Nancy Satur (00:01)

One of my three sons told me, you know, this system is really messed up. Patients wait months to see me. I can only spend 10 minutes with them. And if a patient needs a follow-up to cut out a skin cancer or because they're blistering head to toe and I need to see them again, there are no openings in the schedule. And when I look out into the waiting room, it's full. And most patients don't really need to be there and probably don't want to be there. And it was there in 2012. He had this crazy idea to start a telemedicine practice on the side.

Being the supportive mom I am, I said, ~ no, why would you want to do that?

Ryan Newman (00:38)

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 Nancy Satter. Nancy is the co-founder and medical director emerita of Pureology, a skincare brand delivering personalized prescription treatments straight to customers' doorsteps. With over 5.5 million patients served nationwide, Pureology recently expanded its footprint to retail locations, including CVS and Walmart.

Dr. Satter earned her undergraduate pre-medical degree from Penn State and her medical degree at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. A board certified dermatologist, Dr. Satter worked as a private practice dermatologist before becoming co-founder, medical director and dermatologist at Curology full-time. Welcome, Nancy, to Dare to Disrupt. Thank you for joining us on the show today. This is a first for us. You are our first medical doctor.

Undare to disrupt and we're happy to have you.

Nancy Satur (01:43)

I'm so happy to be here. It is my pleasure.

Ryan Newman (01:46)

Let's

see, I'd like to get started as we always do, which is at the beginning. Would you mind sharing with our listeners some of your early formative years, such as where you were born and where you spent those early years of childhood?

Nancy Satur (01:57)

the eldest of six, small Pennsylvania dairy farm outside of a town called Becaria, population about a hundred. located only about 45 miles west of State College. My mom went to the seventh grade, my dad the ninth. They had to drop out, leave home, go to work, send money back to help raise their younger brothers and sisters. My mom worked as a housekeeper, then a waitress and a diner. My dad ultimately went to the coal mines.

until he went to the European front in World War II. He was a medic. He could have gone to college under FDR's GI Bill, but all he wanted was to come back to the farm where my grandparents had raised him. So, my mom waited for him to come home for five years, I think. They married, bought the farm, worked hard, struggled to make ends meet. I remember seven years of drought and no money to buy school clothes.

When I look back, I'm so incredibly grateful for how far I've come and grateful for all the opportunity given to me. We didn't have indoor plumbing until I was in the fifth grade. ~ No kitchen sink, no bathrooms, no toilet, no bathtub or shower. I pitched hay, drove a tractor, helped milk the cows, cared for my younger brothers and sisters while my mom and dad were working in the barn or out in the fields. I had really no exposure to the outside world other than church and school, but I was

Ryan Newman (03:01)

Gosh.

Nancy Satur (03:20)

very motivated to get off the farm.

Ryan Newman (03:23)

unbelievable. That is incredible. I that could be ~ a book or a movie. I mean, it's just really extraordinary. When you think back on it, and you mentioned the drought for so many years, is your overarching feeling one of struggle, pain, nostalgia? I mean, what is sort of the overwhelming feeling you have when you think back on this experience?

Nancy Satur (03:43)

It's a combination. I have lots of nostalgia for growing up. The stress in life was always money. We always had a garden and we always had milk because we had cows. Thank goodness we had the land. But it was a struggle.

Ryan Newman (03:58)

Normally, I always ask our guests after this point, well, how did you decide to go to Penn State? But I feel like there's a really interim question here. What conversations did your family have about education and the role that education would play in your future? And was that a foregone conclusion or how did that really even come about as a discussion in your family before we even get to the whole Penn State part?

Nancy Satur (04:19)

My parents didn't verbalize this, but I knew they valued education. Even though they were not educated, they were both readers as much as they could be in that time. I remember when the World Book Encyclopedia, you know, they went door to door to sell the encyclopedias. I mean, this was not an easy thing to use money for, but they bought the encyclopedias for us.

So I knew that they valued education. So they encouraged me, but they didn't have any background to guide me. mean, career choices, college applications, financing and education, they knew nothing about those things. I guess I always loved learning. you

know, National Honor Society, editor of the year book, valedictorian. So those kinds of things, thankfully.

came fairly easily to me, not that I didn't work, but I was always the quote smart one. Plus that got me out of working in the fields. I had to study.

