

[00:00:02] Vivian Valenty: My first day at the company, I was told that I'm giving you this project. We don't expect you to be successful. During the past twelve years, five different groups in our company had worked on this project and came out empty. Took me three months. Give me a problem, I will come up with a product to solve it.

[00:00:30] Ryan Newman: This is dare to disrupt, a podcast about Penn State alumni who are innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders and the stories behind their success. I'm your host, Ryan Newman, and on the show today is Vivian Valenti. Vivian is the founder and president of VB Cosmetics, a fully integrated manufacturing company with global brands of clean nature and science based functional and proprietary beauty products. Its transformational product, Dazzle Dry, a quick dry nail polish system, is revolutionizing the nail industry. After 17 years on the market, Dazzle Dry now still has no equal in performance. Vivian spent 35 years as an accomplished bio organic chemistry and inventor, creating specialty chemical products that solve problems in fields such as agriculture, textiles, microelectronics, graphic arts, and finally, cosmetics. She received her bachelor's in chemistry from Mapua University in the Philippines and her PhD in organic chemistry from Penn State.

This is a first for us. Vivian, you were the first guest we've had on dare to disrupt, who was a chemist, and not just any chemist, but one with nine patents. We're excited to hear your story. Thank you so much for joining us today.

[00:01:56] Vivian Valenty: Well, thank you so much for inviting me to join your podcast. It's always a pleasure to share my story.

[00:02:03] Ryan Newman: Well, we're excited to hear it. And what I think is the most exciting part is how many of our podcast listeners, to the extent they've ever visited a nail salon, will be very familiar with your product. But before I get ahead of myself, why don't we start, as we always like to Vivian, which is at the beginning, can you give some insight to our listeners where you grew up and what your early formative years were like as a child?

[00:02:24] Vivian Valenty: Boy, that was a long time ago, but I do have a good memory. So I was born in the Philippines in a one room hut with a tuxed roof, no running water, no electricity. Our only source of light at night was a kerosene lamp, which is, you know, if you could picture a can of soup, an empty can of soup with a hole on the top where we fill it with kerosene and then insert a rag, a piece of rag to serve as the wick that was our source of light at night. And so, at four years old was when I learned how to write my name with that light and started reading using that light.

[00:03:09] Ryan Newman: And, Vivian, did you come from a big family, lots of brothers and sisters or just you?

[00:03:14] Vivian Valenty: I have five siblings. I was the second oldest, but the oldest daughter.

And in our culture, the oldest daughter actually gets on all the responsibilities. And so my father always told me that I never had a childhood. I was an adult from when I was four.

[00:03:37] Ryan Newman: Wow. And when you look back on it, did it feel that way to you as well? How would you describe your experience?

[00:03:43] Vivian Valenty: I think it was normal. It was a small town, and almost everybody knew everybody, and almost everybody was a relative of my father. We were one of the poor relations of the very rich relative. I didn't feel like I was different.

[00:04:04] Ryan Newman: And so as you were growing up as a young child in Philippines, and you started to kind of have maybe a hope or a dream for the future, just in general, what were some of your earliest hopes and dreams as you were growing up in the Philippines?

[00:04:20] Vivian Valenty: I wanted to be a doctor, and I thought that a doctor helps people. They are looked upon highly by the townspeople. But my parents can't afford to send me to medical school. My mother said, your brothers and sisters would have to wait until you're finished before they can go to college. And I thought that was too much of a responsibility for a 14 year old because I was 14 when I went to college.

[00:04:49] Ryan Newman: Why were you so young? Is that just how the education system works in the Philippines, or was that unique to your situation?

[00:04:55] Vivian Valenty: It was not entirely unique. There were a lot of my generation that started school early. My mother was the elementary school teacher, so she taught grade one. And so I went to school with her, and I learned she was transferred to teach another grade. And the next teacher who took over told my parents that, oh, Viben is good. I can promote her to grade two. And she did. And that's how I, I'm two years younger than my classmates in college.

[00:05:27] Ryan Newman: And where did you go to college?

