

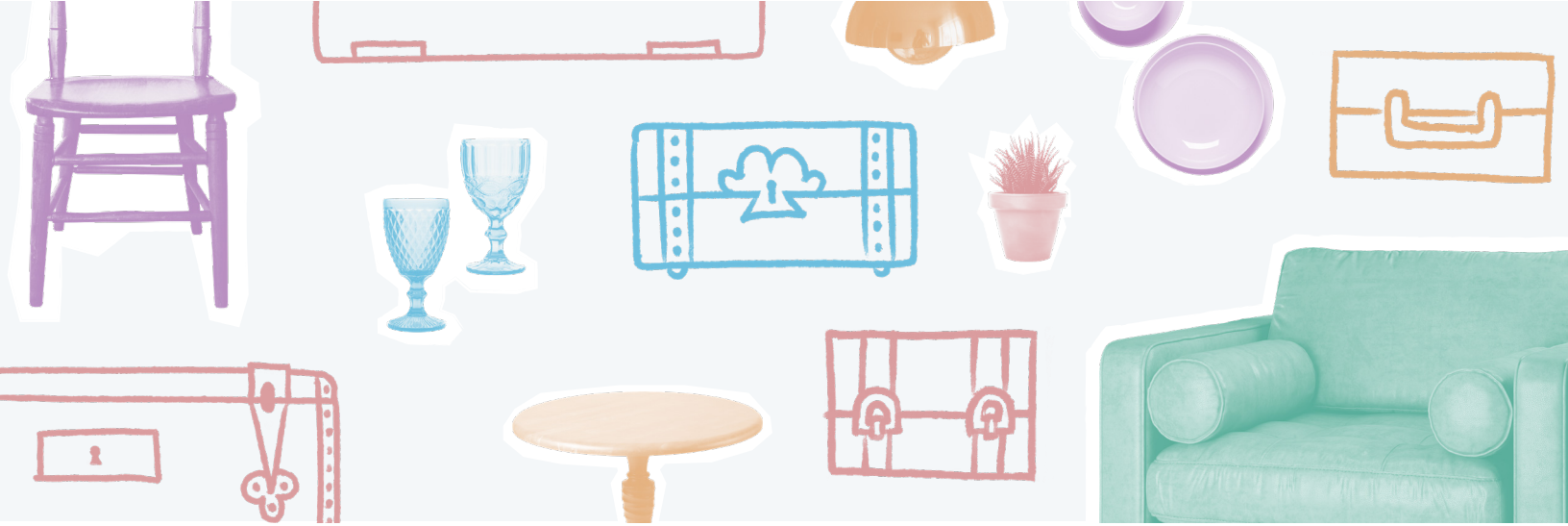
The
**TRUNK
SHOW**

With RW ELEPHANT

SEASON 2 EPISODE 6



**BRANDING & MARKETING AN EVENT
RENTAL BUSINESS WITH LILY & CANE**



Before starting her event rental business, Sherine Iskandar was a marketing professional. Now, with years of experience and a personal rebrand under her belt, she's the perfect pro to talk to about the nuts and bolts of branding and marketing an event rental business.



What's in this episode:

- Building a new brand in a new market
- How Sherine plans her purchases around pieces that fit and further her brand
- The strategy behind rebranding Modern Vintage Rentals as Lily & Cane
- Lessons learned commissioning custom pieces
- The endless battle for work-life balance



QUOTES

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The client experience is a huge thing.”

- Sherine Iskander

“Some people give up after attending once or twice at one of these networking groups and then they say, ‘oh, that doesn’t work for me.’ But what I’ve found is that **you really have to stick with it for six to nine months** before anybody with any kind of great reputation will give you a chance because if they recommend you, then their reputation is on the line.”

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“This was important for me to explain to myself or to keep repeating to myself: **‘I can’t be all things to all people.’**”

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“I decided **I’m not going to wait for perfection** to start promoting a product.”

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“My name was doing a disservice to the brand,
and I had to change it.”

- Sherine Iskandar

“It was a big goal when I quit the corporate world. My goal was to be a healthier person – mind and body. And I am a healthier person now because **I’ve allowed myself the balance of work and life.**”

- Sherine Iskandar

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

Allison Howell Hello, I'm your host, Allison Howell. And this is the Trunk Show, where I talk with leading event rental pros all about their rental adventures. The show is brought to you by R.W. Elephant, mighty inventory management software designed to help you conquer the chaos in your event rental business and reclaim your creativity because the world needs more of the beautiful events and environments you create. In this episode, I sit down with Sherine Iskandar, a marketing and branding professional turned event rental pro in Portland.

