nowhere. There are obviously things happening in the background. I guess it's a success story kind of a movie.

OK. Everyone likes a success story so this is going to be good. The movie begins and the first scene starts to play. What is the story? What is the scene? What is going on? What began your entrepreneurial path?

I think the opening scene would be me in a women's life coaching circle. In my mid-20s, I was just feeling really lost. I wasn't feeling happy. I wasn't sure about the direction of my life. I didn't feel like I needed to see a therapist; I felt like I needed something else. I got introduced to this life coach. She held these life coaching circles at her home with other ambitious women wanting more from life. I would go to these circles and I started to learn about all these different thought leaders and experts — people like Jack Canfield and Louise Hay as well as some of the newer emerging thought leaders. I just felt like this was the most amazing thing. That helped me more than anything to be exposed to role models who were living their best lives, who were inspiring other people to do the same, heal their relationships, get clear on what they want in terms of their career, their life purpose, their health and everything like that. I feel like a light bulb went off and I just became passionate about this. I was always connecting people to different experts and resources and opportunities. I would say that's where I began and that's where the movie would

begin — with my low point of having nowhere to go and then finding this women’s coaching group.

I love that. I can literally picture in my mind now everyone sat there in this coaching group and you discovering these incredible people and these incredible books. When you discovered those books, did you just read them and soak up all their information and all of a sudden did you just read them you’ve gone down this rabbit hole where this other world existed you that hadn’t realised was out there?

That’s such a good way to put it. Yeah. I would read all these books. I would join these people’s newsletters. Once you get on one person’s newsletter, you learn about all their friends. Over time, I started learning about people like Marie Forleo and Ramit Sethi. It just opened a whole new world for me. Deep down, I wanted to be somebody who could promote incredible people like them. That actually led to my first business. What happened is I went to business school because I needed a break from my non-profit career. I felt like I hit a ceiling. I wanted to try new things and see what was possible for me. I worked with this amazing female entrepreneur who had a media company and she was starting a new media company around her personal brand focused on women empowerment. Working alongside with her was really eye-opening because when I worked at the non-profit, I saw myself as a really hardworking person but a non-profit employee. I didn’t see myself as an entrepreneur even though I was being super-entrepreneurial. Working alongside someone who had made multi-millions made me realise wow, I have things to offer someone at that level and I can operate at that high level of business. It really gave me confidence. When I was at NYU, I had a lot more free time being in business school because I wasn’t pursuing consulting or investment banking. I wasn’t going to those interviews and those events. I had time to network and meet other people. I ended up connecting with one of my online mentors and heroes Ramit Sethi who was living in New York City. Through him, I connected with Marie Forleo. It just opened up this whole new world for me. As these people got to know me, they really believed in me and they saw me as the best person at what I did. It was crazy because in the past —and this is another scene from the movie— I would be literally in my bed late at night watching Marie TV, reading Ramit’s newsletters, reading Danielle LaPorte’s inspirational posts on Facebook and just thinking, “Wow, these people are so amazing. I don’t

know them, but I feel like these are the kind of people that I would love to be friends with, that I would love to support and get to know.” I ended up stepping into that world. I mean, that is the world I live in right now. It’s pretty crazy how things have come full circle.

That is so cool. I just love it because it’s the power of getting yourself out there and meeting people and connecting. It builds so much momentum and all of the pieces start to slot into place. Everyone is going to be wondering right now, “How did you do it?” I reckon a lot of people lie in bed at night thinking “I would love to be Marie Forleo’s best friend.” How did you do it? Going from that moment where you were lying in bed watching Marie TV to actually building relationships with these incredible people? How did that all come about?

I won’t claim to be Marie Forleo’s best friend but I am fortunate to know her and have her in my circle. I would say there were a lot of little things that led up to it. One of the things was my relationship with Ramit. I literally was walking home from my summer internship while I was in business school with that female media entrepreneur and I saw him on the street. I think what a lot of people would do when they see the person they admire is “Oh my God!” and run in the other direction. “Ah, I have no idea what I would say to that person.” I don’t know, there was something inside of me that said I should go for it because I might never see this person again in my life. So, I just went up and introduced myself to him. It was a crazy story. He was letting his parents into a car and we started talking. Apparently, they had gone on a cruise with him. He mentioned he was on that cruise with his sisters. I was like, “Oh yeah, you have 2 sisters.” He was like, “Wait. How do you even know that?” I was like, “Well, in chapter 7 in your book when you talked about savings, you talked about weddings and how your sisters both had east coast and west coast Indian wedding.” He was like, “Oh my God, I can’t believe you know that. You’re a stalker.” I was like, “No, I’m not a stalker.” We started talking. I had purchased his programs and read his books so we had a lot to talk about. Then he said, “Are you on my list for my New York meetup because I’m going to be hosting a meetup soon?” I said, “Yeah, I’m on the list.” He hosted a meetup a month or two later. I ended up going to that meetup and I met Derek Halpern in there who was one of Ramit’s best friends. I remember talking to Derek and Ramit coming over and “Do you 2 know each other?” “Oh no, we just met.” The thing is I was so familiar with Derek’s work and Ramit’s work because I follow them, there’s a lot to talk about. Sometimes, we