[00:05:29] Vivian Valenty: The name is Mapua Institute of Technology. When I was there, and then now it's university. They dropped the name Mapua Institute of Technology Technology, which to us, when abbreviated, was MIT. And so we always said, when people ask us, you know, where do you go, MIT? And everybody thought it was Mit of Massachusetts. Now it's called Mapua University.

[00:05:57] Ryan Newman: And what did you study at Mapua?

[00:05:59] Vivian Valenty: Initially, I enrolled as a chemical engineer, but my professors convinced me to change to chemistry. There was a lot of discrimination against women engineers, and they said, you won't be hired as a chemical engineer, and so why not become a chemist?

[00:06:19] Ryan Newman: So really you became a chemist by default out of being talked out of what you were initially pursuing?

[00:06:25] Vivian Valenty: That's correct. And so I think it is my nature to be able to accept the situation and pivot.

[00:06:33] Ryan Newman: So being resilient and pivoting, it was an early theme for you, which I assume we'll hear more about as we get deeper into your entrepreneurial journey. So you go to the MIT of the Philippines. What was the catalyst for you first departing your country for the US?

[00:06:47] Vivian Valenty: In college, I hear about graduate of our school going to the United States to get advanced degrees. So I was given the opportunity to choose where my first employment is going to be. It was either be a teacher or to be a chemist to study the chemistry of rice starch. At the International Rice Research Institute, which is a very prestigious research institution in the Philippines, they offer scholarships and travel grants for your trip to the United States to get you a density degree. So if you qualify and get one of those, you don't have to worry about saving the money and most of the money. I sent to my mother to support my younger brother, who was in medical school.

[00:07:42] Ryan Newman: So somebody in the family did make their way to medical school?

[00:07:44] Vivian Valenty: Yes. We have two doctors in the family. Our youngest sibling became a doctor through the help of my younger brother. See how that is in the Philippines. You help the next one, and the next one helps the next one and so forth.

[00:08:00] Ryan Newman: And so you come to the US and then, is that how you found your way to Penn State?

[00:08:04] Vivian Valenty: So I actually saw an ad in the chemical and engineering news for Penn State looking for teaching assistants. So I applied to Penn State. I got an acceptance, and I got an offer of a teaching assistantship. So then I took that and told my boss that I would like to get a travel grant. He submitted an application, and then he told me that it was rejected. So I was so disappointed, but my mother advised me, said, don't give up. So I went and I presented my dilemma to the director, and he said, give me 24 hours. About an hour later, I saw him go into my manager's office, and they talked for a while. And then he walked past my desk, didn't say hello to me or acknowledged me, but my boss, he said, vivian, what did you tell doctor Chandler?

And I said, nothing, except tell him the story. He said, well, he's giving you a travel grant. It's a one way ticket. So that's how I got to Penn State. I was only planning on going for my masters. There was a party that the department of chemistry gave to the new graduate students.

I met one of the upperclassmen. He asked me what my plans were, and people may not like what they hear here, but this is what happened, how it affected my thinking. He said, why are you settling for a master's? You're settling for a consolation prize, he said, when you haven't even tried for the gold? And I said, oh, my gosh. I said, I don't want to be known to have shuttled for consolation prize.

And so I said, I'm going to be folded after it.

[00:10:11] Ryan Newman: And so ultimately, from this experience, you started out potentially wanting to be an engineer. You're now matriculating as a PhD in chemistry. At this point, how had your views evolved in terms of what you thought you might do with this advanced degree?

[00:10:24] Vivian Valenty: I was going back to the Philippines to do research and study indigenous plants that are used as medicine to isolate the extract, you know, the active ingredient in the extract. But there was only one professor that offers natural product chemistry at Penn State. He offered me a research fellowship, but then he reneged on it, so I had to go find another professor. At this time, the only professor that had what I thought could be used for when I go back to the Philippines was with doctor Gordon Hamilton. It was the study of enzymes. I learned how to synthesize. You know, I did a ten step reaction to produce the molecule. So I learned how to work really in small amounts and cleanly. It taught me hard work, too, continuing hard work.

