

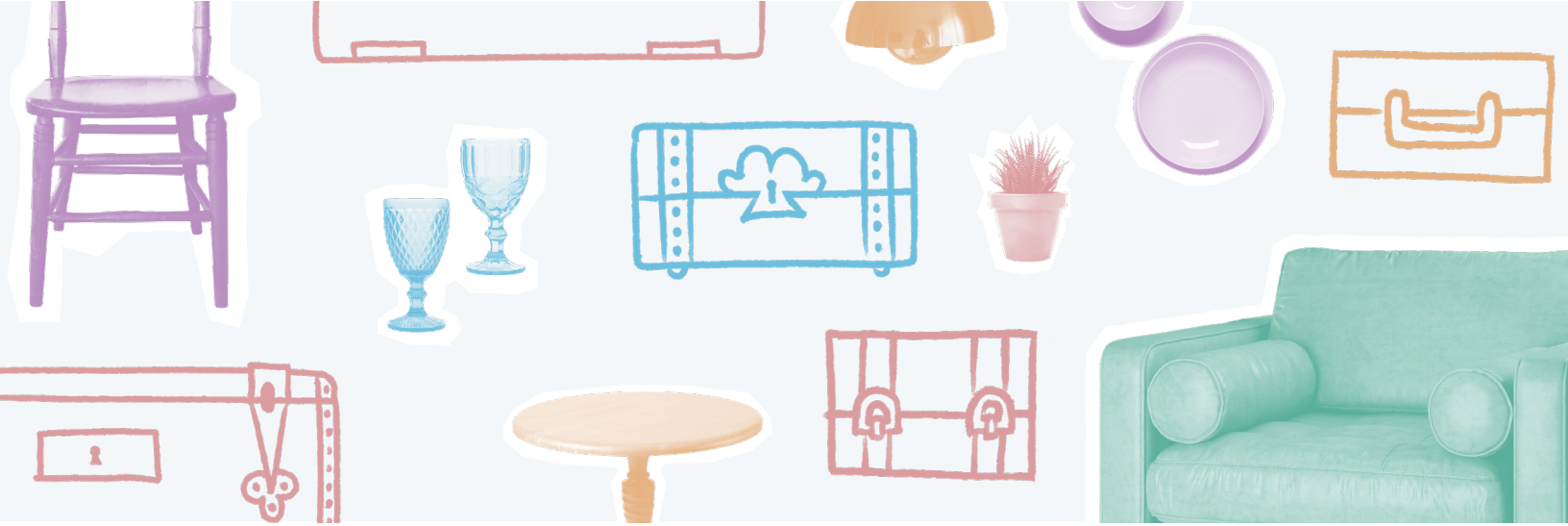
*The*  
**TRUNK  
SHOW**

*With* RW ELEPHANT

SEASON 2 EPISODE 2



**BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS TO LAST  
WITH PATINA RENTALS**



Nearly a decade after Corrin Arasa started NYC's Patina Rentals, we hear how she built a business that has not only lasted but flourished. Enjoy an inside look into one of the country's most talked-about event rental businesses.



### **What's in this episode:**

- How to build a work culture that empowers your staff long-term
- Patina's famous roller skating parties, and how those started
- The rent-ready guidelines Patina uses for their vintage furniture
- Pricing your work in a way that builds self-respect and client acclaim
- Selecting and organizing a warehouse in the Big Apple
- Getting creative with business marketing



## QUOTES

“I had this house filled with cool vintage things, and I said - ‘**Oh, I can rent! I can use those chairs!**’” - Corrin Arasa

“Everything that we have today is built up on **those relationships we made early on.**” - Corrin Arasa

“What I realized was that those were going to be the early adopters... corporate. Although there are so many interesting things that you can do experientially and activation-wise, the wedding market was ready to adopt what we were doing and was really excited about it.” - Corrin Arasa

“**It is a very lonely thing being an entrepreneur sometimes,** and so it’s nice to have a community of people to bounce your ideas around with.” - Corrin Arasa

“I built a business plan and a business model and a mantra and values... and everything that **was really based on scaling and having work-life balance and bringing other people in.**”  
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“While we eventually got to where I wanted to be, and we’re still going, there were **so many starts and stops along the way.**” -  
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“It was really intentional letting go to grow and realizing my skill set and my time is going to be far, far better spent on mentoring other people and working on the business rather than doing it myself. Because they’re going to come with new ideas. They might not have done it exactly the same way that I do it-- they might do it better. They might come up with a new way to do it. And there are so many smart and talented people out there who can bring so much to the table. Maybe if it doesn’t go off exactly well, we’ll lose a client but it’s not about that. **It’s really about building bigger so that we can all be better and learn and experience these things and improve the company overall.**” -Corrin Arasa

“I was pricing for me and now we’re pricing **to help the client understand their budgets a little better.**” -Corrin Arasa

“**They needed content, and we needed content.** And so we kind of gave them a cocktail and blasted the music, and sent them around the warehouse, and then told them to come back and create this design in an hour.” - Corrin Arasa

## EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

**Allison Howell** Hello again. I'm Allison Howell, and you're listening to Season Two of the Trunk Show, where we hear about the rental adventures of leading event rental professionals straight from the source. The show is brought to you by RW 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'm talking with Corrin Arasa, CEO of Patina Rentals, all about building a rental business that lasts.