think what would we even talk about with these crazy successful people that we admire? You have to remember that everyone's favourite topic is themselves. If you are following their work and you have something that you can compliment them on, offer feedback or express appreciation, they're going to be interested. You're going to be the most interesting person in the room. Sometimes, we get into our heads thinking what are all the things I can do and say to impress them? If you just connect on a genuine level and make the focus on them, it's actually very easy to have these conversations.

Have you found it's easy to do as well when you're not with people in person? Do you think it would be easy for them to reach out and connect with people, too, online?

Yeah, absolutely. I was developing a relationship with Marie Forleo long before I ever met her in person and the same with so many people. I may have a relationship with them but I've never ever met them in person. You can reach out to them over email and express your appreciation for their work or share a success story or an interesting resource. That happens all the time. Or, you could get on Skype and have a Skype coffee date with them. There are so many ways to connect with people so you absolutely don't need to be living in the same city as them. With that being said, I do think for those entrepreneurs that are serious about building relationships, it's worthwhile to consider maybe once a year picking a major event where you know a lot of your industry's influencers and colleagues will be congregating and showing up. The conference organisers will literally be spending a year thinking about the event, picking the best speakers, doing all the marketing and create amazing experiences and talks. All you have to do is show up. It is worth it to really consider picking at least one event to show up to so you can complement those virtual relationships with some strong in-person connections as well.

Yeah, I completely agree with that. I think it's so important and so many people forget to do it. When you go along to those events, you have all sorts of inspirational moments and just meet the most incredible people that lead to some incredible things most of the time.

Absolutely. Carrie, I want to add a bit more. I mentioned how I met Ramit, but I want to talk more about how I turned it into a deeper relationship with him and Marie, just so that people can fully connect the dots and see “What would I do in those situations? What could I do in the future?” A theme that I’m going to be sharing is that in thinking about these relationships and get ahead, you don’t want to wait for opportunities — you want to create opportunities. What happened a month or two later is Ramit reached out to me and he said, “Selena, I’m redoing my website. I’ve got these 2 mock-ups of home pages. If you’ve got a minute, I would love for you to take a look and give me your feedback, but if you’re too busy, no worries.” I remember being actually in business school at my entrepreneurship class. I left the classroom because I thought nothing’s more important than helping this person that I admire so much. I went to the library, gathered a group of people and created a focus group. I got their feedback on the different versions of his website and then created this long email summary —almost like a report— for him with all these really deep insights and sent it over and he was so blown away. Even though Ramit has never been my one-on-one client, I’ve been someone who’s always stepping up and finding ways to help. He’s like “Do you have a minute?” and I put 5 hours of work into this and send it off. Those are the kinds of things I do all the time. He let Marie know about me. Also, there were some other things where he was looking to reach out to certain people and I helped with certain emails and things like that because I’m really good at reaching out to people who are almost impossible to reach and getting a response, knowing how to connect with people deeply and persuade and influence them. I just helped him in different ways. He was really able to speak to my skills and experience. That was really powerful for me.

From that, how did the business side of things come about? I want to point out that I love the fact that you go above and beyond. This is just so key for anyone building a business. The people that go above and beyond are the people that come out on top and succeed because we want to be surrounded by people that will wow us. To me, that’s everything in business.