Ryan Newman (05:18)

Wow. So OK, so obviously we're talking to a valedictorian here. So college was clearly on your radar. And then how did Penn State come into the mix?

Nancy Satur (05:26)

It was my 10th grade science teacher who first gave me direction. He singled me out one day and he handed me an application for a National Science Foundation summer program at Carnegie Mellon and told me, you should apply to this. I did, and we couldn't afford the $350 for room and board, but the local PTA stepped in with a scholarship and that summer changed everything. You know, it was in a dorm. I met students my age from entirely different backgrounds, city kids.

who took it for granted that they would go to college and become engineers or scientists or doctors. And I started to think, well, maybe that was possible for me. So, I remember going to the university library at Carnegie Mellon that summer and I was flipping through college guidebooks and there I found a brief description of the accelerated five-year Penn State Jefferson program that resulted in a BS and an MD degree in five calendar years.

I remember thinking if I could shorten the usual eight year path to becoming a physician, maybe there was a chance I could do it borrowing the money.

Ryan Newman (06:33)

And so now you're on campus and you're been accepted to this five year program. So you're on the path to becoming a doctor. What was some of those experiences like in

terms of your classes? And then when did you eventually venture onto Jefferson's campus and what was that experience like?

Nancy Satur (06:49)

The five-year program is now a seven-year program, I understand. But when I did it, when you graduated high school, you started Penn State that summer and then you went that whole next year and then the summer after that and then you began medical school. We had the same four years of medical school that any physician does, but you started medical school one year after high school graduation. And then you did the four years of medical school, but you were to come back

to Penn State after your first year of medical school and after your second to get more undergraduate credits. Unbelievable.

Ryan Newman (07:23)

because in between those medical school years, when you said you returned to Penn State, you're returning presumably in the summer, right? I mean, you weren't skipping a year. That's incredible. Yes. So how did you handle the maturity element of being one year out of high school, sitting in medical school? And correct me if I'm wrong. When you're sitting in medical school, you may have some classmates that are in a similar situation than you. But the majority of that class is just a traditional medical school program of people that have gone through four years of college. Right.

Nancy Satur (07:31)

Right, exactly.

Yes, I'm still waiting to be wild and crazy in my golden years. So I think that being the oldest of six on a farm, I think I had more maturity than a lot of students my age. When the twins were born, they would take my youngest sister, who was two at the time, to the barn to milk cows in the evening. Who were they going to leave the twins with? Me. I'm five years old. So

I was told to rock the cradle so I did one with my hand and one with my foot. I was not allowed to pick them up and I was not allowed to give them a bottle because they could choke. I was only allowed to give them a pacifier. And if I needed help for that hour and a half or so when my mom was in the barn, I would put a big red Maxwell House coffee can in the porch window. If it was light outside and my mother would every 15 or so minutes would check and if she saw that red coffee can in the window, she would come home. If it was dark, I would turn on the lights and that was the signal.

So I think someone who was in charge of babysitting newborn twins at age five, I really, I didn't have trouble adjusting, quite honestly.

Ryan Newman (08:58)

Unbelievable. That is an incredible story. And it does speak to just tremendous resilience and then this idea that sort of nature forces us to work through things in a timeframe that is really not on our own sometimes, which is pretty extraordinary. So you're sitting in Jefferson Medical School, you're having this unbelievable robust experience of medical school infused with undergraduate science education.

What did you start to evolve in your thinking in terms of how you wanted to potentially guide yourself in terms of which specialization with medicine?

Nancy Satur (09:33)

Well, initially I wanted to become a family physician because that's what I knew growing up in a small town area. But I did a general internal medicine internship in Allentown, Pennsylvania. I found it too broad. So I started to think seriously about specializing. I considered radiology, but I knew I would miss patient contact, which was one of the main reasons I was drawn to medicine. I thought about cardiology, but even then my hearing was poor and I knew I'd have trouble with a stethoscope discerning like

heart clicks and murmurs. So I kept coming back to dermatology even though I had never done a rotation in it. I like the visual nature of a specialty. I think I've always been a visual learner. The chairman of the Department of Medicine in my program, when I told him I was

leaving after internship year, planning to go into dermatology, I guess his impression of dermatology was, don't cure anybody, you don't kill anybody is what they used to say. And he said, what a waste of a bright young mind. Anyway, but.

