**26. How I Turned My Life Around & Got Featured in Forbes**

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:00:00] Open the door to your hopes and dreams. Open the door to your vision. Open the door to your future.

**Intro** [00:00:07]

Hello and welcome to ALSO in PINK. The podcast all about lifestyle design. How we live, the clothes we choose and how we organise our space. I'm your host, Alexandria Lawrence, a certified KonMari consultant and personal stylist. I'm here to guide you on your journey to live a happy, fulfilled life.

Every Tuesday, you'll get new insight on what it means to live well, plus actionable tips.

Redefine what's possible and create your ideal life. And now for something a bit more personal. I'm going to tell you a story. My story. How I went from struggling freelance musician, failed entrepreneur and unhappy employee to finding my purpose and my people. And yes, I got featured in Forbes within five months of launching my business. I hope my story inspires you to say yes to putting yourself out there. To free yourself from toxic relationships in your work life or personal life. To say yes to living your hopes and dreams. Yes, you can make 2021 your year.

Here's something I never thought I'd say. I just got featured in Forbes magazine. Yes. That Forbes. Every day this past week, my mom has sent me a little update. 57 views. The next day, it's up to 649 views champagne, glass, clinking, emoji. 700 views. Currently 810, 876. 1,340 views, 1400 views. And currently my Forbes feature is 2,220 views and counting.

 Okay, let me make something clear. When it comes to being an entrepreneur, I'm basically a baby chick. Sure, a baby chick is cute and fuzzy and hops about an endearing way, but it's still got a lot to learn. The little fuzzball is constantly growing and developing its skills, but it doesn't know how to fly. Not yet. And it's pretty vulnerable to all sorts of creatures like hawks, possums, badgers, and yes, even your neighbor's lazy cat.

I started my business and podcast five months ago. So, how do you get featured in Forbes within five months of launching your business?

 Well, let's go back in time.

 Picture a dismal office block in Wembley, north-West London. Faded blue carpets. The sickly glow of fluorescent lights. Rows of cheap white tables pushed close together. Your standard office drab. I was in my early thirties. I had worked as a freelance classical musician for 10 years and had never had a full-time job. Office life was a shock to the system. The daily commute across London took an hour each way. And I was surprised to learn that this was nothing special. My commute was the average. Some people in my office commuted more like an hour and a half, even two hours each way. So I was lucky. I guess.

The variable work schedule I was used to as a musician, hadn't prepared me for the relentless weekly slog of life in the office. I was like a penguin plucked out of my natural habitat and plonked on an African Savanna with elephants and cheetahs running past. I had absolutely no context for what to expect. It was a strange and unfamiliar world. Most, if not all of my friends, were self-employed people in the arts, many of them also musicians.

A lot of decisions I've made in my life are based on intuition. On a gut feeling. And somehow I'm not afraid to jump. It was a leap that took me to that office block in Wembley. And that building was just a stone's throw from Wembley stadium. If you're not a football fan and I'm not. Wembley stadium hosts major football matches, including things like the FA cup final. Big whoop. Sorry, Ben. My husband is a loyal West Ham United supporter as is Obama. So I'm not a sports fan. But I can get weirdly excited about a big game. But only every so often. I love the buzz of the Olympics, the excitement of Wimbledon, and I can even get into a rugby world cup.

Still, the most contact I've had with Wembley Stadium is walking around it at lunchtime. It was one way to get out of the office and get some fresh air.

A few months before getting that office job in Wembley, I'd seen an article about developer bootcamps. This was 2013 and there was a fair amount of press about these coder bootcamps. Essentially you learned to code on an intensive three-month course. Well, you learn some coding basics. And then you go off to work in the exciting in-demand world of tech.

This might feel pretty left field for a freelance musician, but it made sense to me at the time. I had experimented with coding. I built my own website with lots of help from a developer friend. But that's another story.

So there I was in that dismal office block in Wembley. The only woman in the developer's den. The only woman on the tech team of a clothing and lifestyle e-commerce company.

I was excited at first, I was finally bringing in the big bucks. Well, big bucks for a freelance Baroque Viola player. My starting salary was 27 grand a year. Close to three times what I ever earned as a musician. How amazing. I felt like I was finally making a contribution to the household income plus learning some exciting new skills. Win-win.

But the rosy glow quickly faded. My shiny new job soon felt dull and lifeless and draining. I'm sure there are fulfilling corporate jobs out there. There must be, right? But mine was not one of them.