**Corrin Arasa** My name is Corrin Arasa, and I am the founder and CEO of Patina Rentals in New York.

**Allison Howell** Yeah, well, take us back to your early career. I'm interested to know about your first jobs in events. How did you get into the event industry in general?

**Corrin Arasa** Yeah. So, you know, I had been in the corporate world of marketing for a while with different large brands and luxury brands and like really cool cutting edge organizations, and got really sick of trying to play the corporate game and climb the corporate ladder and, you know, that whole thing and really thought I could go out on my own and start my own marketing agency. You know, having lots of experience and events in the corporate world, I really was so inclined to go more towards event marketing. And so I had started an experiential marketing agency that was great. It was fun. It was a big hustle. We won lots of awards,

**Allison Howell** Mostly in New York or traveling?

**Corrin Arasa** No, all over the place. So much travel. Lots of travel all over the place. We did South by Southwest, we did the Olympics, things like that. But, you know, what ended up happening was I just got super, super burnt out, you know? I wasn't able to scale the business the way I needed to. I had a baby at home who I missed terribly. And although that was, like, it was a success on paper, it wasn't a success to me. It wasn't what my success looked like.

**Allison Howell** OK.

**Corrin Arasa** When I stepped back and looked at all the assets I had, it was just me. You know, I was selling myself and I was pitching my ideas and I was executing the



ideas and, you know, I was a glorified one-man show and it was hard to, you know, I was working in the business, I didn't work on the business at all.

**Allison Howell** Yeah. So then tell me, like, when did you first have the idea for Patina?

**Corrin Arasa** So I was producing a big event in Times Square. It was this kind of like, celebrity thing. I was going to be widely, you know, all over social media and we needed some chairs at the forefront on the stage because that's kind of where the whole action took place. And hit all my normal rental companies I had. You know, we only had a week to go. I couldn't find anything around. I was really at a loss. And then I realized that I had the perfect chairs for what the setting called for at home because I had been just like a flea market junkie for years and years and years. It was my personal passion and hobby to just, you know, I had an old farmhouse at the time upstate, and just go to flea markets every morning and yard sales and antiques and really just kind of furnished my house.

**Corrin Arasa** And so I had this house filled with like cool vintage things, and I said I can use those chairs. And so everything kind of came together and I looked around and realized I can probably --. I got super excited and super obsessed about the idea of creating this, you know, in New York. Anyway, there was the regular event rental companies that are kind of standard, the party rentals of the world. And then there are prop houses, which would be great for the movie studios. And they're just huge warehouses filled with tons and tons and tons of stuff that you sort through.

**Corrin Arasa** But you know, there was really nothing that spoke to professionals that were able to give you the soul or character, help you tell that story that you needed to tell as an event creative. And so I became super obsessed with this idea and kind of looked around and realized, you know, I found Found in California and Loot in Austin and realized I'm not the only crazy person with this idea. Like, this could be an actual --.

**Allison Howell** It's always good to know you have people like you somewhere else, huh?

**Corrin Arasa** Yeah. I thought, Wow, you know, this could be an actual, viable business. Turns out it is. But, then that's when I went, I hit the road and went to Austin and visited Rhoda and Anna, and I went to meet you and Jeni in L.A. and got to learn a little bit about the other businesses, which I was really privileged to be able to do before I started my own.



**Allison Howell** Yeah. So, then, tell me what was that starting process like? Was it a huge grand opening reveal, or was it slow and steady sort of just adding things to your own events and sort of spreading the word?

**Corrin Arasa** You know, I had been working on my agency full time and really kind of saw this as a really good, passionate, a good side hustle for my creative passions.

**Allison Howell** Got it.

**Corrin Arasa** And potentially a viable business and hopefully a viable business, but really kept my agency going on for a bit, but, you know, was really motivated and personally excited about the launch of Patina. And so I put together a website, took images of everything that I had had in my house, but a couple of new pieces. Not that many. Started off with just a mismatch of things like I honestly cannot believe that we got it off the ground with what we had. And then, you know, it was back in 2012, and there was a couple of like indie wedding things in Brooklyn, and went to those to meet a couple people and still working with them, you know, all these years later. So it was not a big grand opening. It was pretty slow and organic. But, you know, everything that we have today is built upon those relationships that we made early on.

**Allison Howell** Yeah. So you mentioned the few indie things happening in Brooklyn. Tell me more about the sort of event market in New York at the time. Were you coming in and easily accepted or did you have to really fight to get people to understand what you were trying to do?

**Corrin Arasa** You know, my world had been really corporate and experiential marketing, and so I didn't understand the wedding market at all. Frankly, it scared me a lot. I think it was when I had visited these other companies, and it was all about the weddings, I was like, I have to learn about the sweetheart table and figure out how to talk to, you know, all of the brides. And it really scared me. But, you know, we went out and hit, what I realized was those were going to be the early adopters for this. And that corporate, although there's so many interesting things that you can do experientially and activation wise, the wedding market was ready to adopt what we were doing and really excited about it. And so no, it was not a hard sell. It was almost, you know, we were we were definitely the first to market in the New York area. And, you know, they were, we were just embraced in such a way, the concept, the warm community of professionals, you know, people who wanted to share.