Sherine Iskandar My name is Sherine, and the business name is Lily and Cane. We're in Portland, Oregon. And been doing event rentals for about five years.

Allison Howell Great.

Allison Howell Can you take us back to your early career? What did you study in college?

Sherine Iskandar I actually studied marketing. So I got a degree in business and marketing. And then I, after working in marketing for a few years, went back and got a degree in graphic design because I felt like a lot of the smaller businesses that were hiring wanted more of a one stop shop, so I learned about marketing, branding and design.

Allison Howell Great. And so what kinds of businesses did you work in then at that point?

Sherine Iskandar So let's see, I worked for Ringer. They're a baseball and softball footwear company. That was like my launching of my marketing career and design career and then moved on to the Colombian, which is a newspaper. And then we -- then I moved on to commercial real estate, and that's really the last industry I was in.

Allison Howell And that was with Capital Pacific.

Sherine Iskandar Yeah. How did you know?

Allison Howell Well, you know, I did my research well. And it looks like you went through a process of rebranding at Capital Pacific, right?



Sherine Iskandar Yes. So rebranding, branding, corporate culture, all that stuff is is stuff that I - to me, it kind of comes naturally and it's also just something I'm super into. So even though I love events and obviously what I do, I think the world of marketing and branding is still super exciting to me, which has helped me, you know, with my business and how to brand that. Yeah.

Allison Howell So tell us about your role there. When you dove into the commercial real estate market, you were you were in a marketing position. What were you in charge of?

Sherine Iskandar So I was in charge of making them look good.

Allison Howell Okay, great. So how did you do that?

Sherine Iskandar You know, I started off the first big item on my to do list when I started, that was was to rebrand the company. There was no name change or anything like that, but it was really to figure out, you know, what does Capital Pacific stand for? You know, who are we? What do we want to convey to our clients? How do we convey it? So it and it also goes, you know, external and internal. So then you got to work with your company culture and are we really embodying what we're saying that we're doing? And so there's a lot of changes that have to happen internally too, you know, to get really excited about the new branding and the new direction and really embody it. A brand embodies so much more than just the look and feel. It's the client experience as a huge thing. And then is it... and your product? And in my case, you know, the product is the inventory coupled with the client experience, right?

Allison Howell So what did you do next in your career after you were working in corporate real estate or commercial real estate? What happened next?

Sherine Iskandar So I got pregnant and had a baby, and it became clear to me that the crazy hours of the corporate world were not good for my health and were not good for our family life. Yeah. And once I had made -- when I was pregnant with my second, that's when it's just like, I couldn't do it anymore. Working the crazy hours and, you know, having your brain on all the time for work. So it was just time to find something different to do and... I think I lucked out. I happened to also be in charge of clean events at my last job, and that's when I was exposed to the event industry in the first place and exposed to event rentals.



Allison Howell And so you were producing events. And did you sort of see a need or a hole in the market or what? What made you think, "Oh, I should do rentals?"

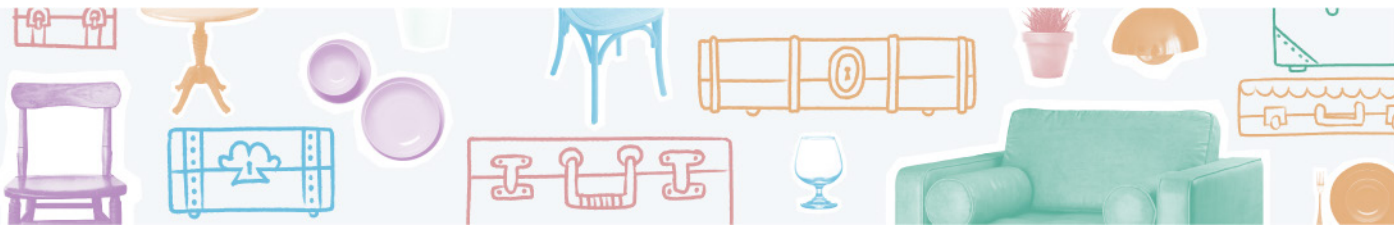
Sherine Iskandar Yeah, that's actually exactly what happened. It was a corporate event. You know, it was a client event. And it's not a wedding. So all I could really find at the time was just a lot of vintage stuff and like really cool ornate things. And I'm like, I want modern couches and stuff. And, you know, I didn't want like chairs for all our attendees. You know, our brand at that time was definitely like an outside of the box thing, and we weren't going to be like what every corporate event was like. So we wanted to do something different, and it was hard to find that. And so that's when I saw an opportunity or a hole in the market... And thinking, you know, okay, you know, maybe, maybe this is something I could do. Maybe I could bring some more modern pieces to the events industry, some more high end pieces. Maybe, maybe you don't need to cover your tables with linens all the time. Maybe you can have high quality tables that you know, just look good bare.