[00:11:25] Ryan Newman: So, speaking of hard work, how does someone that's so immersed in the details of working in a lab go from that to actually becoming an entrepreneur? And I know where there's a lot of steps in between, but take us to that moment where you actually started to work, what you're currently doing in the context of maybe in another company in regard to using your chemical background, but also then what bridged you to get to becoming an entrepreneur?

[00:11:54] Vivian Valenty: You know, graduating from Penn State, there was still a lot of discrimination against women in the technical field. I already had our first born while in graduate school, and then I thought, well, I'd probably be having at least another one. And the first thing that companies ask when you apply is, what are you going to do with your children, or do you

plan to have any more children? It was the norm to ask those questions at the time, and I accepted it. My husband and I agreed that I was not going to look for a job until we agree. We didn't want to add more in the family. And so I was a full time housewife and mother for four years. And then when it was time, I started looking, and I still saw a lot of discrimination. And I saw another ad in the chemical and engineering news assistant professor position opened at Skidmore College. And two years there, I knew it wasn't the right fit for me. And I saw another ad in the chemical and engineering news on a research scientist position with the New York state Department of Health. So I worked for the state of New York for four years. However, I had to make a decision. When my manager started to have too much of a liking for me, I reported him to his manager. And it was, you know, just brushed it off, like, oh, he's just kidding. But he wasn't. Every day it was harassment to me. My husband and I sat down and said, well, what are my options?

If I stayed and not say anything, I would be miserable for as long as I work there.

So that wasn't acceptable. If I filed a lawsuit, I'll probably be blacklisted, and I won't be able to get a job anywhere else. And so the third option was send your resume out to where you will find a job that you will be happy with. I saw an ad again in the CNE news of a position at Saley Manufacturing company, a research chemist. And I got the job. So this man, I had to go to Illinois, that's a thousand, about a thousand miles away, and live there, away from my family for two years. That's what I did. That's where the eureka came. My talents, my passion is in creating products that solve problems. You know, give me a problem and I will take it and come up with a product to solve it.

[00:14:53] Ryan Newman: When you were working at this current company, what were some of the big problems that you were starting to solve for them?

[00:14:58] Vivian Valenty: My first day at the company, I was told that, so I'm giving you this project. We don't expect you to be successful. Of course, I will ask the question, why do you think I'll be unsuccessful? And he said, well, because during the past twelve years, five different groups in our company had worked on this project and came out empty. There was rumor that the government is going to ban phosphates in detergents. Now, the company sale was a company that work on corn and soybeans. Everything you know, all the raw materials are from corn and soybeans. Other companies have been working on a replacement for phosphate, and that's sodium citrate, which is not a very good replacement. He said, all we want you to do is come up with a molecule that we can produce by any means from corn and or soybeans that will be equal to sodium citrate. So I said, deal took me three months. And as I was titrating this solution, it passed sodium citrate activity. Then it passed sodium charged polyphosphate. I was giddy, you know, I couldn't sleep that night. And in the morning, of course, I told my manager. They were very happy about it. And pretty soon I got a promotion and a raised in pay and a technician and two patents came out of that work.

[00:16:35] Ryan Newman: Incredible. And you've inevitably continued on. And how did you start to break into what you're doing now with respect to using chemistry, with respect to the nail business?

[00:16:47] Vivian Valenty: From saline. I was hired by GE again, it was in r and DA product development in the silicone products division. I was in a new group looking at polymers, silicone polyamide polymers that have potential use as dielectrics or in the packaging or also in the processing of chips. I came up with a process on how to manufacture them in one part, and I got a pen out of that one. Ge decided they were going to set up headquarters here in Phoenix, and I was told I needed to move to Phoenix. So my husband, he said maybe I could quit my job and set up a consulting company in Phoenix. And so we moved Analyzed, Inc. With my husband's

company. Three years later, a gentleman, the husband of a manicurist, approached him about the problem of his wife losing money, because when she does the manicure using traditional nail polish, the client usually comes back to get her nails redone because they ding their nails on the car door or putting on their seat belt. And that's all for free when they come to get them redone. So we need the product to dry all manicures in less than ten minutes using uv light. So I thought, that seems to be against theory, to put a cross linkable coating on top of a solvent laden coat and expect the solvents to evaporate faster.