I was sure this was what I wanted. So I needed a job. I came across an ad for Project USA, a public health service program that placed short-term replacement physicians where they were urgently needed. So I was hired by Project USA and could interview in between my assignments. I worked with the Nez Perce Indian tribe in Idaho, the Papago in Arizona, and the Sioux in South Dakota. ~

Ryan Newman (10:52)

Wow, incredible.

Were you actually specializing at that point in dermatology?

Nancy Satur (10:56)

I was out of academics and working and then in between assignments, I would get on a plane and fly to an interview for a dermatology residency.

Ryan Newman (11:04)

Unbelievable. And ultimately, where did you end up for your dermatology residency?

Nancy Satur (11:09)

I worked emergency room for six months after those Indian reservation assignments. And one of my interviews at the University of Chicago, the chair of the dermatology department told me, you know, you've made it through several rounds of cuts and you're here for an interview because we really wanted to meet you, but I'm not going to accept you because you're not in an academic program. I said, what's wrong with working emergency room? I'm learning a lot. It doesn't impress us. need.

are residents to have been in academics. So he suggested I pursue a pathology residency to strengthen my academic credentials and improve my chances. So I left that interview, picked up the phone, called the pathology department at the University of Illinois in Chicago, interviewed the next day, immediately was accepted because that is a much less competitive specialty than dermatology. So I spent the academic year of 78, 79 in pathology residency.

and ultimately was accepted into dermatology at Case Western Reserve University Hospital in Cleveland. And there I served as chief resident in my final year.

Ryan Newman (12:10)

So you leave Case Western Reserve, you graduate, you now have this advanced degree in medicine, you also have a specialization in dermatology, and where does life take you next and where did you begin your practice?

Nancy Satur (12:22)

I moved to San Diego North County area in 1984 and spent almost 30 years in the private practice of dermatology. This is where I'm sitting now in Solana Beach, California. So I treated conditions from acne to zoster and everything in between, cutting out skin cancers. And I also had an aesthetic practice, injections, laser therapies, liposuction, and also volunteered at the clinical teaching staff at University of California, San Diego.

Ryan Newman (12:48)

So you're in private practice, you're practicing your dermatology profession, presumably you're having a really rewarding time, fulfilling time, serving patients. At some point, there's an entrepreneurial thread to this, if you wouldn't mind sharing how that all took hold.

Nancy Satur (13:02)

One day, one of my three sons grew up, went to med school, became a board certified dermatologist as well, and started a company. And I was lucky enough to be invited along for the ride.

Ryan Newman (13:15)

So let's take a momentary catch up real quick because you're one of six. And so you led the path on really leading your family into education. You obviously then commented about the fact that your three kids also went through to getting higher education. But what ended up happening with your other five siblings at home, maybe not in detail, but just at a high level, did they end up pursuing advanced education, watching them with their sister had done?

Nancy Satur (13:40)

All five went to Penn State. Wow. The youngest two attended for a time but did not have degrees from Penn State. without exception, we are all so very grateful for the opportunities for the financial aid, the loans. It made all the difference in the world.

Ryan Newman (13:55)

And so you have this son and he first he chooses a similar specialty that you had chosen. And then he goes a step further to actually pursue something entrepreneurial. What was it like when he came to you with this entrepreneurial idea for the first time?

Nancy Satur (14:10)

Well, after his dermatology residency, he joined a dermatology practice in Albuquerque and it was there in 2012. He had this crazy idea to start a telemedicine practice on the side. And remember, this was long before the pandemic years when telemedicine became generally accepted. practice really needed him. From his first day, his schedule was full. Within no time, he was booked out several months. Many patients drove a couple hours to see him. One day he told me, you know, this system is really messed up.

