

Debbie Saviano of Debbie Saviano LLC

Speaker1: [00:00:04] This is the Investor Connect podcast program. I'm Hall Martin. I'm the host of the show in which we interview Angel Investors, venture capital, family offices, private equity, and many other investors for early stage and growth companies. I hope you enjoy this episode. The Investor Connect is a 501 C three nonprofit dedicated to the education of investors and startups for fund raising. Please consider donating \$100 to the program to help others in their investor and entrepreneur journey. You can find the donate button on the Investor Connect org website. Hello, this is Hall Martin with Investor Connect. Today. We're here with Debbie Saviano , founder of Debbie Saviano LLC. Debbie is a course creator and social media advocate and works with individuals, organizations and nonprofits. Debbie, thank you for joining us.

Speaker2: [00:00:52] Thank you for having me.

Speaker1: [00:00:53] Great. Well, tell us more about yourself and your work.

Speaker2: [00:00:56] You know, I find it so literacy because I think you reach a certain point in your life and you think you realize that everything you've done before this time prepares you for today. I move constantly. Growing up, my daddy was in the oil fields. And of course, you're from Texas. You know, that means we didn't have any money. People outside of Texas, things that means you have money. But, you know, we didn't. But so we moved all the time. And so I never met a stranger. I love meeting people. I love learning. And so that prepared me for my role as a principal. And then when I left being a principal, I started doing social media. And so it's like it's all steppingstones, right? And what I do is I teach courses. Education's always the foundation of what I do. I believe it's the pathway to help other people. So I teach courses and I help redesign people's LinkedIn profiles.

Speaker1: [00:01:39] Great. So what is your experience with LinkedIn and other similar platforms?

Speaker2: [00:01:43] So when I left education, this is 12 years ago and I knew that I needed social media, I didn't know why. I just knew I needed it. And so I spent two and a half years learning everything I could. But there wasn't a plan. I didn't know why. I just knew that I was

supposed to learn it. So LinkedIn being a professional platform, I think that's why I was drawn there first. And so when I did my LinkedIn profile, I drew upon that educational background. I know how people learn. I know how to keep people on a page. I know how people keep people engaged. And I did my profile that way. And a funny thing happened. People started reaching out to hire me. And so that's kind of how it was all born. That was not the plan. I didn't know, but I took all those things and started doing LinkedIn profiles and as a result, that was the beginning with LinkedIn. Now I do every platform today and that's also another conversation sometime. But you can only do so much. But LinkedIn is always my go to. I mean, to me it's like the best thing since sliced bread and for entrepreneurs and professionals and etc., etc. It's just there's no other platform as good as LinkedIn is, and they're not paying me to say that.

Speaker1: [00:02:43] Great. So so what is the strength of LinkedIn over other platforms?

Speaker2: [00:02:47] Well, first of all, it's got 740 million people worldwide. It's only for professionals. I always tell people you can happen on a feed and Facebook, you can happen on Twitter or whatever, but on LinkedIn, people go there for a reason and that's the key. They go there for a purpose, and the purpose is to find out everything they can about you. And the unique thing about LinkedIn is oftentimes people think, well, I don't use LinkedIn. And I have to gently say, it's not about you, it's not about me, it's about people searching for you. Professionals expect to find professionals on LinkedIn, and if you do a Google search on someone by name, if you have a LinkedIn profile, which a lot of people have, they just didn't use it right. They haven't utilized it. Your LinkedIn is going to come up in the top 3 to 5 searches and so first impressions are everything. And so making sure that, you know, that people they're in a business mindset. That's why it's called a golden rolodex. And the one thing if I only had to say one thing about why LinkedIn decision makers are there, whatever your your area of interest is, decision makers are they're.

Speaker1: [00:03:49] Greene So on the other side, what is the weakness of LinkedIn that you found?

Speaker2: [00:03:54] I think the weaknesses and that's a fascinating question. I don't think I've ever been asked that. I think as people's perceptions, people think, oh, it's still a place you go to find a job or you don't do it until you're looking for a job. But to me, it's the mindset of people.