But I said, I'm willing to look at it because the other requirement is that it has to be removable with acetone after it's cured. Within a week, I had a formula that will cure and dry the colored polish underneath. But you can't remove it. I said, well, there has to be a way to make it removable. And so, remember, I'm still working full time. I did this at night, on weekends, and it took me 300 formulations and one year to come up with one that met drying and removal.

[00:19:20] Ryan Newman: So I have to ask you a question. Over 300 different formulations when you're on formulation number 299, did you think about stopping?

[00:19:31] Vivian Valenty:

No. No.

It was because every time there's an improvement. Right. I learn something each time.

[00:19:39] Ryan Newman: And while you're in the valley of formulation number 150 or 210, and you're just sort of toiling formulation after formulation in your mind, did you ever feel like you weren't going to get it solved?

[00:19:54] Vivian Valenty: No. Because again, each one was an improvement. Any action takes you towards perfection. Doing nothing will not get you there.

[00:20:05] Ryan Newman: You're not one to do nothing.

[00:20:06] Vivian Valenty: Yeah.

Once I got the product and the client said, yes, I like it. It's still not perfect because the product smelled. And I knew, you know, this is not going to be accepted by the public. Some people are allergic to the monomers and they could smell it. But it was the client's fault. He went to an investor and lied to the investor. My agreement with him was that I own the patent and he only has marketing rights because he didn't have any money to pay my time to create the product. He told the investor he owns the patent and it is ready to take to market. So I said, look, I want to help you. In order for me to expedite the development, I need to quit my job, but I need to be paid. So we entered into an agreement on how we could do that. So I quit my job, work on it full time. There's a lot of things that went in between.

However, finally, you know, the product was ready and the guy lost everything. Another party took over the company, the marketing, and I had the exclusive right to manufacture the product. Four or five years later, I read that the FDA said UVA is potentially more dangerous than uvB.

Well, I made sure that we didn't have any UVB, that whatever was all UVa, because I put two and two together, and I think almost everybody thought the same way, that Uva is safe. Because UVA doesn't produce sunburn, it's uvb that causes the sunburn. The FDA explained UVA penetrates deep through the epidermis, through the dermis, into the subcutaneous layer, and damages DNA. That's why it is considered carcinogenic. I didn't know that. That wasn't known. I

said to myself, I have to stop creating products for cosmetics using uvA.

Then the only thing for me to do, I said, is to solve the problem with these traditional nail polishes that dries so slowly that some of them require 60 minutes too long.

I need to develop products that do not use uv light. So I started working on it it's a new problem.

[00:22:50] Ryan Newman: A new problem had appeared, and it was time for you to go to work trying to solve it. And how long did this problem take to solve?

[00:22:57] Vivian Valenty: Ten years.

[00:22:58] Ryan Newman: Wow.

[00:22:59] Vivian Valenty: That's because I was doing other work. I invented a coating that go on a coffee mug at the time in order to do sublimation, dye printing on them, which provides better resolution and brighter colors than screen printing.

And so they were starting to use polymeric coatings. So, like epoxies and polyesters, the epoxy have good adhesion on ceramic, but they don't give brilliant colors. Polyesters give really high resolution and brilliant colors, but they don't stick too well on ceramic. And so it was the problem that I solved by mixing epoxy and polyurethane chemistry. I got a patent out of that. However, that didn't bring us any money because we. We were partnering with somebody who does spraying of the mugs, and he partnered with the company in China to do the production. We shipped 30 drums of coating to China. That was it.

They still consider our coating as the gold standard. That's where I learned that patents are really not for small businesses to have.

[00:24:27] Ryan Newman: Why is that?