Patients wait months to see me. I can only spend 10 minutes with them. And if a patient needs a follow-up to cut out a skin cancer or because they're blistering head to toe and I need to see them again, there are no openings in the schedule. And when I look out into the waiting room, it's full and most patients don't really need to be there and probably don't want to be there. He felt that acne, which is the most common condition dermatologists see, would lend itself well to telemedicine. And this could be more affordable.

and convenient and free up the appointment calendar for patients who needed to be seen in person. Being the supportive mom I am, I said, ~ no, why would you want to do that? And as a dermatologist since 1982, all I knew was a brick and mortar practice. But the more I thought about it, the more excited I became because I grew up without health insurance. No one in my family ever saw a dermatologist for our teenage acne. David saw the need. When he had this idea,

I remember we saw that the average wait time in this country to see a dermatologist was two months, and it could be six months in some areas. And the copay for the medications and the doctor's visit could easily be three to $400. We really wanted to make this not only convenient, but affordable. So he started working on this idea every waking moment. I remember in 2013, while we were still just brainstorming, David called me from Albuquerque.

to ask whether I could go to a casting call in North Hollywood for Shark Tank in two days. And of course I said, I'll do it. So I delivered our pitch to the casting manager and ended with, we think this is a great idea. She said, so do I, very enthusiastically. I thought we were on our way. Alas, it was probably for the best. We did not advance to the next round and we made our own way without swimming with the sharks.

Ryan Newman (16:30)

So you actually had an interview with a casting interview. Basically it was shark tank. Interesting. And Nancy, while this was going on, were you still having your own private practice as well? So you were sort of having one foot in the business and then one foot kind of running your private practice.

Nancy Satur (16:43)

Right, in 2013, I was full-time in my private practice just kind of bouncing ideas with David. What happened then was the website, an entire online medical record system was another challenge. David was working with offshore web developers and they were somehow not bringing his vision to life. So his younger brother, Glenn, my middle son, a Columbia

trained lawyer who at the time was working for an American law firm in Hong Kong came to the rescue.

I think Glenn was born with a keyboard in his hands. So he was able to grasp David's vision and run with it. And that's what happened. He quit his job, came back to San Diego, slept on David's apartment couch for the first couple of months and developed the first rendition of our website. And he was our CTO and stayed for eight years.

Ryan Newman (17:28)

Wow, incredible. your middle son Glenn was able to really create a website that ultimately appealed and probably had an interface that interacted with the actual underlying patients to be able to get them the care that they need. At a certain point, did you leave your actual private practice, Nancy, to pursue the business for a time first time? And if so, what role did you play at the company primarily?

Nancy Satur (17:51)

We launched to see our first patient in March 2014, and I volunteered to come to the office a couple half days a week. Now, let me back up a minute. Why did we even have an office? We were all online. David's next idea was to mix up, i.e. compound the prescription formulas ourselves in our office and send them directly to patients. I believe my words were, you've got to be kidding.

That's a whole other industry. All I could see were the obstacles. This wasn't in the skill set of a medical physician. How are you going to mix the topical medication consistently? How are you going to get it squirted into bottles or tubes? What about the prescription labels? They need to be printed accurately. Every state will have different laws. Thank goodness none of my sons have ever been in the habit of taking my suggestions too seriously. I thought we could send our prescriptions to an independent compounding pharmacy, but David was right. The cost to patients would have been exorbitant.

In private practice, we've all had patients who go to the pharmacy but leave without purchasing their medication because they couldn't afford it. Not to mention, we did have

trial formulas from compounding pharmacies. They just weren't right. They were gritty or the consistency wasn't right. So he decided that to make the treatments more affordable and to maintain control over the ingredients and concentrations, we would compound the formulas ourselves. The main

idea that was different than in-person practice was to gradually increase the strength of our acne treatment ingredients because most patients don't stick to treatment because they get irritated and they give up. So to give better results, we could increase with really small steps and help patients stick to the regimen and do better as far as results. In-office compounding, some people hesitated that.