Sometimes they don't see how beneficial it can be, and so they underestimate the power of it. And so they don't take advantage of it until like people like you or me or other people are starting to talk about it more. And during COVID. LinkedIn is where people are because we had the zooms, we had the meetings, and so the natural progression of that is LinkedIn. But I think that they underestimate I think that's the weakness. I mean, that's it.

Speaker1: [00:04:30] So we deal with startups and investors raising funding, and so we get a lot of startups looking to find investors and many of them use LinkedIn for that. So what's your recommendation? How should a startup approach LinkedIn for that purpose?

Speaker2: [00:04:45] Well, the first thing is a strategy. And of course, the first thing is you want to make sure your LinkedIn profile represents you as the professional. And I think oftentimes people don't realize that it's 70 plus percent are only going to look at the top portion, the banner, the the picture, the headline, the contact information. So to have that information which represents you, that's the first part of it. And then the second thing is you want to look from the perspective of who do you want to attract? If you sell a product or a service, that's who you're attracting. If you're a startup wanting to find investors, that's who you're attracting. And so having the strategy to make sure your LinkedIn profile is built out and then who do you want to connect with? And the beauty of LinkedIn is they give you so much space to put everything about yourself. So when that investor comes looking at you and you want to pull them in, you don't want to have to push. You want pull. So if they see you out there, if you're engaging, we'll talk about that later. But they then can see your picture, your name, your headline. They're like, Well, hey, who's that? They click on it. You want to speak directly to them, you want your headline to say why you want your skills and experiences to say why you what? Again, all those things that you talk about in your blog, those five that I just was reading some of your stuff and the five lists that you have on what to do, be prepared, have those things in your LinkedIn profile and do them authentically, do them words in real time, if you will, as far as what you're trying to do. But think about everything an investor wants to know about you. Include that in your LinkedIn profile.

Speaker1: [00:06:13] And so how should a startup use LinkedIn to actually go find investors? What should they be doing to achieve that goal?

Speaker2: [00:06:20] Well, once the LinkedIn profiles like they want it to be as far as representative of them, the next thing is the second strategy. So what do you include? So think about who are you wanting to attract? Build out that that profile of that investor, that angel investor, whomever, build out the profile first. Once you identify that, then make a list of who those people can be. Then start looking at how can you accomplish that? And I did that as a sample with you. So let's say that someone that's what you do, right? So a startup is looking to get someone to help them. They go to your profile. There's many. And again, this is the education background, teaching a child how to read or in high school, teaching a child how to do something. You back it up, know what you want, you back it up. So they go to your profile, they look at your name, they see what you do, they look at your profile, then they look at your connections. Because who's going to be connected to you? The very people they're trying to get in front of. So you look at your connections and then you go to those people, because if you look at who they are, you can actually reach out and say, Hey, I see you're connected with how I lived.

Speaker2: [00:07:25] It can always send a message. Don't, don't hide that. Let them know what you're trying to do, but reach out to them. But then here's the big one. Engage with them. You want to have a list of ten, ten individuals, ten investors, whomever that you're wanting to get in front of, and then you stay engaged with them. You watch their posts, you watch their articles, you watch their newsletter. Another thing to do is you can also see, like if you look at your profile, it says who also is viewed. Those are also people in that same realm. So just doing the backward design of who it is and then just start engaging. And that's what people don't often do. They don't engage enough. And those reactions where you just hit the reaction are worthless. I mean, I don't want to be rude, but they're worthless if you don't comment or share. They don't even really know you were there unless they click on that many people don't. So yeah, strategy, strategy, strategy.

Speaker1: [00:08:13] Right. And so what should a startup prepare in order to use LinkedIn to run this search for finding investors?

Speaker2: [00:08:21] Okay, actually. So again, they want to make sure because first impressions only come on time, right. And so if they get that investor to come to their LinkedIn profile, they want to make sure that it says everything that investors are looking at. And we all know what

those points are that they're looking for. So make sure that they have those included in the skills in the feature every section at LinkedIn gives you the headline alone is 220 characters. So what can you say and do in that profile to answer that investor you're looking for? Because think about it, that's all you're thinking about. You don't think about anybody else but that ideal investor.

