

Episode 6. How to Partner with Brands as a Micro-Influencer with Jenny Melrose

INTRO

JACLYN: Welcome to Go-to-Gal Episode 6. I'm so excited to share this conversation with you today. And you know what – it kinda works out but I'm a little behind recording because I don't have to wait that long to share it with you, let's put it that way. I usually try to be at least a few weeks, if not months ahead. And I just haven't been able to get there. And with sickness... gosh I feel like Mike gets real sick, I get sick, everyone else gets sick. We had to reschedule a bunch of interviews in January. And so it's a little bit of catch up this month and this February. But it's kinda cool because I recorded this and I can't wait to share it with you. And now I get to do it just a few days later. So we'll put a positive spin on this.

Our guest today is going to talk about pitching and working with brands as a way to add extra revenue stream into your business. Now what I love about this conversation is that it ties back in to Episode #1. If you haven't listened to Episode #1, go get your booty back there after you listen to this one because it's a good one. In Episode #1, the first prediction that I had for 2019 was the rise of the super microinfluencer. But really it's the rise of the influencer at all levels. It's like taking that qualifier off the table, like you need 100,000 followers to be considered an influencer. And if you have an audience of any size, you're now an influencer. It's really what that was all about. And our guest today is tying that in so perfectly. It's almost like I planned it. The cool thing here is that Jenny Melrose, our guest today is telling us even if you only have 100 followers – if they're engaged followers, you can be working with brands and an extra stream of revenue. Like hello, this is passive income, people [laughter]. Oh, it's so brilliant. I love her approach. And I'm just really excited about the fact that there isn't this big threshold that we have to overcome that we can be working with brands. We have that targeted engaged audience.

So if you don't know Jenny Melrose, head on over. First of all, she's a fellow podcaster to the influencer-entrepreneur's podcast. You can catch her over there. Make sure to subscribe while you're over there. Check out Episode 103 with yours truly. If I'm talking about working with brands and you're like oh my god I can't work with brands, I'm not there yet; you may just have impostor syndrome and you should go listen to my interview with Jenny where we get all into that. But Jenny used to be a teacher. She was a reading specialist and started growing a blog on the side and grew her blog until it exceeded her salary and she was able to retire. Now the cool thing about our conversation is we really talking that

leap from being a hobby blogger to a business owner; and then that next leap where she went from business owner to personal brand. And pulling back from her teaching experience and how teaching others how they can do the same team. So, so many mindset shifts there. I can't wait for you to hear about her journey with that. And we get in to the good stuff with pitching. And Jenny brings the goal. She has a great freebie at the end, too.

I'm gonna stop talking. You can go ahead and listen, and let's dive right in!

PODCAST

JACLYN: Jenny! I'm so excited to have you here!

JENNY: I'm so excited to be here. I've been looking forward to it.

JACLYN: Alright. So before we get in to what you're doing now and all the good stuff, I'd love for you to share with us when you were growing up, or even early in your career; what were you the Go-to-Gal for?

JENNY: I would actually say that I was the Go-to-Gal for not holding my tongue. I had the habit of always speaking my mind. Whether I was in elementary school, middle school, high school, and then even as an adult. I feel like as a teacher, that's actually why I felt like I had to lead. I used to be an inner city district school teacher for 9 years. And as administration kind of changed and shifted things, I didn't agree with it and I had a really bad habit that I would say what I was thinking. It didn't matter if it was administration. It didn't always go over well. So I've always been one that kinda spoke my mind. And sometimes, I probably should have reflected back and hold back a little bit. But I do feel like it served me well in wanting and being able to take risks now in my business. Because I don't necessarily hesitate and get caught up in fear. I'm willing to just say what I think. And if it goes on deaf ears or if it's not looked at as the right thing to say – then you're not my audience. And I'm okay with that.