**Corrin Arasa** And the other thing that was really exciting for me as an entrepreneur, you know, the community of entrepreneurs that I found through the the event in wedding industry was really amazing. So many female entrepreneurs, so many solopreneurs who were going through the same growth problems that I had gone through before. And so many people who are just – it's a very lonely thing being an entrepreneur sometimes. And so it's nice to have a community of people who you can bounce your ideas around with.

**Allison Howell** Yeah, yeah. Well, so you're starting, Patina, you're building this community. Tell me when the roller skating party started. For anyone who hasn't heard, Patina is famous for their roller skating parties. It's a fun and really smart way to connect with the industry and potential clients. How did those come about?

**Corrin Arasa** When I started Patina, I built a business plan and a business model and a mantra and values and everything that was really based on scaling and having work-life balance and bringing other people in. So, you know, first thing I did was hire my sister, Kim, to work for me because she is awesome. And when you're doing something you know, fun, you want, you know, fun people around and so she was great. She came on and and we had so much fun kind of brainstorming in the early days and we really kind of curated our whole vibe and our whole brand as if we were a Fortune 500 company and wrote, you know, the scripts and really kind of did it as if we were much larger in scale.

**Corrin Arasa** And so the roller skating party was one of those things that was really exciting and fun and passionate to both of us. And we both loved roller skating and we got some great DJs and we decked out the whole place and we had the disco balls and it was just something that we started that really took off. And year after year, people are able to come see, we were able to use it as a showcase for our staff and just meet new people and also generate social media content around it.

**Allison Howell** Right. And that was in your warehouse, right? You were roller skating in the warehouse?

**Corrin Arasa** Yeah, the first time was in our warehouse. I can't believe we could actually fit so many people on our first warehouse and, like, that goes to show you how much furniture we didn't have at the time. But, you know, now we've been through a couple of warehouses since and yeah, we've moved out to different partner





venues, which has been really fun because then we get to partner with them to showcase their unique space and bring a new clients for them. And so it's a nice biotic relationship.

**Allison Howell** Well, it seems like you mentioned sort of a mantra and vision and values for your business. What can you share with us about that? What were those values that you put together at first and are they still in place?

**Corrin Arasa** A lot of it was work-life balance. A lot of it was really a human approach to everything that we're doing, working with people that share similar values of being kind and working hard and putting their egos aside. You know, a lot of the values and the core of the company weren't based in the collection. More about how we respect each other or how we trust each other, how we speak to each other or how we don't have bureaucracy or traditional carrot and stick management and how we listen and share and allow ourselves to be vulnerable and, you know, allow ourselves to try new things and fail.

**Corrin Arasa** And so, you know, it's a unique culture that we've really built and it's based on, you know, really fostering trust and respect amongst each other and amongst our clients and that's really dictated everything. You know, the three kind of tenets, you know, the three areas that I focus on really are culture, collection and clients. And they all have a, you know, an equal share. But culture and respect and trust is really kind of what underlies everything.

**Allison Howell** Mm hmm.

**Corrin Arasa** So, you know, we have this kind of these agreements when we, you know, our handbook is just like a page or two and it's agreements of do what's to what's best for yourself, do what's best for the client, do what's best for your coworker and do what's best for Patina. You know, always come from it with integrity, even if that means we are losing the business or we're not getting the job or we're not doing it right, it's always come at it with integrity. You know, always follow –. You know, there's always room for improvement, no matter who it is or what it is. Like, let's be creative and try to improve together.

**Corrin Arasa** You know, we show examples in our regular meetings. We act upon it in our weekly meetings, you know, calling out situations where people have done just that. We talk about it at our annual meetings. We, you know, it's pretty pervasive throughout everything we do. Talk about when we first hire people,



you know? It's pretty important, and I think people, you know, I think it's important, though, that the culture is not necessarily dictated by me. It's like a living organism where everybody who joins it brings a different energy to the table and different ideas.

**Allison Howell** When you started, you talked about wanting to scale and build something that didn't have you at the forefront. So in what ways is it the thing that you imagined and in what ways is it different from that thing?

**Corrin Arasa** Yeah, I think you know that we're, before COVID, you know, we were, you know, we had a 30,000 square foot warehouse and 30 employees and, you know, thousands and thousands of events and we'd grown to drive some, you know, to do some pretty sizable revenue from, especially from when we first started. And while we eventually got to where we, I wanted to be and we're still going, there was so many, you know, starts and stops along the way. So, you know, one of the things that I did was at first we started renting out smaller items and props, and our average order size was like a hundred dollars. And you know, that was not going to get us to where we needed to be.

**Corrin Arasa** And so quickly realized, OK, let's get rid of all of the small items and just really focus on the big items. And then we had, you know, a mismatched collection of furniture for so long because I was, you know, bootstrapping it and trying to do vintage initially. And so, you know, our average order sizes remained really small. And so we spent years building out the collection because everything's kind of the growth and the dollars and the funding that we're putting back into it is based on the year-over-year profits.