Allison Howell Well, tell us about the early days then of Vintage Meets Modern. And that's what your business was originally called.

Sherine Iskandar Yes. So, you know, that name was like a no-brainer for me. So I came up with it, and I didn't even think twice. Like vintage meets modern, because does everything have to be vintage? We need modern too. And then also. I launched a business with two new dining tables. It would have been easy to just by folding tables from an event vendor and just, you know, doing what everyone else was doing. But I went and got custom furniture made. And I decided, "Oh, we're going to have rounds made out of walnut, so you don't need to cover with linens." And then I decided we should have white tables that are white lacquer. And so I decided to launch with like two big products that I like. OK, these two products are going to take to industry and like, everyone's going to be like, "Wow, vintage meets modern and we have to rent from her!" It didn't quite work that way.

Allison Howell What do you mean? What do you mean? How did it work?

Sherine Iskandar I was like, "Hey, look at my cool new products." You guys should be super excited about these tables. You can't find them anywhere else. And I was like, Oh, wow, yeah, this really look good. But we love working with so-and-so, so we're just going to stick with them. And it was a couple of years of of really like, "Come on, I'm a new business, but you should give me a shot."



Allison Howell Well, who was your ideal client at the beginning when you were launching with those two table designs? Were you thinking all corporate events? Were you thinking weddings? Who who was that avatar in your head of the ideal client?

Sherine Iskandar My ideal client was mostly weddings. The lounge furniture would have been for both, so but if we tackle the tables first, my ideal client was someone that was sick of status quo like I was. So someone that was more design savvy and more interested in wowing their clients. I mean, sorry, wowing their guests. And just like having something different at their events and willing to pay a little more. It wasn't a lot more, just a little more, I thought. Mm hmm.

Allison Howell So how did you communicate about your business to those clients and potential clients?

Sherine Iskandar I did a lot of cold calling, I guess. But the cool thing about the wedding industry is it's easy to figure out who the players are. You know, just make a list of all the planners. Make a list of all the venues, call everyone, and introduce them. I had newsletters like email newsletters. I tried to have like good photos from the get go. I had a little like leave behind, you know, just typical typical stuff, I would say. I joined a networking group. All of that.

Allison Howell An event based one.

Sherine Iskandar Yes, it was a wedding based one.

Allison Howell Which one was that?

Sherine Iskandar It was called Wedding Network USA. They don't exist anymore. Not that I know of.

Allison Howell I mean, every region has such a different, like a certain kind of group. Some some really focus on Alia, the International Life Events Association, Summer MGI or Nace or ABC or whipper. Like every region has sort of had one of those organizations that kind of becomes the front runner and. So it's fascinating to me, there are these are all national or international organizations, but they're not always the big thing in your neighborhood, you know, very true.

Sherine Iskandar Like right now, there's an organization called Art of Weddings. And they're very, very local to Portland, and that's now my favorite go to. And there's Ilea.

Allison Howell Mm hmm. So as you were networking with people and meeting people and doing those cold calls, what were you communicating? What was the messaging that you were sharing? It wasn't just, Hey, I'm a rental company. What were the things that you were saying to them?

Sherine Iskandar I really tried to make it clear that I had big plans to bring, you know, something very unique and different to the events industry. And that's why I wanted to start with like something tangible. So I couldn't really launch my business until I had those two tables made. And I started investing in some of the more modern lounge pieces as well. That was my messaging is like, "It's not just vintage anymore. It's vintage meets modern." And you can have, you know, you can have something different and unique at your wedding or event.

Allison Howell So you mentioned that it was hard at first to get people to sort of leave their trusted sources and develop a new relationship with you. What was most effective at helping people make that transition?

Sherine Iskandar I think it was perseverance. I think it was me just sticking to it and continuing to promote the business. I did some styled shoots that really made my furniture look good. And it was just a matter of continuing to promote and prove that this is, you know, we're here to stay and we have something different and unique and you should take a look at it. And, you know, it's slowly but surely worked.

Allison Howell Yeah, it's interesting you say perseverance, because in my experience, in my whole career in events, you know, I've attended these networking groups. And you know, some people give up after attending once or twice at one of these networking groups and then they say, "Oh, that doesn't work for me." But what I found is that you really have to stick with it for six to nine months before anybody with any kind of great reputation will give you a chance because if they recommend you, then their reputation is on the line. And so they want to see, "Oh, they're actually coming back. They're sticking around. They're growing their business. Other people have tested them, and they've worked out."