Speaker1: [00:08:59] Right. And then what should they focus on when they put that together and prepare for that?

Speaker2: [00:09:05] So what makes them unique? Why them? I mean, there's all kinds of people investors are looking at, right? What makes them the best investment? And they have the opportunity. LinkedIn is the only place where people go. They're expecting to have those answers right when we're talking about startups or anything else for that matter. Pitch Deck. They've all done a pitch deck. They've got their pitch deck ready. They may not want to share the whole pitch deck on LinkedIn. I get that. But how can they break that up and do different components of that to where they answer those questions? So competitors, for example, how do they have because that's something investors are going to ask them, right? Who are your competitors? How can you sublimely mention those things in your profile, which sets you apart from someone else? And again, that's the research there. But that's important to know because they're going to have to answer when they talk to them. So why not do it before that and make sure in the contact information and this yours is excellent. A lot of people don't put everything they're put because people want to get a hold of you. If it's an email, that's fine. You and I, we both have phone numbers on ours. I'm a firm believer in giving as much information as you can, so when people do want to talk to you, they're able to get hold of.

Speaker1: [00:10:17] And what's the most common mistake people make when they put these together?

Speaker2: [00:10:22] I think the most common sayings, they try to talk to everyone and they and I'll say this about women. Women are not always as good. Men are much better about this. Women are a little bit shy, sometimes a tooth or horn, if you will. I think the biggest the biggest mistake people make is LinkedIn. They came there to find out about you. They want to know everything about you, so give it to them. And so oftentimes that's why people hire me. I can talk

about them much better than they can talk about themselves. But if you just think about in front of you, I've got this investor, I've got this individual or this team of people who I'm going to talk to. That's who I'm talking to. Every time I put information in my LinkedIn profile, every time that's what I'm talking to.

Speaker1: [00:11:01] And so what's the most important lesson you've learned in this area?

Speaker2: [00:11:05] I think the most important thing is that there truly are no borders anymore. We're able to connect with the world and everyone has a phone and we all we all have our phone in our hands. And because of that, I'm my faith. I believe God gives us the doors. We just have to open them. And I think that our phones and our computers are passports. And I don't think people often take advantage of that. I as I said before, in the beginning, I love people. I love meeting people. And you can meet people so much more on LinkedIn than you ever could in physical space. I mean, I love I love to meet physical space, but the last two years has been proof of that. We haven't been able to do that. So how can you expand that if you see someone or you hear about someone, you read about an investor in a magazine, reach out to them on LinkedIn, send them a message and say, Hey, I read this article about you in a magazine. I can't tell you how many people I've connected to that way. And nine times out of ten with a message, they'll accept the invite.

Speaker1: [00:11:59] When you work with people on LinkedIn, what's one thing you didn't expect that you found?

Speaker2: [00:12:05] I didn't expect the reach. I didn't realize how easy it would be in in many spaces. And I'm a huge fan of Chris Brogan and his book *The Freak Shall Inherit the Earth*, and one of the first books I read all those years ago. There are no gatekeepers. I mean, everyone of any importance, if you will, is on LinkedIn. And so where else could you go knocking on the door and say, Hey, how I'd love to connect with you and send it, send a personal message and know you can reach out. I mean, the world truly is as close as our keypad is our phone or our computers.

Speaker1: [00:12:37] Right. So you help people run social media campaigns and educate them on using these tools. What's the common myth about your job or field of expertise?