JACLYN: Oh, I love this. And I love that you already tied it in a step ahead [laughter]. This is what I was and this already helps me in my business, and that's amazing. And I think that that's a testament; because sometimes things that we think are wrong about ourselves or that other people think are wrong about us or we shouldn't act that way or do something. A lot of times it's just that we're in the wrong situation and we just have to be putting ourselves in those situations that are allowing us to leverage who we are and our strengths, and not be so against the

grain. And that's such a powerful shift because there's nothing wrong with that. You were not in the right place, and now you are. I love that.

JENNY: Yes. Absolutely.

JACLYN: Well, I think that's a good transition to tell us a little bit about your business now. What does your business model look like? I don't want to get into numbers here, but we are always so curious. How did you make money?

JENNY: Well, my business has shifted over the past three years. But when I was still an inner city district school teacher in New York, I started a lifestyle site when I had my first daughter. A lifestyle blog where I create quick and easy recipes and projects for busy parents. It's called the Melrose Family. It was my way to kind of find myself. As a new mother, I definitely have lost myself. I always wanted kids. It took us a really long time to have kids. And when we got there, I thought I was going to be prepared and it was going to be so easy and I was just made for this. Yeah, not so much. So because of that, I started my blog and I just kind of did it for fun at the beginning and got caught up in the blogger world. I saw there were so many women doing what I was doing. They're making money at it, whether it was ads or whether it was sponsored posts, affiliate marketing. All of these different revenue streams. And I of course started playing the social media game and tried to grow my page views because we all know page views can help with finding that audience and of course tying it into income. I was probably about three years in, started to make some money coming in. It became more than just a hobby. My husband stopped saying, "Oh, are you over there just blogging again, talking to your friends?" And I loved what I was doing. I still love what I am doing. I think it's so important when we are starting to create a business, it's really loving what we do. But I started to understand that I can work on sponsored content where I could pitch friends who I knew [00:04:21 – inaudible], and make money off of sponsored posts. So I was making revenue from my ads sponsored income a little bit from affiliate income. It wasn't really my jam. I'm more of a sponsored post girl. I would much rather talk to a brand, explain how I was gonna use their product to create a recipe or create a project. And keep it authentic to my audience, which has helped me the greatest.

And then as that grew, I started getting more and more bloggers that were asking me how to create sponsored content. I got asked to speak at a couple of conferences and realized I needed to share this. I needed to get back to teaching because at that time I have left being a teacher and I needed to step back into that teacher role and start teaching blogger show to pitch sponsors and really start to make a full-time income from

it. That was about 2 ½ years ago. So now I have jennymelrose.com. There's a podcast. There are courses. There's the whole thing that comes with it all.

JACLYN: Do you still have the other blog?

JENNY: I do. It's run by a general manager though, because for the longest time when I first started it, I was able to focus on both. And then it just got to be too much. I travelled so much last year. I spoke at thirteen different conferences. There was just no way I could keep up the content on the Melrose Family. So there is a general manager. We have contributors that help create content. And I still oversee it and I will help with the sponsored post especially when it comes to pitching as that is my thing. I still will make sure that the content is where it needs to be. But my focus now has become more the Jenny Melrose side of things.

JACLYN: That makes sense. And I love the teaching brings you back to it and now it's full circle. I love it. So this has been such an incredible journey and I have here so many questions. I'm curious, and I almost feel like **there are two big leaps that you made here. The first was that shift from hobby to business. And then the next was like okay, this is a business but I could be leveraging my strengths as a teacher and really helping other people do this, too.** Reflecting back, what do you think were those mindset shifts were that you had to make. If there was this one big shift or a couple little things that took you from that hobby to business, and then from business to personal brand?