**Corrin Arasa** And so, you know, building out those collections so that we have a broader appeal, a larger average order size. So really, you know, thought about, I think the collections, you know, the values are the same, kind of the visions are the same, the way we're managing our inventory, the way we're executing better. Those are the things that are changed. Our approach to client services is really the same. Our approach to the brand is the same in our approach to the culture is the same, but the inventory and operations have really grown significantly and changed quite a bit.

**Allison Howell** Yeah. So in the very unlikely event that someone listening isn't familiar with Patina, can you describe your collection as it is today? What would you say is in your collection and what would you say about your collection?



- Corrin Arasa** Yeah, our collection is really evolving a lot.
- Allison Howell** OK.
- Corrin Arasa** We focus on building out different collections within our collections. So we've got kind of our new neutrals collection where that's going in one direction. We've got our new old fashion collection. We've got our future perfect collection. We have a little capsule collection, which has some like cool vintage pieces that are really fun and interesting to use. But you know, we've got all of these different areas and we're building out so that we have enough inventory in each collection to be able to substantiate really large events within each collection. But they all work together really well.
- Corrin Arasa** There's a lot of thinking about trends and we're in New York, so we have to be at the forefront. You know, a lot of our clients are fashion and we do fashion week and tons of things where we have to be, you know, have the cutting edge of color, texture, of shape, of silhouette. We have to, you know, we have to be there for our clients when they need it. And so it's trend forward, but it's also versatile and usable.
- Corrin Arasa** So you've got to anticipate that more than some other rental companies may be in a less forward market, right?
- Corrin Arasa** Yeah. We spend a lot of time really picking up on cues and doing a lot of research of, you know, fashion trends and furniture trends and, you know, looking at all the shows in Europe. But then what we do is really we custom build some of our furniture, we reupholster a lot of furniture, and then we work with manufacturers to custom design things. And so we're trying to really make sure everything tells a story. So we'll pick a color away in particular and identify what colors we think are going to be on trend for the next, you know, within the next six months or a few years. So not super specific, but something that we can get some mileage out of.
- Allison Howell** So at this point, what percentage of your collection would you say you make in-house versus purchase versus having custom made for you outside of Patina?
- Corrin Arasa** You know, we made a lot. We made a whole bunch of stuff pre-COVID. Really since decided to kind of wind that down a little bit. And the reason for us making a lot of stuff in house is that could have different things from our



competition, have a little bit more quality control, have a little bit more stylistic control, and not everything is great for a rental. But, you know, scaling up a full furniture production shop was something that we considered and toyed with, but really at the end of the day, it's a different business. And so, you know, we have so many creative people and so many people who, you know, get excited about doing that stuff. So now we just pretty much do small runs or prototypes or experiment within. And then we work with partners outside to to build those pieces.

**Allison Howell** You mentioned that not everything works for rentals. And I mean, obviously, you're looking for long term durability, but also something that doesn't like weigh as much as a grand piano. What other kinds of factors are you thinking about when you're imagining a piece for rental, maybe that, you know, doesn't work the same in residential or commercial?

**Corrin Arasa** You know, we have, in New York, we have so many stair issues, you know, elevator issues, not everything's on the ground floor. And so we have so many space issues in New York. So it's always kind of like things that are modular things that can, you know, collapse or, you know, we can build on site. You know, when it comes to furniture, the leg of the chairs and the couches, the legs, those damn legs break nonstop. And so, you know, it's like finding ways to work with those legs and, you know, different leg styles or things that we can take off and put on. It's always kind of a problem.

**Allison Howell** Right.

**Corrin Arasa** The durability in terms of finishes. You know, we had some great tables that would rent all the time, but every single time they rented, they had to come into the shop. And so, you know, when you calculate the ROI on those guys, it's just, you know, it's not worth it. And so, you know, it's that kind of thing about thinking about what's the true ROI of these pieces. You know, it should look like a piece that's not a rental piece, but it needs to act like a rental piece.

**Allison Howell** Yeah. Well, and it needs the perfect amount of Patina, right? You don't want it to have any more scratches or dents than its original character when you purchased it. But at the same time, you want it to have character and not just look like cookie cutter.

**Corrin Arasa** Yeah, you know, for a while when most of our things did have Patina, well, in the



beginning it was easy because everything like had Patina and, like, it was the chippy paint and the scratchy wood and that was, like, cool. So whatever, you rent it, it gets a little beat up. Cool, looks better, but that's definitely not the case --.

**Allison Howell** It has more of a story to tell.

**Corrin Arasa** Exactly! That's definitely not the case anymore. So we had to develop these rent ready guidelines that were like, OK, if there's a scratch that's a little bit bigger than this, you know, let's escalated it. If there's a, you know, a tear or a stain that looks like this on this section, we have to escalate it. And so, you know, our collection grew so quickly and we had so many people coming into our team who really didn't understand the difference. And so, you know, the team really put together some awesome rent ready guidelines. And, you know, now as we regrow the team again, we'll start to train and, you know, make sure that's a big part of it.

**Allison Howell** Yeah. So you said the team put that together. So did somebody come up with that idea or was that you saying, Hey, we need rent ready guidelines? Tell me what that process is like.