Sherine Iskandar Yeah, I really agree with that. I think it was a matter of this is a new kid on the block. I don't know that I can like I give her my business, and what if something goes wrong? And so that's why with perseverance and slowly gathering new clients, you can continue to prove yourself.



Allison Howell You mentioned that as you were coming to market, you were looking for people who were sick of the status quo and also who were willing to pay a little bit more. Help me understand a little more about how you feel like pricing fits into your positioning.

Sherine Iskandar You know, events are expensive. And people throwing an event, especially a wedding, because it's personal money, it's not it's not money out of, you know, the corporate account... I think that makes it a lot harder to spend. You know, it just has to be the right client. Like this was important for me to explain to myself or to keep repeating to myself like: "I can't be all things to all people."

Allison Howell So initially, how did you set those prices? Were those based on like the market around you? Were those based on your cost? Was that based on value that you were offering? How did you calculate that?

Sherine Iskandar Two things: one would be my cost and how many times do I need to rent this item to break even on it, even if I'm not even considering all the overhead and operating costs? It was a very simple formula for me. How much would this cost if I rent this? Between four and eight times, depending on the item, then that's the price I'm setting, and then I had to go and look at the market. Of course, I can't rent a chair for two hundred dollars if everyone else is renting chairs for sixty dollars. I mean, lounge chairs, not just matching chairs. So yeah, that's how our pricing came about. And with the tables, I kind of tried to compare like, "OK, if they're investing in high end linens plus, you know, a cheap folding table this is their cost." And then if they're investing in my tables that are that don't require linens, it's still a higher cost. But you're trying to build that brand equity and you're trying to just be that brand that people want to have at their event.

Allison Howell Right. So you mentioned that you had commissioned these tables to be built. How did you go about finding people to make things for you?

Sherine Iskandar That was such a pain point early on, it was. It's the kind of thing that would make you want to quit. It was very, very tough. I don't already have connections. You know, I'm in here zero connections in the event industry, zero connections with carpenters or any, you know, furniture makers. Like I went from zero to like trying to find people. I learned quickly not to be cheap. If they're asking a certain price, look at their portfolio. You know, but it's been really tough. When I started out, I didn't even understand materials. I didn't



understand what it took to build a table. I wanted a white lacquer table. I barely knew what that meant. I just knew that it looked really nice, and I didn't know what you had to do to build a table that looked like that. I thought wood and white and lacquer paint. That didn't work out. Trial and error was a big thing.

Allison Howell So tell us about your collection. What do you rent now? What's included?

Sherine Iskandar So we rent -- think of a dinner party or a wedding. So we rent mass seating, dining tables and chairs. We rent a table top decor, lounge furniture -- I love lounge furniture, so we have a lot of lounge option. And I started this thing called "Rent This Look." And so we have like an easy button. So you click an easy button, and you're like, "Oh, there's my lounge, you sleep and boom! There is my dining table and chairs, and that's what it's going to look like." And so that was part of also our big goal is the client experience, the shopping experience itself. If they're not stylists, and they don't want to spend all this time trying to style their event, but they know they want something that looks awesome. They can come to us and we have a way to just do like a one stop shop, and you can click on "Rent This Look," and you've got this whole lounge and it comes with pillows and the core and even dryer floral that's included or plants and greenery. And we do the same for dining too.

Allison Howell So how did you decide what to add to your collection after you had those first two tables and some lounge furniture? You're starting to get some business... how did you decide what to add next?

Sherine Iskandar It's a combination of client feedback and interior design trends.

Allison Howell Is that what continues to sort of guide your buying?

Sherine Iskandar Yes, yes. So the client feedback, like, for example, I was just so anti farm tables for some reason. Oh, everyone else has farm tables. And you know, I want to be unique. We don't need farm tables and people just kept asking for farm tables. And I'm like, Well, I guess I'm missing out on a lot of business here, but how do I carry farm tables that are on brand for Lilly & Cane? And so we had our own custom made modern what I call modern farmhouse tables, so they're not rustic. There are more high end and those are doing really well, and that's a client feedback that I listen to.

Allison Howell Yeah. And so where do you sort of get inspiration for that other side of the equation, the interior design trends?



Sherine Iskandar I love shopping. No, it's, you know, a lot of it actually, I look at the big furniture companies that the the like CB2 or Crate and Barrel. You know, those brands that are like they're elevated, they're known for their high quality. They're known for being not just on trend, but leaders and innovators. And and they just get inspired by what what they carry and the scenes that they create. And I follow some interior designers on Instagram, and it's it's just I take inspiration wherever it may hit me. You know, I take a lot of inspiration from nature too. And I really love, you know, furniture that's made out of wood and just like drawing the natural out and not just, you know, not just like metal furniture, for example.