JENNY: And both were tumultuous points in life, too, because there was so much going on at home. When I started my blog, I had one daughter, and then ended up with another 3 ½ years later that we didn't expect. So there was also that "I'm a new mom" and have to take care of babies while I'm creating content. Oh, and by the way, teaching in inner city schools full time as a reading specialist and 250 kids on my roster. So there was a lot going on at that time. That mindset shift for me really was that I feel like... I went to a conference in New York City - it was *Blog Her* back in the days when it was ginormous. It was my first conference. There were thousands of bloggers. And I got asked what is your site about? They were doing elevator pitches. And I said it's a lifestyle site. And that's all I could say. I didn't know how to articulate what it was that I did. And then I listened to all these other women that were powerhouses. They knew what they did. They were creating products. They were thinking about big dreams. And I kinda left there totally overwhelmed and exhausted because I'm actually an introvert. But I kinda opened my eyes to all that was there. And **if I started approaching it like a business and treating it like a business, it would become a business. And I think that that is**

always one of the biggest shifts I watched clients go through is when they stop saying to a friend or to someone at pick up line in school when they get asked what do they do; and they say oh I'm just a blogger. When they stop saying that and they say I run a business and this is what I create content for and who it's for. That's a huge shift, I feel like.

Then the other shift for me took longer than it should have because when I was still teaching and I knew pitching was my thing, I had a blogger who I thought was a friend, say to me those that can't, teach. And I felt like oh, well if I go to teach then obviously I can't. That's held me back for probably a good two years before I thought whatever, I don't give a crap anymore. I'm getting asked about this constantly. I need to make a shift. So when I made that shift, we actually had uprooted my entire family. My two girls and my husband and I, we moved from New York down to Charlotte, North Carolina. I left teaching to do my blog full-time because my sponsored post income had replaced my teaching salary at that time. So we moved down here and I thought that I knew this is what I wanted to do but because I now had all this time where I wasn't commuting three hours and teaching full time, I knew that there was something else. And I had been asked to speak previously a couple of times over the summer prior to moving down, and said okay I gotta figure this out. Where is this gonna take me? How do I go about putting this together? What is this gonna look like? And that summer, I actually read Pat Flynn's *Will It Fly?* and realized that this is it. **In his book he talked about the idea that you can't make something and not have proof that you're actually going to pay for it.**

So I was visiting family in New York over the summer. And I had a blogger friend that texted me and said hey listen, I have a question about sponsored posts; what do I do in this situation? And I was getting emails like that constantly. So I replied back to her and said hey listen, I'm actually creating a course that's gonna teach you how to pitch. I'd love for you to be a beta tester. I'll give you \$100 off. I'm gonna charge \$297 at that time, so that would be \$197. Within three minutes she got back to me and said "What's your PayPal, I'm gonna send it to you right now." And I had told her, at this time it was this first or second week in August, and I was up visiting in New York. I told her it would be done by September 1st. So **she was my first proof of yes, there's someone. So I reached out to a couple more bloggers to make sure. Reached out to twelve, and eight of them said yes. And I was like okay, we're doing this. And the course was done September 1st.**

JACLYN:

Oh that's amazing! That's such a good story, thank you for taking us on that journey. So the mindset shift from hobby to business, it is so important to be around other people. **It's so amazing that we can have**

our businesses from home. But I think it also is a business. It's so important to get out of our offices, get out of our living rooms and be around other people that are doing the same thing and just soak in that inspiration. I just had that myself. I was in New York for a couple of conferences. And one of them had us writing down our goals, and they were like I challenge you to 10x your goals. Omigod, right? And it really forces you to think what would it be like if I was thinking bigger and dreaming bigger, and why am I not, and what's holding me back from that? So **I loved just putting yourself in that blogger conference around other people who were taking it seriously just opened up your eyes to how much opportunity that was literally right in front of you.**

JENNY: Yes. And I think when we're only around our family and friends that don't understand it, it's also that not only do I see bigger, but I also got that comfort of **"they get me"**. They know why I'm stressing about Instagram and the algorithm or hating Facebook or whatever else. Whereas anyone in my real life didn't understand why I was wasting so much time – in their mind wasting – on Instagram or Facebook or wherever else.