[00:24:28] Vivian Valenty: Because, especially now. But in 2000, the US changed patent regulations, where your patent application is published within 18 months. So 18 months, everybody can then learn what you're patenting, and they could start working to copy your patent or find ways to get around it. Whereas before 2000, you could have a pending for many years. So, you know, for small business, if you have something and you don't have the pockets to go look for the infringers and then take them to court, you're just going to use your money that you should be using to build your brand into paying the lawyers to go after the infringers.

[00:25:18] Ryan Newman: So, most people today walk into a nail salon, they'll be very familiar with your product. Dazzle dry. How did you get to the point of creating that product and having it be under your own brand?

[00:25:31] Vivian Valenty: It was easy to create a non uv top coat that will dry the traditional nail polishes in less than 60 minutes. I thought to myself, I won't be able to claim a specific time for the consumer. I could just say it will dry your polish in 75% faster, but I can't say five minutes or ten minutes because it will be dependent upon the layers underneath and how fast they dry. And so I thought, okay, because of that, I need to create the colors. And that's what took time. I had to learn how to deal with pigments. I wanted to also solve the longevity of wear because you wait 60 minutes for them to dry, the next day they would chip. So I thought, I need to solve that problem. And then the other problem is all of the traditional nail polishes turn the natural nails yellow. The cause of the yellowing of the nails is not the pigments because that's what they tell the consumers. It's the nitrocellulose, the common ingredient in those products. Dassodry does

not have that. I purposely took it out making sure that I don't have nitrocellulose in the product.

[00:26:56] AD: The Coccoziello Institute of Real Estate Innovation at Penn State University is dedicated to advancing the real estate industry through cross disc collaborations and education. The Coco's yellow institute is working to evaluate and improve all aspects of the built environment in which we live and work, from engineering and sustainable design to insurance and risk analysis, to even legal and governance implications. To join our email list and learn more about the institute, visit [coccoziello.esu.edu](http://coccoziello.esu.edu). that's [coccoziello.esu.edu](http://coccoziello.esu.edu).

[00:27:41] Ryan Newman: So not only do you have a product that now dries faster, but in the interest of making providing certainty to the consumer of how fast it would take to dry, it also required you to once again roll up your sleeves and dig deeper and develop the other underlying pigments. And in the process of developing underlying pigments, also solve for this issue of the natural nail beds appealing yellow under the previous process.

[00:28:06] Vivian Valenty: Correct.

[00:28:07] Ryan Newman: And once you actually developed this process, how was the commercial uptake and more importantly, how widespread and pervasive is it? All I know is that in my house, my daughter and my wife were both very excited to know that I was speaking to the founder and inventor of dazzle Dry. So it's definitely penetrated the Newman household, which I assume is a sign that it's penetrated many, many nail salons and households. But how pervasive is the product and how has that developed into the success of your business?

[00:28:35] Vivian Valenty: We launched the brand in 20 07 20 08 20 00 920 ten. That's a deep recession, I thought with the product that has these benefits, these properties dry in five stays on nails seven to 14 days, takes off with regular acetone, doesn't turn your nails yellow. That clean and conscious beauty. Who would not want to have this product?

I thought in two years it will be all over the US, right? In all households. Well, that's not the case.

With the recession coming, I almost lost the business I spent over. I would say during this time, all the money that we saved. The private label business that we had, you know, that making the uv top coat, that was the private label because I didn't market it, the brand wasn't mine. And some skincare products and other nail products that I sold to other companies and they built their business from those products that I own and that I created that two years, I should be able to have an ongoing business. I could then think about relaunching my skincare line. What? It didn't happen. Business at \$50,000 in the bank. Why? My website went down.

It's a website that was only two years old, but it was apparently created not on the Linux platform, but on an old platform that became obsolete in 2010. I owed the bank \$50,000. So I'm certainly bankrupt and I need a website. What to do? I didn't know where to go. A friend of mine who's a serial entrepreneur said, Vivian, you need to go to the SBDC. They will help you. They will assign somebody that has the expertise to help you. So I did. They assigned a marketing person. To me, marketing is really very important. After I told him the problem and what the product is and what my vision is, he asked me the question, do you have a business plan? I said, of course. I said, okay, let me see it. And I said, why is all here on your head? In my head? And he said, no, no, no. Unless it's on paper and in writing, you don't have a business plan. They said, you need to come up with a business plan. So I did. And lo and behold, everything started happening exactly as I put it down on paper. Without me doing anything. People just came.