but it's in the grand tradition of dermatology. Back in my residency days, my dermatology attending might have in his back office, his medical staff mix a topical steroid with coal tar for a psoriasis patient and sell it in a big jar for almost nothing, simply because he believed it was the best option for the patient. The actual compounded product is not FDA approved, but that is not bad. So if you...

had a bum knee and you went to your ortho doc and he or she decided to inject your knee, they might draw up in their syringe, a corticosteroid to decrease inflammation and they're taking that steroid from a bottle that is FDA approved and then they take some numbing medication so the knee doesn't hurt so much and that bottle is FDA approved. They draw that up into the same syringe and they mix it. That mixture is not FDA approved but

that's perfectly fine. It's ethical, moral, and legal to then inject that into your knee. So that's what we did. We started with FDA approved ingredients, mixing up a compound that was specific for our patients. David planned to mix up sample formulas before we launched and send them off to independent labs for testing for potency, pH, shelf life, et cetera. And he was going to use his apartment kitchen as his compounding lab. He discovered

One could not order prescription raw ingredients to be shipped to a residence. So we needed a medical office a year before seeing our first patient. We rented our first very modest office in an industrial strip mall in San Diego. I worried that potential patients might

Google map us and wonder if we were legitimate. A dermatology office located above an auto repair garage.

Ryan Newman (21:25)

Unbelievable. And really, I presume that that compounding of the medications yourself really saved tremendous dollars, not just for your customers, but also for the business in terms of margin that allowed you to A, keep your cost to customers low and also keep your own costs of the company low, which then allowed to fuel the growth of the business, presumably. A lot of this, Nancy, was happening direct to consumer, right? But then at some point, did you all ever think about going into the big box stores as well, or was it all done direct through consumer?

Nancy Satur (21:45)

Yes, exactly.

We are a medical practice, of course we need to prescribe the compounded products to our patients. After years, we also came out with over-the-counter cosmetic type ingredients, moisturizers, cleansers, and sunscreens, and those have been available in Target and Walmart and Amazon.

Ryan Newman (22:15)

What's it like to see your own products on the shelves of these household name stores that we all familiar with?

Nancy Satur (22:21)

it's just awesome. I can't believe how far we've come.

Ryan Newman (22:25)

Really

extraordinary. So when you think about the future of dermatology and the future of telemedicine and the role that that can play, how do you see this continuing to evolve into the future? And what role do you see neurology playing in

Nancy Satur (22:38)

think that the introduction of AI into everything is going to change not only curology, but every aspect of medicine in many ways. And so we are working to stay ahead of the curve there. And I think that we can make the interface more interesting for patients, flow more easily. We're working every day to make that happen. We don't have a dedicated app, but that is soon to come.

Ryan Newman (23:05)

And this whole notion of being a physician and all of the work and effort it takes to be a physician in parallel to then also pursuing entrepreneurship, what advice would you have for other physicians who are thinking about taking the plunge into entrepreneurship?

Nancy Satur (23:20)

I think it helps to have co-founders that you trust and work well with. They don't necessarily need to be your brother and your mother, but I think that is critical. You want to have an idea, whether it's a service or a device, that is somewhat transformational, that makes a huge difference, or you feel will make a huge difference in the industry in which you are working. But then you also need a path to market. And if no one is

going to buy it or be interested in it because maybe it's not so much different than what else is available, you're not going to succeed. I don't mean to plug my son's book, but actually he did this past year write a book entitled Why Doctors Win, The Doctor's Guide to Creating or Joining a High Impact Startup, and it's available on Amazon. And he really goes into how you can leverage domain expertise as a medical provider to

succeed in a medical or medical related startup to a greater degree than those that are founded by people who don't have the medical expertise.

Ryan Newman (24:27)

Very interesting. Well, certainly I think that that book would be a great bedside guide for anyone looking to potentially take that plunge into entrepreneurship. And it's great to know that for anyone looking to explore that further, that there are resources available. We're not going to go into our rapid fire segment of the show, Nancy. So what will happen is I'm going to ask you a few questions and you just tell me the first thing that comes to mind in a sentence or less. Okay. Okay. Great. What is your favorite thing about Penn State?