Allison Howell Well, take us through the process you have when you get a new piece, for instance, these modern farmhouse tables, when you decide to purchase something or have it built... what do you do first?

Sherine Iskandar It all starts with some kind of inspirational either photo or idea in my head. I start sketching measurements design. I'm not a good sketch or by any means. I'm really not talented in drawing, but it's it's just they're simple sketches of like these are like, sure, the dimensions. I think we're going to use these materials. And then you just got to search for the right local talent. I've gone through a lot of difference makers. Some of them have quit or moved or or had a bad experience. "And sorry, I can't use you again." So it's it's such a long, long process. It really takes a lot to bring a new custom-made product to market. I just don't think people realize that.

Allison Howell Right. So what are some of those some of those ideas that you're holding in mind as you're making that sketch? I mean, obviously, you talked about dimensions like with a table, are you thinking about design first and then functionality second?

Sherine Iskandar I think I do start with the design first because that's what truly inspires me. So we had custom bars made. They're called L-word bars. And... I just wanted actually, no! That's a lie. Those ones started function first, so I guess it depends. With the bars they needed to fold, and they needed to be on wheels, and they needed to have prep space. But then I also had to make sure they looked gorgeous. So that's always very important. So, you know, it is definitely a marriage of form or design and function.



Allison Howell Sure. So. So then what happens next? You've got this idea you've had, you've found your manufacturer, they've made you maybe your first prototype, and they're going to continue making the rest of them. Are you Instagram Story? Like, how's that? How do people start hearing about it?

Sherine Iskandar Yes, pictures. So, you know, I decided I'm not going to wait for perfection to start promoting a product. As far as like, I'm not going to hold on to these bars for like a couple of months until I finally, like have a cool style shoot planned. I am just promoting it right away. So that's what I did. I took pictures on my phone, went straight to Instagram, started promoting it. I don't think they were even on the website yet and then put them on the website right away. And then it was part of my newsletter that I send out. I only send it out like once every three or four months. So I don't bombard people. And then came the styled shoot, and I was able to promote it a little more heavily that way. And you know, really, it really would align better with our brand when you do the more professional branding and promoting.

Allison Howell So how do you know when you've marketed something well?

Sherine Iskandar Oh, that's a great question. I mean, if it's doing well, you know, it's a combination of, "Is the product being received well plus did I market it well?" I guess it's a combination of both. But you know, through RW Elephant, we can run, you know, we can we can run reports on our inventory and we can figure out, all right, this went out this many times in this past year. It's doing really well. And this couch that I spent, you know, two thousand dollars on went out twice. Boy! So that helps you, you know, kind of figure out, all right, what's going well and what's going wrong? How to fix it.

Allison Howell You mentioned that when you're when you're setting your pricing, you're often looking for something to make back its cost within four to eight rentals. Are you hoping that happens within a certain time frame?

Sherine Iskandar Generally, it's been six months to a year. Of course, things, you know, things have been very different the last two seasons, the last two years. So we don't have a good gauge right now. But generally, I would say I need to break even within one year or a lot less. It really depends. You know, it's hard to it's hard to break even quickly on a on a high ticket item. You know, vases I can break even like in a couple of months or if it's something as big as a custom designed, expensive table... It might take me over a year to break even.



Allison Howell Sure. Tell me what you do when a piece isn't performing the way you expect it to.

Sherine Iskandar So sadly, sometimes I'm just emotionally attached to something.

Allison Howell I think that's a pretty common experience in this industry.

Sherine Iskandar Yeah. Generally speaking, it's time for it to go. Unfortunately. Well, not necessarily. So what I've also done on some things that weren't performing as well as I put them in a pre-styled lounge. So let's say a couch wasn't going out as much or a love seat or a lounge chair? I have put them in our one of our Rent This Look lounges, and it helps because people like the lounge as a whole.

Allison Howell Yeah, well, it's interesting. Sometimes people have to see it in context in order for them to know what to do with something. And it seems like you're obviously really good at that, and your ideal client is not that stylist. Your ideal client is not somebody who... obviously they care about the look, but they're not necessarily the person who can do it themselves. And so being able to sort of serve it to them on a silver platter gives them, again, access to something that they couldn't do on their own.

Sherine Iskandar Yeah, you got it exactly right. That's really what I try and do. Of course, there are some clients that don't need my help whatsoever and are amazing and brilliant stylists. And then there's the B-to-C, like directly to the customer where they need that help. They just, they know they want something really cool. "But oh my goodness, I don't want to have to figure out how to style this."

Allison Howell Sure, sure. So are there any other things you do? Something's not performing. So you put it in sort of the Rent This Look category and see if it gets more attention that way. Are there any other changes you make or steps you take in order to get it out more?