That it wasn't a good cultural fit is what I'd say if I was feeling generous. Tech guys tend to eat at their desk. You could call it a working lunch. A working lunch consisting more often than not of junk food, soft drinks, all those things that would horrify your well-meaning parents who heaped steamed broccoli and lentils on your plate as a child.

Lunch in the developer's den is a world of screens. Everyone has two monitors and a laptop, with the coder himself connected to the laptop by some invisible unbreakable cord.

I had to get out of the office whenever possible. And eventually I made some good friends which did make a world of difference. Chatting and whingeing with them over lunch became the highlight of my day. Shout out to Corina, Oliver and Patrice. And my train ladies, Sam, Petra and Yvonne who brought joy to my morning commute. Making friends on your commute is key and it's easier than you think.

But the work was relentless. There were arbitrary deadlines, which meant I worked most weekends without pay, just to keep up and get everything done that was supposed to get done.

 Several of us even stayed in the office until 3:00 AM one horrific morning to meet a deadline. In case you're wondering. Yes, I got to work on time the next day.

And instead of being horrified, when he found out the crazy long, unhealthy hours we'd put in. Our boss was impressed. Yeah, guys. Great work.

 The same boss would sit in the middle of the developer's den and watch us. He had a special kind of nervous energy that filled the room with electric unease and tension. He'd watch our screens and make comments. If I spent too long working on a particular task, he'd say something. Why hadn't I finished that thing yet? Well, being watched doesn't help me work any faster... is what I should have said.

 I'd never felt stress like that before. I remember one moment in particular, when the tech boss came over to look at something on my screen. I didn't at first understand what he wanted me to change. As he stood there next to me, his frustration bubbling up, I felt an intense fear rising up inside me, a deep paralyzing anxiety that coursed through my entire body. I felt stupid and completely powerless.

 I remember looking at the rail tracks on my morning commute. And fantasizing about jumping. I never would have jumped though. I'm too much of an optimist and far too stubborn to ever give up on life. But still it's a picture I played over and over again in my head. The fantasy of ending my life-sucking job on those London transport tracks.

The real tragedy is that some people do jump.

My heart goes out to anyone who's lost a loved one to suicide. I've lost someone too. I know that pain well.

A toxic work environment is like a bad relationship. You might put up with it longer than you should. And when you're out of it, you wonder how you could possibly have been in it for so long. Everyone said to me, stay there at least a year. You have to stay there for a year. I lasted 15 months before saying Sianora, goodbye and good riddance.

Yes, I had a retirement party. I knew I couldn't work for someone else ever again. I just, I don't have it in me to work in an office. Certainly not in the old school sense of being chained to a desk five days a week, and sometimes weekends too. I don't want to TGIF my life away. So I had a retirement party at the age of 34. I said to myself, if it's a choice between barely scraping by as a musician or having a full-time job with better pay. I'll go back to the unpredictable and not always enjoyable life of a musician.

But I chose door number three.

I knew I wanted to be my own boss. I wanted more than anything to be an entrepreneur.

My first attempt at running a business was a complete and utter failure. I self-published an illustrated book without any idea of who it was for or how I'd sell it. I don't know if you could even call it a business. I certainly didn't treat it like one. But at the time, I had no context for how to succeed.

I didn't know anyone who knew anything about business, let alone how to successfully run one. But failure is part of life. Failure doesn't define who you are. Failure is an opportunity to learn.

So, how do you start your own business? In 2015, I didn't have a clue. I didn't know any entrepreneurs. I didn't know anyone who knew anything about business or marketing. But I wasn't going to let that stop me.

Hello, Google.

Yes. I started my three year internet deep dive. I went to branding and marketing talks all over London. I went to talks about growth hacking, talks about developing your personal brand, talks about angel investors and venture capitalism. I went to talk after talk after talk. I read article after article. I was spinning my wheels in a sort of infinite learning loop. With all this learning, I started to get ideas about branding and marketing. I didn't have any real world experience myself, but I knew what had worked for other people. This led me to give my own talk on branding and marketing to post-grad music students. This was at the Guildhall school of music and drama in London where I'd done my postgrad studies in early music years before.

my talk was called five things music college didn't teach me: lessons from the London tech startup scene. I loved the shocked looks on the faces of these music post-grads when I unleashed marketing basics, like it's not about you. It's about your target audience.