JACLYN: And you know what's funny, I heard that saying a lot of times too, especially growing up, that "those who can't, teach". And I've given this thought in recent years. And I think where it came from – I don't actually know the origin of this, fact-check at some point; But where I think it came from is that okay, someone's out there in the business world who are able to have this career and make all this money. If they're gonna leave that to teach and not make a lot of money, then people are assuming that they didn't really do it that well and that's why they were teaching. This is totally my assumption here based on the context of the situations that I've heard of brought up over the years mainly when I was growing up. **But the interesting thing is now, not necessarily in the traditional sense of teaching but in the online marketing world of teaching, the teachers are the ones that make a lot of money. And the teachers are the ones that *can* and that are sharing their experiences and actually being paid for it. And what a flip of the switch there!** This is so fascinating to me. And now I'm gonna have to actually go look and see that [laughter] where that horrible expression came from. Because gosh, we owe so much to our teachers in all stages of life. I don't know why anyone would diss a teacher. I have no idea. But **it is kinda cool to see that now, how teachers are able to make an unlimited amount of money in this kind of thing which was never available before.**

JENNY: Yes, it's so true. And it's funny, because she was actually a former teacher. So the fact that she said it was even more like what?!

JACLYN: What?! Omigosh!

JENNY: And the fact that I didn't realize it at that time was that she doesn't know what she's talking about. You need to just be yourself. Be your outgoing, gonna talk and say what you want and just do it. It took me at least two years before I did.

JACLYN: Omigosh. So cool. So behind the scenes a little bit in your business, especially thinking back to getting any early traction with your blog or getting any of those first sponsors. Were there any key relationships that helped you along the way? And sometimes that's like the invisible stuff that happens behind the scenes. And even for you to be able to talk about how you were able to sell your course so quickly because you were taping the shoulders of different bloggers. **Where did those relationships come from?**

JENNY: **Those were definitely from conferences.** That was always something that I felt like I needed to do. I didn't have anyone that was in my area or at least I knew of that was in my area that were bloggers that would understand the world that I was kinda living in. Even as it got to a point where it was close to replacing my teaching salary, my teacher friends had no idea that I had this other life or business. It wasn't something that I shared because I didn't want it to become an issue as a teacher. For some reason I felt that that online presence might be an issue. So I didn't let anybody else know. When I actually retired from teaching and handed in my resignation letter two weeks prior to doing that, the teachers at the faculty meeting said "What? You're thirty-five! How are you resigning?" And I said I had this other business and not of them had any idea. I had kept it more or less a secret for the longest time. So for me getting out and going to conferences with leading bloggers and creating those relationships; I've always been really good. I am an introvert, but I'm good one-on-one. And I can kind of really understand people and their needs and how I can help. And I've never been afraid to reach out to others. So probably the same time that I could understand others pitch and make some income, I decided that I needed to create a tribe of bloggers to kind of help share each other's content. And this was at the time when Pinterest and Facebook were at the height of algorithms and you can put something out there and see hundreds of people come to your site. So I sat back and thought of who is my dream team bloggers? I'm gonna pitch them and I'm going to reach out to them and see about working together to share each other's content. And I figured if they say no, then they say no; what's the big deal? I think I reached out to... I think there was seven or eight; every single one of them said yes. Didn't even ask for specifics like I was thinking. And I at that time felt like I was the smallest, by far. All of them had presence on one social media platform or another. And they were easily seeing

hundreds of thousands of page views and had been established blogs for quite some time.