Nancy Satur (24:53)

My favorite thing about Penn State, in addition, of course, to the ice cream, which I'm sure is everybody's answer, is just the people and the surroundings and the feel that you get as you walk that campus. It still feels like home to me.

Ryan Newman (25:06)

What is the best advice you've ever received?

Nancy Satur (25:08)

The best advice I've ever received was to take a deep breath, slow down, and don't let your anxiety and desire for perfectionism interfere with your decision-making.

Ryan Newman (25:21)

And what is your superpower as a co-founder?

Nancy Satur (25:23)

My superpower as a co-founder would be my love of learning, teaching, and organizing. I led the medical team as medical director and developed all the protocols, the verbiage

that we use to communicate with our patients and mentored and taught the nurse practitioners and physician assistants and physicians who see our patients.

Ryan Newman (25:50)

And what's one myth about launching a startup that you think needs to be debunked?

Nancy Satur (25:55)

You feel compelled to do it even if you don't know how you're going to do it. Go forward.

Ryan Newman (26:02)

What's your favorite way to unwind after a long day?

Nancy Satur (26:06)

My favorite way to unwind after a long day is to take a walk and enjoy the fresh air and the blue skies and my surroundings in this beautiful place that I live.

Ryan Newman (26:18)

If you hadn't been a dermatologist building Curology, what would you be doing instead?

Nancy Satur (26:23)

If I hadn't been a dermatologist building Curology, I would probably have been a teacher and enjoyed that very much. Disruption to me means to do something that everyone else will think won't work, shouldn't work, can't work, but you believe in it and you make it happen and you make a difference.

Ryan Newman (26:30)

What does disruption mean to you?

Thank you, Nancy, for taking the time today to share your entrepreneurial journey with me. Now I'd like to hand things over to a current Penn State student, Maya Anderson. Maya is a senior at Penn State studying biotechnology in the Eberly College of Science. She is the founder and CEO of Vyla, a hair accessory brand engineered for durability, curl compatibility, and eco-conscious materials. Maya is actively involved in Penn State's entrepreneurial ecosystem. She won third place

at the Happy Valley LaunchBox Pitch Fest and is currently a participant in the Happy Valley LaunchBox Fast Track Accelerator Program. Maya, I now hand the interview over to you.

Maya Anderson (27:27)

Thank you so much, Brian. So Nancy, as a founder still in school, I'm really learning to balance my product development operations and like brand building. When Curology was early, what sorts of responsibilities did you and your son keep close as the domain experts and what did you learn to delegate early?

Nancy Satur (27:49)

That is a good question, Maya. What did we learn to delegate early as founders? I think that in the beginning, we delegated nothing, not only because we felt we needed to have a hand in everything. We didn't have the funds to hire. So the first year we bootstrapped and we weren't paying ourselves anything. Then once we were funded at the end of 2014,

We then were able to hire staff and develop a team that helped us with tech and marketing. So I think it's important when you have co-founders to use each person's unique strengths in the best way to allow your project, your startup to move forward.

Maya Anderson (28:37)

At what point did you determine that it was fit to start paying yourselves through your company? I do believe a lot of companies like to bootstrap like yours, but I know that there

are certain founders that do struggle with finding that point that they actually can start paying themselves and move forward with their company.

Nancy Satur (28:56)

Well, once we were funded, we paid ourselves very little, but just enough to buy groceries and pay rent. Most companies fail because they run out of funds. And we didn't want to a bankruptcy because we spent too much. So it was difficult because your runway is only so long and you don't want to reach the end of it.

That kept us very small for the first handful of years until our second round of venture capital funding. And then we were able to hire more of the expertise that we needed.

Maya Anderson (29:29)

Curology had to earn trust quickly in a category where some people can often be skeptical. So for a new brand like mine, where we're introducing a biodegradable alternative to everyday accessories that everyone already trusts, what are some sort of early trust building signals you prioritize in your own company and that you would recommend for someone like me?