[00:31:25] Ryan Newman: So as we sit here today, what is the legacy you want to leave behind with

your company? And more importantly, just the incredible impact you've had on this industry?

[00:31:37] Vivian Valenty: My life I've led has always been about serving, you know, helping others be successful. Leaving this planet earth, that's so precious, a better place. And that's why we plant trees. So far we've planted over 544,000 since 2018. We will continue planting and just not planting, growing them and helping the people in the reforested areas give them a better way of life. They are being taught beekeeping before the reforestation. They use the trees as firewood and they sold the firewood. They are taught how to manage the forest beekeeping and have a cottage industry selling honey and byproducts of beekeeping, helping with global warming, but also helping in education, which is the other passion of mine, is that I think that a lot of the problems we have can be solved if everybody had a good education. That's the goal. I want to leave when I depart this earth.

[00:32:53] Ryan Newman: Well, thank you, Vivian, for taking the time today to share your entrepreneurial journey with me.

[00:32:58] Vivian Valenty: Thank you, Ryan.

[00:33:00] Ryan Newman: I'd now like to hand things over to a recent Penn State student, Devanshi Mittal. Devanshi just graduated this past May from Penn State with a degree in computer science. She is the founder of trails, a software application designed to offer a centralized platform that unites students and alumni through an AI driven, forum based Q and A knowledge sharing space. Devanshi participated in the idea test lab and the MVP dev lab at Happy Valley Launchbox powered by PNC bank. Devanshi, I'll now hand the interview over to you.

[00:33:35] Vivian Valenty: Hi Devanshi.

[00:33:37] Devanshi Mittal: Hi Devin. I'm really excited to ask you about some of the insights from your entrepreneurial journey and also just some advice to young neo entrepreneurs out there. So what were some of the initial steps that you took when you wanted to launch your own products under vb cosmetics?

[00:33:58] Vivian Valenty: Cash is, you know, it's important to start any business with us. It so happened that we already had an existing business, so my husband was able to help provide the laboratory space for us so I didn't have to rent a space. I was also working full time. I was getting salary. I didn't start vb cosmetics until I had enough business to make it a standalone company without cash to pay for what you need is difficult, so you have to raise the funds either from friends and family or from venture capitalists.

[00:34:39] Devanshi Mittal: Yeah, that is a great insight. So what kind of like advice would you give to someone who might be taking their first step and maybe launching their own product?

[00:34:49] Vivian Valenty: The first step is to have a business plan without the business plan. You heard my story. It seems to be getting nowhere with my business. But as soon as I wrote everything down on paper, you know, everything started working. My first number one in my business plan was have a website because that was my only means of generating the income. I didn't have money to get a new website made, but, you know, somebody called me, it was a cold call and said, I want to develop your website and I will not charge you upfront. In one month, I'll have your website up and running and I want to do your online marketing. I said, I need marketing. This is the win win situation. So I had an agreement and made sure that it is all in legal. We had a lawyer review it and we signed the document and we worked together for six years. And then next thing on my business plan was hire a salesperson. Did I go advertise for a salesperson?



I didn't. Somebody came in the door, you know, of our building, and said, I want to work with you. And I said, I don't have money to pay you, but I can assure you, if you stay with me, help me grow the company, when I sell my business, you'll be handsomely rewarded. So he did. We did. And when I sell my business, he'll be well taken care of. Number three, on my business plan, hire an educator, because I knew that education will be very important in any new product. That's different. When the consumers are used to doing their nails the same way for many, many years, then to tell them, you need to use this system, it's hard. Again, I didn't advertise. Our education director called me up and said, Vivian, I want to have a meeting with you. And I'm a nail tech. I am a celebrity nail stylist. My client brought me your product, and I think I'm interested to help you grow the business. Again, I said, I don't have money to pay you. That was early on. Remember, I was coming out of a deep hole. So she joined, and they're still with me after almost ten years that they came.