Sherine Iskandar What I've done is rename, repriced, and reshoot. I've tried that.

Allison Howell All three at the same time or one of those three?

Sherine Iskandar All three at the same time. And sometimes I actually increase the price and sometimes I decrease the price. It just depends. And I try and follow my gut, and I'm not always right. So sometimes things are just still not performing well, and then it's time to sell.



Allison Howell We're back with Sherine, and we're going to be talking about all things marketing, starting with communication. So tell me more about how you communicate with your clients. Now you mentioned a newsletter, you mentioned Instagram. How do you make sure that you're continuing to keep the same messaging and the strong brand that you want in front of people?

Sherine Iskandar I put a lot of work into our website. A lot of work into it. And as you know, we did recently, rebrand. So the branding is super important for me. It's just in my blood. And yeah, I work on the website. I work on the on the product photography. I design my own styled shoots as opposed to just doing photoshoots when someone else is planning because I know exactly the type of photos that we need. And I'm sure it's wonderful to have a beautiful bride with gorgeous dress and amazing makeup, but I can't sell that. I'm trying to sell furniture rentals. So it's just a matter of really getting that right. Yeah, just thinking, sticking to the brand, sticking to the quality, and it needs to be behind the scenes as well as in front of the clients.

Allison Howell OK, well, how do you evaluate whether or not to utilize new marketing channels like, for instance, TikTok has become the big thing over the past year? How do you evaluate whether it's worth your time?

Sherine Iskandar I'm resisting TikTok right now. Well, ask me again in six months. But I only have so much time in my day. So to me, the website is absolutely the most important marketing channel. Number two would be social media as a whole, but we are focused on Instagram.

Allison Howell Well, I'd love to talk more about the rebrand now. When did you decide that Vintage Meets Modern was no longer the name for you?

Sherine Iskandar You know, it's actually been a couple of years that I that this thought was in my head that we needed to possibly change the name of the business. It was a great way to start. And the brand, the name and the brand did get a lot of, you know, brand equity and it was a positive thing. But then at some point I kept seeing and realizing that people were so focused on the word "vintage." Everything else was kind of taking a backseat. And vintage is not a big part of what we do. Actually, it really isn't. And so my name was doing a disservice to the brand, and I had to change it. What I realized is we needed to elevate the



brand. And so this new name needed to be a little bit more high end, but not quite snooty. And then, you know, and then I just went from there. You know, think what inspires me? What inspires the type of furniture that we carry and what was the idea that I wanted to convey?

Allison Howell

OK. So how did you land on Lily and Cane?

Sherine Iskandar

So we had to throw out Vintage Meets Modern, but, you know, it wasn't like out with the old and in with the new. It was more like, things that come first inspire something new. So we still needed to embody this idea of old and new working together. So Cane is a part of a ratan plant. Right. And so when you peel the skin of a written plant, you get that vine and that cane webbing. Cane webbing or cane. But cane webbing is a staple in mid-century furniture design, and it continues to be widely used today. And it has this presence about it, to me, that's both like strong, structured and masculine, yet elegant and feminine. In a word, Cane, you know, the reason it's used in the name is mostly because it is something found in nature that you use that inspires you and you use in furniture design, which then translates to beautiful events. But Cane is also a masculine name like a first name. Lily is the ying to his yang. You know, and it's kind of a nod to our old name Vintage Meets Modern. It's like Lily meets Cane. So Lily is feminine. It's a flower. It's a feminine name found in nature. To me, nature is very inspiring. You know, we bring plants indoors, we bring flowers indoors, and we want to create it as part of our living environment. And we do the same thing with events.

Allison Howell

Yeah. So you decide Lily & Cane is the name. And what happened next?

Sherine Iskandar

Well, what happened next is trying to really design the branding. So.... what's the logo going to look like, what are the colors? What's the color palette? What do we need to really represent? And even though I've done this in my career for many, many years, I did not want to do it this time around for my own business.

Allison Howell

It's kind of hard to do it for yourself, right?

Sherine Iskandar

It became hard, for sure. I did it with Vintage Meets Modern, and I designed our logo. But this time around, I hired a local firm here in Portland. And they did a really amazing job. Their name is Situ. And they really got to know the brand or the new brand, I guess, that I wanted to portray. And they helped me develop



like the general aesthetic. What kind of photographer you're going to use. This kind of feeling that you want to evoke in your clients. Who's your ideal client? All that stuff.