**Corrin Arasa** You know, we were at a we were in a little bit of a crisis mode because we were having our busiest month ever and we had people, you know, starting in the warehouse and getting stuff out the door. And client services was just, you know, working so hard, and things were just kind of coming out, we had lots of new clients. And that was the month that we got so many complaints about our stuff. And we take we take so much pride in our inventory. So it just killed us that we got so many complaints that people didn't think our stuff was good. And so like, I bummed everybody out.

**Allison Howell** Yeah.

**Corrin Arasa** You know, it was a big fire drill. And you know, like, let's stop and figure this out right now and like, let's get everybody involved and there is a stop gap in terms of like, OK, we just need more eyes on these orders. We're in the middle of it. We're in the thick of it. We need more eyes. We need we need people to double check these things, we need to --. And then we finally, once kind of the dust settled from that busy season, we were able to spend the next few months really developing it and getting feedback and figuring out what works for us. And it's still improving, you know, it's still, it's a working process living.



- Allison Howell** Yeah. Well, it seems like you have to have employees who are pretty invested to care that much. They have to feel like they have some ownership in it, right?
- Corrin Arasa** Yeah, yeah. And that's hard to foster. The bigger you get, the harder it is to foster. You know, when we were at thirty five people at one point, it's, you know, it's a mix, right? And so here, you know, people who just started and are not vested and who are meaning well, but maybe don't have the same level of empowerment or investment. And so, you know, it's something that doesn't, can't just come from one person. It has to be the pervasive kind of feeling throughout the organization in order for the rest of the people to feel it and for it to be contagious, which is what you want, you know?
- Allison Howell** Right. Well, and it seems like, yeah, you've got to have that critical mass of of committed team members in order for people who are new to get that sense. How do you feel like you found those people? I mean, obviously, Kim was your first employee, but did you have some kind of secret sauce for attracting the right kind of person?
- Corrin Arasa** You know, the people that tend to do well at Patina are like people who are really creative, really self-motivated, really kind of don't want to deal with bullshit, who don't really--. It's not about climbing the corporate ladder. There's not a lot of ego. It's just like, Yeah, let's figure this out. Let's do this together. And you know, maybe they've had like other job experiences that weren't the same, and this is like just some more like trusting open like, let's figure this out kind of relationship.
- Allison Howell** Sure.
- Corrin Arasa** You know, we've got some really interesting people who a lot of them are in bands and are starting their own businesses and are just really creative and want to do good work. And, you know, like the people that they work with and like the people that the clients that we are able to serve. And so, yeah, we're really lucky to be able to find a group like this and we're starting to expand too, so if anybody like that wants to join!
- Allison Howell** Patina's hiring, just just so you know. Yeah, well, that's such a fascinating model. You know, talk to a lot of event rental business owners, and one thing that I hear a lot is nobody can do it like me. You know, like, I have to be at every set up because I have to be the one to place the pillows because I can't teach anyone that. It seems like you have a really different mentality. Has that ever



been part of what you were hoping for? I know you talked about scale from the beginning, but how do you kind of pair that desire for scale with also the desire for a very particular kind of outcome?

**Corrin Arasa**

Because I know that when I don't do it that way, I can't scale. So when I -- my other business, that's what I did. Nobody could do it like me. I had to be the one on the client I had to do --. And so with this one, it was a really intentional letting go to grow and realizing, you know, my skill set and my time is going to be far, far better spent on mentoring other people to do it and building, working on the business rather than doing it myself because they're going to come with new ideas.

**Corrin Arasa**

They might not have done it exactly the same way that I do it. They might do it better. They might come up with a new way to do it. And I think that I can't, you know, there's so many smart and talented people out there who can bring so much to the table. And I think giving them the opportunity to learn and try and grow and try different things -- like we might -- yeah. Maybe if it doesn't go off exactly well, we'll lose a client, but it's not about that.

**Corrin Arasa**

It's really about building bigger so that we can all be better and learn and experience these things and improve the company overall. And so it's left me in a much healthier mindset and a much healthier place than I was before this whole thing, to be able to build a really healthy, sustainable, long term company with a team that's going to help take it to the next level rather than what I did before, which was just go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go, take every lead, act on every impulse, take every project. It's really a much, much different approach this time, and it's a much more -- leaves me in a much more sane place than I was before.

**Allison Howell**

We're back with Corrin, and we're going to address a major pain point for a lot of event rental pros: pricing. How do you feel like pricing relates to profitability in your business, because I know, like particularly in your market, you have the ability to charge a premium for what you're offering because it's not as readily available and you probably don't have a lot of people saying I could do this myself. So you're in a great market, but how do you strategize how much to charge?

**Corrin Arasa**

Yeah, we just recently went through all of our pricing and raised it all in a more consistent manner. And so at first it was just like pricing at a whim. Like, Oh,



this is really cool. I really like this, and we spent a lot of money on it, so I'm going to charge this, whereas this one, you can get anywhere, I'm going to charge this. And so it was kind of random at first. But now we have different price bands for each category that are definitely on the more premium side, for sure.

**Allison Howell** So, for instance, you charge X to X + 200 for couches or something. Like, your range for couches is maybe 200 wide. Or chairs is \$50 wide.

**Corrin Arasa** Yeah, I was pricing for me, and now we're pricing to help the client understand their budgets a little better. But building in that margin into the price for sure.