[00:37:23] Devanshi Mittal: Also, you have launched a lot of products. From my experience, product market fit is, like, one of the most important things. So has it ever happened that you experienced a setback or a failure, and then you had to pivot from your original product? And if so, like, how did you deal with it? How did you.

[00:37:43] Vivian Valenty: One time in 2007, we launched nine colors. And the potential customers said, oh, you know, they weren't interested because there's a small line they're not going to be around. They'll be short live. So I continued to create colors. Like, every year, I would create at least 20. By 2017, I had 257 colors. The marketing agency said, Vivian, we cannot promote all 257. You need to pair them down 250. Now we keep it around 150, but continue to launch new colors because that's what keep us relevant. Our customers love the new colors. We have to continue creating, but we discontinue the ones that are not good sellers anymore.

[00:38:44] Devanshi Mittal: Yeah. So it seems like your company is based a lot on innovation. How important do you think innovation is for any new entrepreneur?

[00:38:54] Vivian Valenty: I think it's very important for a new entrepreneur. You must develop a product that will set you apart. You cannot launch a product that is coming in later. Somebody has launched the same product and has made headway, whereas you have to catch up. And so I think that takes more hard work and more money or a better way of marketing, perhaps.

[00:39:23] Devanshi Mittal: And just like, lastly, my question is, what are some of the most common mistakes you see new entrepreneurs making and how can they avoid them?

[00:39:33] Vivian Valenty: I think I come across often with those who run out of money, and that's, again, it's cash flow. You need to be very careful in where you spend your money. And so it might be you have to grow slowly like we did. You know, we didn't want to get outside investors because when you go for outside money, they would always require a share of your business.

And so sometimes it's better to do guerrilla marketing and grow slowly. Whether we wanted it or not, that's what we did. We grew slowly.

And I think scaling up again requires the discipline. It's more complex because we are a manufacturer and not just a marketing company. Marketing company is easier to me. I think if your skill set is in marketing, you don't have to make your own product. You could get them manufactured by somebody else and just focus on marketing. You could grow a business with just a few people. Manufacturing company like us, even now, you know, we're still growing. Every year we have open positions. Then there is. The retention of employees is also tough. Nowadays we're finding they don't want to work in house, they want to work remotely. Well, they

can't work remotely. If you're in manufacturing, you need to be here when you already have a limited budget, you have enough people, but those people don't all show up. So what do you do? You either cross train so that people can take over somebody else's job when the other person wasn't there, or you have to also have a redundancy. So you've got more people than you actually need. And that's costly.

[00:41:29] Devanshi Mittal: Yeah. So how do you suggest a small business to deal with that? Because there's a lot of competition involved.

[00:41:35] Vivian Valenty: You still do want quality with us. How we did it is we did all the work. I did all the manufacturing. I did all the QC. I did all the everything, you know, starting up, I did all the R and D. So I was the one man person. And then slowly I added another chemist who helped me. And then we hired a technician to help her. And we hired slowly. You know, as you, you look at what is critical. We didn't hire a marketing agency until we had enough money to pay them because marketing companies are not inexpensive.

[00:42:14] Devanshi Mittal: That was all from my side, but thank you for sharing your experience and just helpful insights, and I would definitely keep them in mind as I navigate my own entrepreneurial journey. But thank you so much for your time and it was amazing talking to you.

[00:42:30] Vivian Valenty: Well, anytime. You know, you could always email me if you have a specific question along your journey. It's really my pleasure to help.

[00:42:41] Ryan Newman: That was Vivian Valenti, founder and president of VB Cosmetics. This episode was produced and edited by our executive producer, Katie D. Fiore. If you haven't already, be sure to subscribe to dare to disrupt wherever you listen to podcasts and look out for next month's episode. Thanks for listening.