- Allison Howell** So you now have an aesthetic for the brand. How are you going to announce it or proclaim it to the world?
- Sherine Iskandar** You know, I actually I had a big plan. And then I got so busy and only did half of it.
- Allison Howell** Well, tell us the whole plan, and tell us what half you did.
- Sherine Iskandar** I did like a little like pre-announcement. April 15th, I'm committing to this. Whether it's ready or not, I make a big announcement. And I just, I stuck to it: April 15th. I made the announcement on Instagram. And it got a lot of feedback. And you know, I just kept putting our logo on, on our feeds and on stories. And then a week later, I announced the new website, and I sent out a newsletter to our B2B clients so, you know, planners and venues and repeat clients and made that announcement again. Then it stopped, and I just had to work.
- Allison Howell** OK, well, walk us through the process of creating the new website. I know I know you'd been fairly involved in your last website, and you created this one. Tell us, what you used and who was involved in that process.
- Sherine Iskandar** So... one of the reasons I actually joined RW Elephant, your inventory system, is because of the integration, the website integration. So when I launched my last website, I had relaunched the last website, it was through having also just signed on with RW Elephant and all the inventory, all the beautiful pictures that we can upload and keep on RW Elephant get translated onto the website. And so when you go on our websites, when you click on the catalog section, it's drawing out content like descriptions and photos from RW Elephant, but it has your plug in has allowed us to just completely customize it. And so it it takes on the exact same look and feel of the rest of the website.
- Allison Howell** And you're using WordPress as your platform, right?
- Sherine Iskandar** Oh yes and no. So I use Showit.



Allison Howell And Showit is a page builder within a WordPress sort of world. But you put in another – you did a lot of the design yourself, but you brought in a developer to kind of customize some things, right?

Sherine Iskandar Yes. So the developer, because I hate coding and I – I just don't want to deal with it ever. I found this awesome developer and he was able to integrate RW Elephant into... and make it look like everything I had designed on Showit.

Allison Howell Perfect. And do you find that you have a lot of clients using your website to create wish lists?

Sherine Iskandar Yes. Wish lists are awesome.

Allison Howell So they add their items to their wish list, and then they submit that to you. What's what's the process look like? After that, they submit it to you. And what do you do?

Sherine Iskandar So... there's an automated reply, so once they hit submit, they get an email that says, "We'll get back to you within two business days with availability and pricing." Even though the pricing is listed on the website, they need to know what the total price with delivery is. And so I generally try and get back within one business day. I can figure out if all this stuff that's on their wish list is in fact available for their event dates. If it's not, I make suggestions. So I try to not lose a clients because something's not available, and I get back to them with, "OK, here's your order. See, you know, attached PDF. Yeah, to confirm your order, click here. Make a deposit, and you are confirmed." Easy.

Allison Howell Sure, super easy. So it seems like that that wish list process for you is kind of like a springboard for your sales process or a jumping off point. You're not expecting that this is going to be a complete online transaction. They may need a little bit more high touch service in that process, right?

Sherine Iskandar Yes, that's correct. But like I mentioned, the website is a huge part of of how we promote the business. So we do get a lot of clients that have discovered us just by Googling. And so those wish lists are a very, very strong lead. And then it's just it's just a matter of client service after that.



Allison Howell What do you think has changed in you personally as a result of being an entrepreneur? You were in the corporate world, and then you started your own business. How are you different?

Sherine Iskandar Hmm. I think I value my freedom. That's a weird word to use. But a work-life balance, I guess, is better way to describe that. But I really value my work-life balance, and I value my family time and time and the freedom to take a sick day when I actually need to be like, heal in some way. Or being able to take my kids to school and not having to be at the office before magically before dropping the kids off at school. I think I also have a little more confidence in myself. Hmm. And I'm a healthier person. I had health issues when I felt overworked and super stressed out. And that's a huge thing too actually. And it was a big goal when I quit the corporate world. My goal was to be a healthier person, mind and body. And I am a healthier person now because I have allowed myself the balance of work and life.

Allison Howell What are some of the big decisions or turning points you faced as an entrepreneur that you think changed you personally?

Sherine Iskandar It might be more like as opposed to like a decision I had to made, it was more like a bump in the road that I had to ride through. And early on when when I decided I was going to make those white lacquer tables there and no one else had and bring them up to market, and that was going to be how I was going to launch the business. I really hit a lot of bumps. Getting those made, I had like, I paid, you know, down payment or a deposit, and the guy actually never showed up. But the tables went and disappeared with my deposits. And then I found someone new, and they made them. And then the movers I hired to bring them from the manufacturer to my warehouse broke half of them before they ever went out. I had 10 out of -- no, 8 out of 15 tables broken, day one. So these things, they really make you just want to cry. What I learned from that is there's always going to be those darn bumps in the road and I'm going to have my heart broken many times because I am so emotionally attached to the business and to our inventory and all that. And so really, what how I changed mentally, the things that you know, how I changed was really to be OK with the disappointments and the the bad things that happen. Because there's so much worse going on out in the world, I don't need to be like fretting over this. Fix it. Find a solution. Fix it. Move on.