Thanks for emphasising that point. They’re really busy so they’re only going to notice you if you go above and beyond. Otherwise, they’re going to be too busy to notice. The other thing with going above and beyond is you have to make sure that you’ve got the right intentions. You want to be selective with the people you help, not because you’re discriminating in a not positive way,

but because you're just one person. You've got your own business to run so you can't be helping 20 people all day long. But you can choose a couple of people you care about and go all in and help them. The secret here is being detached and not expecting anything in return. That might seem really counterintuitive because "I'm giving so much. Why would I be detached? I do want something in return. I'm looking to grow my business." The thing is you just really have to trust that when you help people, good things will come back to you. When I started helping people like Ramit, Marie, Danielle LaPorte and so many other people in different ways, sometimes big and sometimes small ways, the word gets out. When I started my business, a lot of people in Marie Forleo's mastermind saw that she had given me an endorsement. She had stopped running her mastermind. So now, these people wanted to find out how to work with me one-on-one and join my mastermind. That's pretty crazy when I had just started my business and I had a lot of top people wanting to work with me directly. That's how I ended up helping me from the business perspective. It was creating that good will, that reputation, that brand and having those endorsements. In some cases, a lot of these top influencers would personally refer people to me.

I love it. I love it so much. Every single one of us can do that and be that person that will genuinely care. It can transform everything. Going back to the movie, you start connecting with these incredible people. How did that develop into the business?

I started connecting with all these incredible people. There were a number of people who wanted to work with me one-on-one. At the time, I was working with a client who was not a good match for me for a number of reasons. A great person and very grateful for the experience, but it did make me question whether I wanted to even do the work I was doing. Something just felt off. A lot of people were wanting to work with me, but I was turning all this business away. Clearly, something was wrong. So I organised a focus group at my home. I invited people like Ramit and Derek Halpern to show up. The trick to this is you want to get an anchor person. My anchor person was Ramit. "I'm feeling really torn in my business. There's no one's advice that I value more than yours. I want to do a focus group and I can do it around your schedule. Which of these times and dates can you make?" Clearly, I've given several options and it's around his schedule. Chances are, as long as he cares and wants to support me, he can make it. After I got him, then I got Derek. Then I got all the other people. I got these people's feedback on my

business. It really opened up my eyes to other directions I could take it. Also, a bunch of other friends of mine were working with a coach and they were in her mastermind. They have these successful 6-figure businesses and they felt really good about their businesses and their business models. I knew that was missing. I had the skills and the talent and the heart and the drive to help people, but I didn't have the right business model. There were things that were off. So I hired this coach. It was really about turning to my community and asking them "What should I do?" When I figured out my next step, I moved into coaching. I also created my own mastermind. Once I felt good about my business model and how I was helping people, I was ready to accept a lot more clients. I felt like that was when I my business took off.

What were you doing at the time to really grow your audience and get your message out there?

I will be honest, even now, I'm not someone who's constantly doing list-building. At the time, I was doing media, so I was writing guest posts and podcast interviews. That did help. I did get a couple of thousand people through that. It's substantial in the early stages. Actually, my biggest guest post at that time got me 1000 new subscribers so that was really big. Some other ones would get 50 or 100. That's what I was doing. Actually, that is quite significant. Nowadays, I mostly grow my audience through affiliate partnerships. I think it's a similar thing. It's like endorsed traffic. If you do a guest post or you're on a podcast, it's like "OK, this media outlet thinks you're someone who's an expert." People who join your list are more engaged. Even if you do affiliate stuff, that's the same thing. There's an affiliate who's saying "I know this person. I think her work is really great. You should learn about her." So, I think everybody has a different personality type and ways that they can get their message out there. For me, it's always been through warm, endorsed traffic.

I love that. It's such a great strategy. Like you said, people are so much more engaged when it comes through a reputable person. Obviously, your business has grown, developed and flourished. Have there been any challenges, obstacles or drama? This is a movie after all. Have there been twists and turns that you didn't expect to deal with?

Oh gosh, drama, yeah. I am somebody who is all about harmony. When there's drama, I'm not really happy but I also know that's how we learn and grown. Over the course of my career, I've had mostly 95% the most amazing clients and students who are incredible stars and it's such an honour to support them. I think we'd all had our nightmare clients. I'm someone who actually gets along quite well even people with fake egos. I'm so good at creating harmony, seeing things from the other person's perspective and just being a calm nice person. I help people become big stars, get known, get seen and stand out. There are those people that have a lot of drama around that. Maybe they are doing particular work because they overcame abuse in their family or major money issues and they've got these incredible fears and triggers. Sometimes, when you're working with people like that, it can come out and it's not very pleasant. Now, I'm in a fortunate position where if someone is causing problems and it doesn't seem like we would be able to work it out, or it's just going to be too stressful for me and it's not worth it, I can give them the option of leaving my group program or just stop working with them one-on-one. I don't need to stay in those situations. I would say that in the beginning stages of my business, it was hard to leave them because you're starting off with a smaller email list and smaller audience. It feels hard to let go of opportunities. Even though when you do let go, something better is usually on its way, but in the moment, it feels very scary to let go of clients and opportunities.