**Allison Howell** Well, and I think probably having those bands also helps you be strategic in your sourcing, right? So if you're saying this chair can only rent for X, then I can't spend more than X times whatever on it.

**Corrin Arasa** Exactly. Yeah.

**Allison Howell** Like, setting your pricing based on what the client's getting out of it. Not based on how much it cost you.

**Corrin Arasa** I mean, we have couches that we've gotten for free that, you know, we charge the same as couches that we've, you know --. And if there's something that's outside of that band, that's my fault, that's my attire, than kind of that ROI, like, I understand that ROI that I need to make in order to price it in that band. And sometimes I'll make an exception, right? And so, but that's something that I'm willing to do and I'm doing with my eyes open. Maybe it's a capsule piece. And yes, maybe I'll spend a little bit more on it because it'll get more.

**Corrin Arasa** Maybe it is a gateway drug, or maybe it is a, you know, an Instagram... You know, maybe it's an Instagram favorite. And so I'm willing to spend a little bit more money on that, but I'm still probably going to charge within the same band. Or there are things like I said, I got for free are within the same band. It really is about pricing for value and also helping our clients navigate their budgets a little bit more by keeping the pricing consistent within each category.

**Allison Howell** Sure. Sure. So. The profitability and the pricing piece are definitely big parts of this financial picture. But you mentioned the operation side as well. You've





definitely grown lots over the years and had to make some strategic decisions, particularly about warehousing. What has driven those decisions? How have you made a decision? When is it time to move ... ?

**Corrin Arasa**

Like so hard? It's so difficult in New York, warehousing like the need for space. So the first warehouse that I got was, you know, had 5,000 square feet and we had nothing in it. That's where we had the skate party. We only had a few pieces and we had very little revenue. And so that was a really big risk and that was the biggest financial risk that we had taken, I think. The rent was not a lot. It was kind of in this really weird part of Brooklyn that came into its own after we kind of got there.

**Allison Howell**

You made it cool, is what you're saying?

**Corrin Arasa**

I wish I could take credit for making it cool, but that's not the case.

**Allison Howell**

OK, sorry. Before we go to the second warehouse, tell me about this first warehouse. You're taking this risk. It's 5,000 square feet. It's obviously more than you need. But were you sort of doing math in your head saying, OK, in three years, I think I'm going to be making this much revenue, and so I'll need this much space? Or was it like, Oh, there's not that much space available. This one's good enough, we'll take it?

**Corrin Arasa**

No, I knew we were going to need 5,000 square feet. I mean, I wanted to grow the collection really quickly. Like once I decided to do it and once it got kind of that initial reaction, I was like, Yeah, this is what I'm doing, you know, and this is going to work. And if it doesn't, at least I'm going to, like, give it my best shot, and... So, yeah, so the five thousand square feet, I thought, you know, it became really cramped really quickly because at that time I was really -- I was super, super focused on buying and building up that inventory.

**Corrin Arasa**

But the warehouse space, yeah, the warehouse space is really tricky. We moved up to a larger-- We took out seventeen thousand square feet and then we moved. We got another seventeen thousand square feet. And so we've continued to grow our warehouse space. We've recently cut back some of it because of this year with COVID and needed to cut our expenses for sure. But yeah, it's hard. It's hard to know when to. It's not fun. It's definitely not the fun part of the business, moving, but it's so important.



**Allison Howell** Right. And it is that risk. It's a risk because you're trying to anticipate what your needs will be, not just today, but what will your needs be by the end of the lease? Because you don't want to get into something and three years in feel like it's too big or it's too small and we're doing this whole dance again.

**Corrin Arasa** You know, when we moved from the five 5,000 square foot to the seventeen thousand square foot, that was a huge price increase. That was a huge -- that was a big leap. That was scary, really scary. But we were at the point where we were maxed out. We couldn't, we couldn't operate anymore. We couldn't increase any revenue, couldn't increase headcount or inventory. Even if we called back and just really focused on our top renters. It was still -- we had -- the demand was there to grow and couldn't fulfill it because we had inventory issues and that was our bottleneck. And so we needed to move.

**Allison Howell** Right. And I seem to recall years ago, you mentioning to me that you kind of had shifted your mindset to think of your deliveries as its own separate business because it was eating into the profitability of the rental side. When you just kind of are always underestimating how much the delivery costs. Am I remembering that right? Is that what process you went through?

**Corrin Arasa** Yeah. So, you know, the delivery, we think of it as a separate business from a P and L standpoint. Those delivery costs are really high, you know, and it takes a long time and a lot of manpower to do the stuff that we all do. You're hitting traffic. It's a very, very costly endeavor. The trucks are expensive, the leases are expensive, the ware-- all of that stuff is expensive. And so I feel like it's also one of the things our clients struggle with the most is why our delivery fees are so much. And the reason is we don't take --. That whole operation has to stand on its own. The cost of the delivery has to cover and slightly make out on that effort. Otherwise, it doesn't make financial sense for us to be able to deliver those things.

**Allison Howell** So is that what you lean on when you explain that to clients? Or, when they object to the delivery price, you know, what kinds of things can you say or do you say to help them understand the value?