**Review Ad Spot** [00:13:40]

Well, hello. Can I just say, thank you. Thank you for listening. And if you're enjoying the show, it would mean the world to me if you'd rate and review ALSO in PINK. I'll make it super easy for you and you can even win a prize.

Submit your review on Apple Podcasts, or wherever you get your podcasts, for a chance to win a 20 minute one-to-one virtual coaching session with me. Pick my brain about life, KonMari or style. I'll announce the monthly winner on each Ask Alexandria episode. So be sure to listen out to see if your review gets picked. All you need to do is: go to ratethispodcast.com/alsoinpink. And rate and review the show. Want tips on how to win? Write something genuine. Be thoughtful and let your personality shine through. Bonus points for a dash of charm.

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**Episode Resumes** [00:14:52]

As you can imagine, there are a lot of guys who talk about marketing. And that's not in itself a bad thing. There are plenty of remarkable men out there who are compelling speakers, who want to add value and do good. But these marketing guys tend to communicate in a way that doesn't exactly speak to me.

 There's a huge focus on tactics. Tactics to quickly drive engagement. Tactics to game the system. Tactics to do this. Tactics to do that. There's a push for quantity over quality. And there's almost a contempt for the normals, for people who don't play the game and hustle the hustle.

 I learned a lot from these marketing guys, but I was still on the fence. I wasn't ready to take action. In retrospect, I think that's because I hadn't found my people yet. I could see that marketing at its best was about providing value, was about psychology and human nature and all sorts of interesting things. And marketing doesn't need to be some sort of manipulative, dark art. The proverbial used car salesman, trying to pull a fast one. Trying to sell you stuff you don't need or want.

Although I learned a lot in my three year internet, deep dive. I didn't fully trust the people I'd been learning from. I trusted that their tactics worked, but I didn't trust their motivations. I didn't trust their values.

These marketing guys are great showmen and give compelling talks. But there's still a bit too much of the magician there. The illusionist. I always had a gut feeling that I didn't trust these growth hackers farther than I could throw them. And I'm not the incredible Hulk. So I wouldn't be able to throw them very far. Maybe if I took them by surprise and had to run at them from a distance, I could push them over, but that's about it.

In other words, they were not my people.

 And then I came across Selena Soo.

Selena Soo is an entirely different kind of entrepreneur. Sure, she has the seven figure business to prove she's in the game. She's a successful business woman who knows what she's doing. But she also has heart. She wants to help you realize your potential. And she's not just saying that.

She talks the talk and walks the walk. Selena has proven herself again and again. And unlike those marketing guys, I trust her values. I trust her advice. She is the mentor for heart-centered change-making entrepreneurs. For people like me. And I imagine people like you.

 Selena Soo's super power is her ability to build genuine relationships. She's an incredible publicity strategist and the most connected person that I know.

 Joining Selena's year long program called Impacting Millions is the best business decision I ever made. It helped me take a step back. It helped me really consider what it is I want to do. As a result, I retrained as a KonMari consultant and personal stylist.

I started this podcast and launched my business. ALSO in PINK was born.

And now, five months later, I'm featured in Forbes. I have Selena and her amazing team to thank for that. I don't think you can do better than to have Selena Soo in your corner. She's astonishingly straightforward and reveals so much of herself as a person and as a business woman. She values integrity and excellence.

About a week ago, Selena opened up about how she was in an emotionally abusive relationship, even as a smart and successful woman. She has courageously shared her story in the hope that it inspires others to stand up for themselves and reclaim their personal power.

The closest thing I've come to an emotionally abusive relationship is my 15 months of working crazy hours for an employer who didn't give a damn about my wellbeing or happiness. I did my work willingly and at the time didn't feel I had a choice. After all, everyone said, stick it out for a year. It looks better on your CV. You need to stay in your job for at least a year. No, you don't. You always have a choice. Be courageous and speak up. Stand up for yourself and get the support you need or just leave. Get the heck out of that toxic work environment or that toxic relationship. You don't need to stick it out.

I would retire tomorrow if I could. I'll never forget a conversation I overheard on London transport in my commuter days.

Picture two businessmen in their 50s. Unremarkable in their appearance. Nondescript men in nondescript suits with nondescript briefcases. Sitting next to each other on the London underground.

They struck me as casual acquaintances, polite and civil. Maybe they were colleagues, but they didn't seem like friends. Even so, one man was telling the other a surprisingly personal story.