So, not being afraid to create those types of relationships. And some of those that I had actually started that with, I had met in person at a conference. And they felt like they knew me. They trusted me. They understood that I was on the same page, looking to take this to another level. That tribe of bloggers, I think I was working with them probably for like a year, a year and a half. And that was when I was able to walk away from teaching. They were a part of that. And I'm still, to this day, so grateful to every single one of them. And when I get to see them at conferences, I get all excited and hugs and everything else even though you've never met these people in person. But when some of them I did, I think that makes all the difference. **Creating those bonds with people in person.**

JACLYN: It really does. And I love how you did that and that journey. And the fact that you didn't let... It's important to note here that it doesn't matter how many followers someone has or how much money they make or how many page views they have or visitors in their blog, right? **We all have expertise that we can help other people with. We didn't let that get in the way. Oh, they're "further along" or they have a bigger blog. You knew that you can help them with something. Or they knew you could help them with that, too. And I just think that that's so amazing. Yes, we can all help each other.** It doesn't matter these other metrics that a lot of people are like oh, I couldn't help that person because they already make x amount of money. **If you have an expertise that they don't, sure as hell you can help them.**

JENNY: Yes, and it was my first step towards really pitching. That was my first step towards understanding pitching and it wasn't that scary because it wasn't brands and I wasn't asking for any money. I was just asking for support. But it was the same thing. I was able to tell them what I could bring to the table and what I thought I could see. And the same thing that you do with brands. **So not being afraid to just hit send and not care of if they don't reply or they come back and say no – that's the worst thing you're gonna do is say no. Nothing else. It's not gonna stop my business. It's not gonna help me out of my tracks. It can only move you forward.** And I think that half of the problem when it comes to pitching is always the mindset of I'm afraid that they're gonna come back and say no. Or I'm afraid that they're not gonna answer. So what? What if they don't answer? They're probably busy. They'll probably reply back to you, run them another email.

JACLYN: Sorry, but it was such a good segue to your expertise to pitching. Because I think a lot of people listening might be thinking to themselves well, I'm not ready to work with brands yet. So do you have a metric of when somebody might be ready to work with brands? Or what does it take to even get started and putting ourselves out there to pitch some type of collaboration or sponsorship or type of partnership with a brand?

JENNY: **So the first thing is that you have to know your audience, because the brand doesn't care about you. It's not about you it's about your audience, and whether or not you know how to leverage it.** So if you know your audience you can tell me who it is, why they're coming to you, what pain points are you solving for them and why would they be possibly be interested in a product that you wanna pitch to. Then you can start to reach out and start to pitch. Also, a lot of people are saying to me well how many followers do I need? How much social media? And my answer is always the sky isn't going to upon up and suddenly you're just gonna hear singing voices that say "It's time to pitch! You're at the perfect number." It's different for everybody because if you don't understand; you have 10,000 followers or if you have 100,000 – if you don't know any of those hundred thousand (followers) and if they don't engage with you – you've paid for them – they're not worth anything. **But if you even have 100 followers and they are engaging with you on Instagram stories or they're emailing you back, and they are telling you what it is they want or need from you – those 100 are worth more than 100,000 any day of the week.**

JACLYN: Ohhh, this is so good [laughter].

JENNY: I get really excited about this. It's hard for people to understand that because I think they're so used to looking at followers and page views. **But there are so many ways that people are getting followers now that if they're not engaging, they're not worth anything. So just understanding what it is that you deliver to that audience who they are, and as long as your audience is not your mom, your sister or your best friend, then you're okay to pitch. It has to be beyond that. And I'd say you probably want at least three months blogging underneath your belt before you go to pitch.** I've had some clients that are like blog is getting launched and I'm ready to pitch. No, you're not. Let's really figure this out first. Because a brand is gonna look at you and say look at this launch, you don't know who your audience is and you don't know who you're gonna attract.

JACLYN: And it shows some consistency, too. Even with me. I've been podcasting for over three years, over 300 episodes. But just in January I've rebranded to Go-to-Gal. We had a lot of changes around here. And I know that that's gonna shift. The audience is gonna shift, and I'm

intentionally waiting to pitch a new paid sponsor until we have at least three months under the belt with the new brand because I wanna be able to talk to them confidently about this brand because so much has changed. And I realized that.