**Corrin Arasa** You know they can pick it up themselves. They can find a third party. But yeah, you know, a lot of people are already -- they produce events. We have a lot of



repeat clients. And so they're used to it. But oftentimes it is a little bit of a sticker shock, especially when it's like, Oh, but it's just down the block or it's just here, just there. It's like, Well, you know, we have a really good team, you know, we pay them really fair wages. We understand the time that it's going to take. We've delivered, you know, we do deliveries like this all the time. We've delivered thousands and thousands and thousands of times and we're giving you a really, you know, that's what it costs to do business. And we're the service we're providing to you is renting the furniture and delivering the furniture. They're not, you know, they're two different -- they're not bundled. Yeah. I mean, it is what it is. You know?

**Allison Howell** Yeah. Yeah. Well, and I think it's encouraging to hear you speak of that with such confidence because I know so many event rental businesses feel the pressure to not charge what it cost them for delivery. And I feel like that's one of the ways that you can just shoot yourself in the foot. It really prevents you from scaling. It really prevents you from having any kind of profitability. It prevents you from hiring people when you need to, and that leads to burnout when you're the one on the deliveries all the time. So thank you for sharing that wisdom. I think that's going to encourage a lot of people.

**Allison Howell** Well, I want to shift a little bit and talk about marketing for a minute. You talked about how operations or in the delivery side can really eat at your profitability. I feel like one thing that I see kind of drain bank accounts is marketing efforts. So can you share with us a little bit about what channels you use?

**Corrin Arasa** Yeah. So, you know, we are really lucky in that, and I imagine there's a lot of people in our boat in this industry who, you know, we don't do a lot of marketing. We don't do any advertising per se. We really try and create a word of mouth. And and that's by delivering the best customer service, by having those great pieces, by using our primarily Instagram account really well. And so those are the things that are really important to us in terms of being able to generate word of mouth.

**Corrin Arasa** We used to spend a lot of money on Instagram in that we would just do photoshoots all the time and develop Instagram content. While Instagram's free, the photography wasn't, and the time spent on the photoshoots and buying all the props and kind of all those things. You know, it worked for us in the beginning because it got us a lot of followers. It got a lot of recognition. It really helped build the brand and help showcase our offering.



- Corrin Arasa** But since then, you know, email newsletters have worked really well for us. Social media has continues to work well. And you know, those skate parties were really fun and a nice piece of marketing, for sure. But we don't spend money on traditional advertising or traditional marketing, and it's more about relationship developing.
- Allison Howell** Yeah, and I remember years ago you did something that I feel like was really interesting you. It was relationship building, it had social media attention, and it also really expressed what your brand is all about. And that was you had a design competition in your warehouse when you were introducing your cabanas, is that right?
- Corrin Arasa** Yeah, that was so fun. The Cabana challenge was great because we were able to like -- we had the warehouse full of furniture and we had these cool like little kind of 12 by 12 kind of like boho-y cabanas. And they were -- we brought in designers and people who had Instagram followings at the time. So maybe there were a stylist or interior designer or an event planner or just kind of some sort of influencer in the space and they needed content and we needed content.
- Corrin Arasa** And so we kind of gave them, you know, a cocktail and blasted the music and sent them around the warehouse and told them to kind of come back and create this design in an hour. And we filmed it, and we took so many pictures, and they were able to share their creations. And we were able to do so many, and then it was great because we could showcase the, you know, the breadth of our inventory and how many different styles you could create with it. And it had that kind of fun challenge aspect.
- Corrin Arasa** And it also brought us to a place where we could get more Instagram followers because we were able to work with them and collaborate on developing that design process. And so that was really, really fun and something we're really proud of. And, you know, we're always talking about doing stuff like that again soon.
- Allison Howell** I'm interested to know more about how you personally relate to your business. Are there ways that you think you've personally grown since starting Patina?
- Corrin Arasa** Yeah, you know, it's really -- I think being an entrepreneur who is a mom and balancing that is really been interesting, having the ability to, like you said, curate and design my life. I'm so, so lucky to be able to do that. And one of the



reasons entrepreneurship is really interesting, but you know, it's also very hard and being strategic about my lifestyle and how much energy I want to put towards a certain thing is really, really sometimes difficult, but I'm really happy to have the ability to make those choices. But when it comes to Patina, it's really, my growth over there, I really work on leadership a lot. You know, I'm always trying to build my leadership skills. I'm trying to build my financial acumen.

**Allison Howell** What are some of the big decisions or turning points you've had that you feel like have really impacted you as an entrepreneur?

**Corrin Arasa** Yeah. So a few years ago, I started another business out of Patina called Nomad, and that was really, you know, Patina was growing and we were doing primarily events and there was nothing in the market for in-home rentals. And so now today there's, you know, Feather and Mobley and what have you. But at that time, there wasn't. And so I thought, you know, this could be something really cool. It really could take off, and it's something that we can manage here at Patina. We've got the warehouse, we've got the bank. They can just piggyback off of it and kind of leap start it. It seemed like it was. It could be viable. It would take a lot to take off. Built the branding started out with a website, then did the buying, and the whole buying process was really about like turnkey living rooms, turnkey bedrooms, things like that.