He was 57, he said, and had recently had a heart attack. It was due to work-related stress, but he didn't go into detail. What I remember most vividly about this conversation was what he said next.

I would retire tomorrow if I could.

Even at the time, I felt like saying, why on earth don't you retire? Why are you still working this miserable job that's had such a negative impact on your health and wellbeing?

What's the point of working a few more years to save a bit more money? At what cost.

But I said nothing.

 I've never forgotten this exchange. It planted a seed. I thought at the time. If there's ever something I can do to help people realize they have a choice. To help people live life on their own terms, to help people strive to live well. And if I could gain my own financial freedom in the process, now that, that would be truly rewarding.

 Through Selena Soo's course Impacting Millions, I was reminded of this conversation. I was reminded of my WHY. I want to make an impact.

In business and life, Selena surrounds herself with amazing people. She attracts a community of entrepreneurs who also want to make an impact. People who truly want to make our world a better place. People who do business with integrity. People who have big dreams. People who are committed to doing the work to make their big dreams come true.

I've met some wonderful, inspiring people through Selena. And I'm sure many of them will be guests on this podcast now and in the future.

Selena Soo has been instrumental in helping me rethink my life and start a business I really believe in.

Her connections helped me get featured in Forbes before I even launched my own program or product. And do you know what? Selena got her first piece in Forbes before she even had a website. So, if you think you're not ready. Think again. You are ready. You don't need a website. You don't even need an offer.

Don't take the slow path like I did. I spent several years spinning my wheels. I didn't know where to start, so I cast my fishing line into the black hole that is the internet. And it took me three years before I found someone I know like, and trust. And that someone is Selena Soo.

 So save yourself some time. Here's what you need. You need to learn from experts. You need to learn from people who share your values. You need to be part of a community that inspires you. You need to take action before you're ready.

Publicity helps you get your story in front of more people. It helps you get in front of your ideal clients. Sure, a feature in Forbes is an amazing thing, but it's not an end point. Been there done that. A feature in Forbes opens the door. It's a wonderful credibility boost that opens the door to possibilities.

What could you do if more people knew who you are?

Open the door to your hopes and dreams. Open the door to your vision. Open the door to an article in Forbes. Open the door to impactful media features. Open the door to your future. And invest in yourself. I can't emphasize this enough. It is so, so important to invest in yourself.

That's when things really start to happen. It's all about getting in the right room with the right people. Trust that you can do it. Believe in yourself and invest in yourself.

Selena Soo is my mentor and I'm proud to be an affiliate for the upcoming launch of Impacting Millions, her year long program to help you build connections and develop your publicity skills.

Impacting millions transformed my life, and I know it can transform yours too.

If you'd like to dip your toe in the water, I encourage you to download Selena's free publicity calendar. It's a fantastic resource and a great place to start working on your visibility. As Selena often says, it's about taking that first imperfect step. You may not think you're ready. But I promise you nothing will change unless you take action.

Say yes to being in the room with people who are striving for excellence. 2021 is your year to make things happen. Yes, we can change the world one connection at a time. Well, hope you enjoyed hearing my story. So here's some key takeaways from the show today. You don't need to stay in a soul destroying job for a year, just because people say it looks good on your CV. Don't tolerate a toxic work environment or a toxic relationship. Emotional abuse at work or anywhere else is not okay. Confide in someone you trust, call a helpline. Ask for help and get yourself out of that unhealthy situation.

If you've ever said I'd retire tomorrow if I could, ask yourself, why can't you? Why can't you at least do something else?

Remember, invest in yourself. If you're looking to make an impact, if you're looking to attract your ideal clients, if you're looking to get yourself out there. If you're looking to get a feature in Forbes or anywhere else. Get yourself a mentor. Get some support. I wholeheartedly recommend my mentor, Selena Soo. She is the real deal. Dip your toe in her world and download her free publicity calendar. There's a link in the show notes. Whatever you do. Believe in yourself, invest in yourself and get the help and support you need.

**Outro** [00:27:32]

That's our show then. Thank you so much for listening. I'm Alexandria, and this is ALSO in PINK. The podcast, all about lifestyle design. If you enjoyed the show, please subscribe to ALSO in PINK, wherever you get your podcasts. And the absolute best way to show your support is to write a review on Apple Podcasts or iTunes. This really helps more than anything to promote the show. And, of course, tell all your friends. Thank you so much for your support. Until next time, have a wonderful week. Redefine what's possible and create your ideal life.