Speaker2: [00:12:47] My age. My age. You can find a 30 year old to do what I do and to talk about it. Right. But it's more of a challenge to find someone my age who's also had the experience of being in the chair of responsibility. I'm very in tune and astute, knowing what to do and not to do. And sometimes, I mean, I'm I joke about that many of the connections I have online are young, young, young people. Many of them, they don't care how old I am if they think it's going to cool that I'm older and I'm able to talk with them and do the things that they do because I understand it. And I and I get hired to speak and I get hired to do what I do because of my age. Because if people are in an audience and they want to have someone understand how to use LinkedIn, the 30 year old tell them they're like, Yeah, whatever. They're not listening because they think, well, of course they know. But if you have someone my age and they're like, Well, if she can do it, I can do it. Plus, as an educator, I know that most people come to those those situations with fear. They don't want to look wrong or look the wrong way or whatever. And so having someone my age so that's been the biggest thing. My age, it's been to my benefit.

Speaker1: [00:13:52] Right. So what online information source do you find most helpful in your work?

Speaker2: [00:13:56] Oh, my gosh. Yeah. Well, I have so many apps on my phone. I mean, Ink, Ink Magazine, Forbes Fast Company, TechCrunch, Flipboard, and of course, LinkedIn. I mean, LinkedIn started the newsletters now. And so I have a lot of people who I follow on LinkedIn for the newsletters that they provide articles. I mean, with, with digital space, it's so easy because we have so many places we can find information. But with that caveat, I know you would agree, you want to make sure you check your sources that what you're reading is real, because on social media, sometimes it might not be the case. So again, back it up and make sure that what you're reading before you start talking about it is authentic in Israel.

Speaker1: [00:14:36] Great. If you could start a new business tomorrow, what would that business be?

Speaker2: [00:14:40] Wow, I. Oh, I don't know. That's a great question. I will say that it would have to focus on education, because I'm a firm believer that that's what separates us. And I

think that, again, that God makes those pathways just like mine. I didn't expect to do what I do today, but I wouldn't trade it for the world. So I think keeping an open mind and always being on the lookout for that. And one of the things I always counsel people when I'm working with people is always, look, tomorrow, how can what you do change based on the technology? I mean, overnight we went from having to hire graphic designers, not that we don't don't still some, but let's face it, with Canva and get stencil and all the different platforms, you don't have to use those as much. So always be looking at what could you do to solve someone else's problem tomorrow. So it had to be something with education. The clarity of that, I don't know. But yeah.

Speaker1: [00:15:30] Great. Well, in the last few minutes that we have here, what else should we cover that we haven't?

Speaker2: [00:15:34] I think that if there's and again, I say this all the time, but I think it's so important to never underestimate the power of what technology offers us. I mean, I always make the joke with Star Wars, you know, beam me up, Scotty. We now can have close relationships. I remember when when online dating started, I got to tell you, I thought it was kind of strange. I really did. However, how many people do we know who have really meaningful, close relationships because they found their person online? They may not live next door to them. So our world is limited in physical space, but in digital space it's not limited. So to have an open mind and to really play with it and to know just take baby steps and it doesn't have to be perfect to start. But you've got to start. You've got to start.

Speaker1: [00:16:17] So great. So how best should listeners get in touch with you?

Speaker2: [00:16:21] LinkedIn, Debbie Saviano, LinkedIn. That's one thing I would say. I would say that any time a new platform comes out, go in and get your handle, get your name because there's there's other Debbie sobbing. I know it's just a little bit different name, but there are others. But I own my name and everything because as soon as it comes out, I go grab it. So I use it all the time. No, but I haven't in case I do want to use it. So. Yeah. So Debbie Sammy on LinkedIn. Yeah.

Speaker1: [00:16:45] Cool. Well, great. Well, thanks for sharing that with us today. We'll put those contact details in the show notes and hope to have you back for a follow up soon.

Speaker2: [00:16:54] Thank you so much. It's a pleasure talking to you.

Speaker1: [00:17:01] Investor Connect helps investors interested in startup funding. In this podcast series Experience, investors share their experience and advice. You can learn more at Investor Connect dot org. Hal Team Martin is the director of Investor Connect, which is a 500 1c3 nonprofit dedicated to the education of investors for early stage funding. All opinions expressed by host and podcast guests are solely their own opinions and do not reflect the opinion of Investor Connect. This podcast is for informational purposes only and should not be relied upon as a basis for investment decisions.