- Allison Howell** Well, it seems like, you know, you've come to a resolution that those disappointments are going to happen. But obviously you've got to still feel like it's worth it, right? So tell us what brings you joy in your business.
- Sherine Iskandar** You know, honestly, what brings me joy is when I see how our rentals are being used, and I like, I get photo galleries back from an event or a wedding. And I see smiles, and I see our furniture, and I see how beautiful it looks, and how like it's really like been such a part of their event. And events bring joy. That's what really, truly makes me so happy. Like, Oh my God, look, look, that's our tables that we worked so hard to make. And they're just sitting there in the background and people are dancing, you know, and they made they made the event look beautiful.
- Allison Howell** You heard her folks: events bring joy. Check out the show notes to find links to Sharon's website and Instagram. And while you're in the show notes, click that link to join the RW Elephant mailing list. In the meantime, please enjoy my lightning round questions with Shereen. Here we go. Three words to describe your collection
- Sherine Iskandar** Quality trendsetting rentals.
- Allison Howell** Great. What is one trait you look for when hiring?
- Sherine Iskandar** Friendly. On-task.
- Allison Howell** If you could only have one type of fabric in your collection, what would it be?
- Sherine Iskandar** Cane.
- Allison Howell** OK, now what is something other event pros do that annoys you?
- Sherine Iskandar** Not responding?
- Allison Howell** Mm yeah. You get ghosted by other event pros?
- Sherine Iskandar** Yes. Sometimes. Or just finally getting back to me like the day before the event when I needed that information so much earlier.
- Allison Howell** Yeah, yeah. So do you rent, lease or purchase your delivery vehicles?



Sherine Iskandar Lease? Oh, I have -- I own a van, and I lease box trucks.

Allison Howell OK. Two things outside of work you love to do.

Sherine Iskandar Time with the hubby and the kids. Cocktails with friends.

Allison Howell Great.

Sherine Iskandar Going to the beach. Even the Oregon coast. I can still do that.

Allison Howell Yeah. A business tool you couldn't live without.

Sherine Iskandar RW Elephant!

Allison Howell Well, thank you. That's a great answer. Would you rather pack a delivery truck blindfolded or get a last minute order for a 200 person event that's happening tomorrow?

Sherine Iskandar Get a last minute order for it to a 200 person event.

Allison Howell So you can pull that off tomorrow? You call your crew, you'd get everyone there? You could make it happen?

Sherine Iskandar I mean, I might. There's a 50 percent chance I can. So I'd rather you inquire, and I'll tell you.

Allison Howell Great. Great. What's the next big trend in rentals?

Sherine Iskandar Next big trend in rentals. Just look at LilyandCane.com. You got your answers there.

Allison Howell Great. Great. Perfect. I love it. And so our final question: What do you enjoy most about your rental adventure?

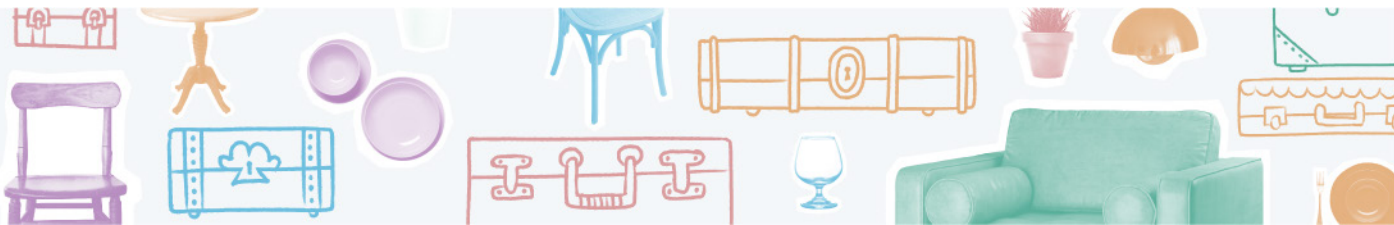
Sherine Iskandar I really enjoy sourcing and designing new inventory.

Allison Howell That's great. Well, I'm so glad you get to do that.



Sherine Iskandar Me too.

Allison Howell Well, thanks, Sherine. I really enjoyed learning more about the branding and marketing side of your business. Plus, everything else you do. And thank YOU for listening to the Trunk Show brought to you by R.W. Elephant. I'm your host, Allison Howell. Happy renting!



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The [RW Elephant mailing list](#) features more event industry resources and happenings—including announcements about new Trunk Show episodes!

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AND OUR GUEST:

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