**Allison Howell** Right, right.

**Corrin Arasa** So bought a ton of inventory and then went to market and fell really short in terms of giving it the resources it deserved for such a major project. I couldn't execute internally. I was trying to double dip with potential resources and piggyback and just take the same approach with a different clientele. And that was a big mistake. And I didn't put enough money into getting the word out and marketing it and really thought that slow organic growth could potentially work in this situation, as it did with Patina, and I was wrong.

**Corrin Arasa** It was a good idea, really, really bad execution. I tried to leverage too much of Patina's staff and too much of Patina's resources, and it kind of sucked us dry. And meanwhile, in the same year, there was a couple of companies that ended up getting a ton of funding, and they got these 20 million dollar venture backed situations, and I was trying to bootstrap it myself. And you know, it was it was definitely the wrong approach. And I learned a lot and I learned, you know, it was also at the same time that we were trying to take on manufacturing of



furniture and, you know, trying to build that end of the business so that it could feed both of these entities.

**Corrin Arasa** And it was a lot and I set a lot of goals for my team and a lot of goals for the company, and we had some big growth goals and we were still in a real growth phase. And so it threw too much at everybody at once. And we were trying to do too many things at once. And you know, that was a big learning of like, OK, let's really ratchet down what our, you know, if I'm going to do this, it needs a separate business. And it went on too long, if I was going to fail, I needed to fail faster. It sapped energy and resources out of the team.

**Corrin Arasa** So now, rather than branching out, we're really focused on like, you know, doing what we're doing, but just much, much better. Rather than going out to new markets, it's like, let's get really, really, really good at the stuff we're doing and grow that way, grow where we're planted, rather than taking on all these new markets with the same team and the same resources. Not to say we can't do that in the future with a different team or different resources or a different backbone. But you know, people need focus and purpose and clarity.

**Allison Howell** Well, big thanks to Corrin and everyone at Pattina. Check out the show notes to find links to her website and Instagram if you're not already following. And while you're checking out the show notes, look out for the link to join the RW Elephant mailing list. And now get ready to hear Corrin's answers to my Lightning Round questions.

**Allison Howell** Three words to describe your collection.

**Corrin Arasa** Intentional, soulful and on trend.

**Allison Howell** Mm hmm. Nice. What is one trait you look for when hiring?

**Corrin Arasa** Curiosity. I want people to be really, really, really curious about everything.

**Allison Howell** Yeah. If you could only have one type of fabric in your collection, what would it be?

**Corrin Arasa** Well, today we're redoing everything in boucle this month. So I'm going to have to go with boucle today. Maybe tomorrow it'll be something different.

**Allison Howell** Perfect. A business book you'd recommend.



- Corrin Arasa** I think that to everybody should have on their bookshelves are The E-Myth and Profit First. Those are just two fundamentals that have so much wisdom.
- Allison Howell** Yeah. What is something other event pros do that annoys you?
- Corrin Arasa** Sells themselves short. I think people don't understand the value that they bring to the table and under charge. Or take it on the chin. Everybody just needs to understand the real -- events are so difficult. Event planners are really -- they have a big job. Anybody in the event world has a serious job and it's hard to produce good events and have it at a high level of execution. And so it annoys me when people undersell their value.
- Allison Howell** Do you rent, lease, or purchase your delivery vehicles?
- Corrin Arasa** All of the above.
- Allison Howell** OK, great. Two things outside of work you love to do.
- Corrin Arasa** I love to hike and cook.
- Allison Howell** What business tool do you use that you couldn't live without?
- Corrin Arasa** Hmm. RW Elephant, of course.
- Allison Howell** Good answer, good answer, I like that one. Would you rather pack a delivery truck blindfolded or get a last minute order for a 200 person event that's happening tomorrow?
- Corrin Arasa** Oh my God, last minute order for a 200 event, happening tomorrow.
- Allison Howell** Ok, great. And what do you think the next big trend is in rentals?
- Corrin Arasa** Hmm. That's a really good question. I think we're going to continue to see really creative companies come up. You know, I think we're seeing so many interesting in-home rentals that are like unique and antique and rare, one of a kind pieces. And I think we're going to see people doing what we're doing at the home level. You know, and for temporary spaces or longer term spaces or museums or offices, I think we're going to see really cool curated collections for those types of businesses and personal lives.



**Allison Howell** Well, that's fun, I'm looking forward to that already. So here's my final question. What do you enjoy most about your rental adventure?

**Corrin Arasa** The constant learning and the constant growth and the collaboration with people to figure out what's next and how to do things better and how to build new collections and the team and the, you know, the creative event professionals that we work with are always pushing the envelope and they force us to do the same. And so just like working with cool people who are just trying to push everything forward in the in the best way. That's the fun part.

**Allison Howell** Yeah, wonderful. Well, thank you so much. I'm so glad that we got to chat.

**Corrin Arasa** Yeah, me too. This was fun.

**Allison Howell** Well, that's our show, thanks again to Corrin, and thank you for listening to The Trunk Show brought to you by RW Elephant. I'm your host, Alison Howell. Happy renting!





**RESOURCES:**

[The E Myth by Michael E. Gerber](#)

[Profit First by Mike Michalowicz](#)

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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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