Nancy Satur (29:54)

Social media has changed a lot since we started. I know when we launched and we started with zero patients, of course, and very quickly we saw an influx, not huge, but still meaningful. We didn't know where they were coming from. And it turned out to be a Reddit forum of skincare enthusiasts who had discovered us. And that led to our first influx of patients. My son Glenn, who again,

did everything in those early years from signing leases to doing our marketing. He, I remember, announce on Facebook, that was our primary marketing tool in the beginning, when we were launched in a new state. Because back when we started, telemedicine wasn't accepted nationwide. And there were some hoops to jump through. And also, we needed to wait for laws to catch up with the reality of medicine at the time. I myself,

am licensed in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, which is no small feat. So again, we need to be licensed medically where the patient is. And that's where the practice of medicine occurs, where the patient physically is. Our startup was much more complex because it's a medical practice as well as a startup. Yours would be so much easier from that standpoint. But I think that you are much more of an expert on social media.

today than I would be, but we really utilized it as it stood at the time.

Maya Anderson (31:24)

As a young founder, I'm still very much developing my leadership style and you helped guide a whole team of medical providers through your fast growing startup. So what sorts of leadership habits or communication practices really helped you to maintain clarity and alignment amongst your team?

Nancy Satur (31:46)

I think being approachable and non-critical helps. I think that ~ there is a disadvantage to being fully remote. We do have a small office in San Diego, but we had gone to bigger and bigger offices in San Diego and San Francisco until 2020 when the world changed and the pandemic influenced us all. As a leader, I think it's so much easier and more impactful.

to be all sitting around a table or in our case, a use shaped sofa with our feet on the ottomans and just hashing out things in person. I think the most important thing is approachability and communication styles that maybe can be honed with outside advice so that those you are leading can look up to you and believe in your vision and believe in the goal that you're working towards.

Maya Anderson (32:45)

Yeah, absolutely. Thank you. And I'm also starting to navigate manufacturing for the first time. And it's easy to feel like I'm making decisions with incomplete information, especially

considering this is nowhere in my expertise. And when Curology was early, how were you able to make confident decisions in areas outside your expertise?

Nancy Satur (33:09)

I remember that I would be concerned about every aspect, liability, whether it was going to work, whether this was the right decision. And my middle son, Glenn, said to me one day, mom, you can't birth a company fully formed. We can't have everything perfect. We just have to wing it sometimes and stop worrying about it. So I did. So I think, I think you just

If you waited for everything to be perfect, you would never move forward. You can't.

Maya Anderson (33:44)

That's a really good point, honestly. And then my final question I do have for you today is, you've really been able to see how consumer behavior evolves over time in your industry. And for Viola, my brand entering a beauty adjacent space, not quite exactly the same as yours.

What sorts of shifts in customer expectations should I be preparing for, especially with your experience in expanding through social media a little?

Nancy Satur (34:15)

I think that there can be waves of different concerns or different focuses that come from outside your startup, your world. And they could be anything from, okay, this is biodegradable, but one of the ingredients is a potential carcinogen or hormone disruptor. And sometimes you wouldn't, in your wildest imagination, think this would be a concern, but then it pops up and you have to deal with it.

I think that, again, you will never be able to head everything off at the pass. You've just got to keep dealing with each problem as it occurs and just have confidence in the vision you're working towards and just know that you're going to be all right no matter what

happens. You're going to be all right. Not to be pessimistic, but even if this idea fails, you will have learned so much that you can then apply to your next step.

Every step of the way is a learning experience, and I think that's important to just appreciate and recognize.

Maya Anderson (35:20)

Absolutely. Thank you so much. Thank you so much for your time. This has been so, helpful for me and I really appreciate you all having me on for tonight.

Nancy Satur (35:28)

You're very welcome, Maya, and good luck. I look forward to hearing maybe about your startup as time goes on.

Maya Anderson (35:34)

Thank you so much.

Ryan Newman (35:35)

That was Dr. Nancy Satter, co-founder, medical director, emerita of Curology. This episode was produced and edited by our executive producer, Katie DeFiori. If you're listening on Apple Podcasts and enjoyed this episode, please consider leaving us a rating and review. It helps more people discover the show. We'd also love for you to share one episode with a person who might be inspired by Nancy's story. Make sure to follow Dare to Disrupt.

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