Yeah, it's definitely a scary thing to do. It's really a courageous thing to be able to do. The entrepreneurial journey is always pushing us to grow and develop as people. I think that's one of the things I love so much about it. The personal journey it takes you on — you just don't expect that it will ever have such a huge impact, but it does.

Oh my gosh, 100%. You never learn this in the classroom — you only learn by going through it. There have been a lot of amazing times, but also a lot of hard times. Especially if you're growing your business quickly, everything is accelerated, including the challenges you have to get through in order to get to the next level.

Now, we're getting to the best part of the movie. You've created this really successful business. This is the success part of the success movie. What is your life like now?

My life is so good. I feel so grateful for the life I get to live. I started my business because I wanted to promote these visionary people with amazing messages. Early on in my business, I realised I want to do that in a way where I can help more than just a handful of clients. So I created this program called Impacting Millions. It's really my signature program. We have a couple of hundred people in that program right now and it continues to grow. The people in that group have landed opportunities like literally Oprah Magazine and places like Cosmopolitan, Business Insider, Entrepreneur, wherever you can think of — you name it and my students have been in these publications and media outlets. That's really been coming full circle. Also, I'm able to partner with other top experts who I want to get the word out to their communities. I feel like I am so passionate about relationships. I've been building these media relationships and influencer relationships for years and years. Now, I've got this amazing community of people that I can share those relationships and opportunities and people I can partner with to get the word out. I'm just so happy. I recently came back from Miami. I went on a holiday with another great friend of mine. It's so great to have a team now who can help keep the business running even if I choose to take a little vacation. Nothing's going to fall apart if I'm not inside doing stuff for the business 24/7. It's been a really great evolution. I'm very happy with where I'm at right now.

I do love it. I love how businesses can enable us to create the most dreamy lifestyles. I feel like it's so worth it for what we can actually create and make happen. I love hearing your story and I love the fact that it all started by bumping into someone that you love on the street and developing these powerful relationships. I just think it's really eye-opening and really powerful to hear your story of what is possible when you follow through with connections and you go all out to serve them above and beyond to wow them in a really genuine way. I just love it. Like I said earlier, every single one of us can do that. Oh my goodness, make a list of all these people I want to connect with and figure out how I can authentically connect with these people. I absolutely love it. To close your movie, it would be good to end with a profound statement, maybe sharing the biggest lesson that you've learned throughout your entrepreneurial journey.

Yeah, sure. I think the biggest lesson and the most important thing is the way to get people to care about you is to care about them first. Parallel to that, the way to become interesting to other people to become interested in them. I feel like I do that all the time with the relationships I build with these big influencers or with the media. I care so much about them and their goals and how I can help them. Because I care so much, they start to care about me. That also extends to your audience, to your newsletter readers, when you share in your emails things that are personal and vulnerable and you show that you care and paying time and attention on them, they're going to care about you as well. The #1 secret to success is to care about your people.

I couldn't agree more. What an amazing statement to end on — that's so amazing. Selena, thank you so much for coming and sharing your story with us, and for sharing your amazing tips for connecting and building powerful relationships. It's been really, really inspiring. Thank you so much.

Oh, thank you. It's been such a pleasure. I have a gift that I would love to share with your audience, if there's time.

Yes, definitely. Tell us all about it.

As everyone knows now, one of my favourite things is helping elevate experts, coaches, authors and making sure the world knows about them. Publicity is a really powerful way to do that because you have these top media outlets with massive audiences endorsing you. It's such a powerful brand-builder. I just created something brand new, which I think is very epic. A lot of work went into it. It's a media calendar and it includes 179 story ideas, hooks and special dates that you can use to get featured in the media. For every month of the year and every week of the year, we have different story ideas and dates that you can pitch based on what has happened seasonally. For example, Valentine's Day, Super Bowl, summer coming up — all these different proven angles that you can use that the media would be interested in. If people want that, they can go to my website at selenasoo.com. They can go to selenasoo.com/mediacalendar to download that.

Amazing. We'll leave the link also over on the show notes on the website. Everyone, definitely go and check that out. Selena, thank you so much. You have

been absolutely amazing. I hope you have all enjoyed it so much. I've been so inspired. Definitely head over to the blog and leave a comment with your biggest take-away from this session. I will see you next week for another episode of She Means Business.