So how do we decide what brands would be good? I love that earlier you had me to point to say that it was authentic how you were weaving brands and sponsored content into your blog. **So how do we pick these authentic brands to align ourselves with?**

JENNY:

Start with the ones that you know, use and love. Look around. If you're a food blogger, go into your kitchen, look to your spice cabinet. Look to your pantry. Look in your refrigerator. If you're a DIY-er, go out to your garage. If you're an organizer, look at what planners. And don't tell me Target, Lowe's and Home Depot and all those home goods, those huge stores. Because yes, they do work with influencers but it takes years, literally years, to get on their radar. So if you wanna start dealing with them, and you can start tagging them on your Instagram stories and talk about Target and how much you love them, but it's gonna take years for you to get on the door. So my recommendation is look at the name of the brands. Your pen, look at the name of the pen brand is. It can be anything. Look at the products that are in your home and start there. And then from there, go and check their social media accounts. Make sure you're following them. Especially right now, Instagram is huge. If you're not paying attention to Instagram, you need to be. Brands are paying attention to it, they want the metrics from it. And it is the easiest way to not only talk to them but also talk to your audience and figure out what it is that they want and need from you.

So really making those authentic relationships. **And when you create content, if it's something that comes back and it's your first sponsored post, the easiest thing that I can tell you is make sure that it's content that your audience wants to see.** Don't give me a review of a vacuum and tell me the specs and tell me all this crap that the brand wants you to say. If you're gonna do a review, you're gonna work with a vacuum company because you do cleaning content on your site for example, you need to be able to give me five cleaning tips for spring, and one of the tips is that vacuum and how great it is. The whole post-content should not be about just that vacuum. Same thing if you're going to do it about a planner. The entire content should not be about a planner. Maybe it should be about ways to be productive. And one of the ways is having this planner and how great it is, and you're gonna give me a beauty shot of that planner. But **the content has to be authentic and give value to your reader.** Because if it falls on its face because the content is a review, the brand is not gonna want to work with you again. And they talk. And a

lot of times you're not working directly with brands, you're working with PR agencies. And PR agencies oversee more than one brand, and they talk amongst themselves. **So if you fall on your face because you did something that was inauthentic and your audience hated it, not only are you gonna probably lose some of your audience, but that brand will never work with you again.**

JACLYN:

Okay, let's unpack that because that was such good value right there. So this is such a key point. Now it sounds like though that this is why people need your help. Because navigating this road is so marquee. So it sounds like the brand is coming to you and saying, or you're pitching, and like oh we have this vacuum and we'd love for you to review it. We're not saying create some great content and sneak us into it. They're saying we want our thing front and center. **So it sounds like we need to take that bigger role and say we know our audience best. We know how to create content best. Trust us, trust me to put this together in the way that I know is best. I'll work it in and it'll be a win-win for both of us.** We kinda have to marry how this is gonna play out. Because it sounds like if we let them do it, not only is our audience upset, they're gonna end up being upset, too, which is crazy.

JENNY:

Yes, a lot of these brands will give you talking points. They want you to say specific things. So maybe the vacuum picks up 98% of all allergens and they need that in there. That's fine. You can get that into one of your tips that you have. But like you said, you have to be able to say to the brand listen, this is not gonna work. Perfect example: I do a ton of food on The Melrose Family. I have Glad trash bags come to me and wanted me to do a four-day smell test of their garbage bag. And I was like wait, what? We want you to do a four-day challenge where you keep the garbage in the garbage bag for four days and we want you to write about it. And I said my audience doesn't want to read about that so that's not gonna work. So I had a choice. So I said I need 24 hours to think about if there's a way I can make this work for my audience or I'm gonna have to walk away from this. Because there is no way... first of all, I'm a family of four. Garbage doesn't last four days! Crazy! And I also didn't want to lie to my audience. They know that I'm a family of four. So I came back to them the next day and said listen, it's spring; recipes are doing well for me. I wanna do Caribbean fish tacos as the post. That's gonna be the title, that's gonna be my pinnable image. That's gonna be my Facebook image. That's the image I'm gonna have on Instagram. But in it, I'm gonna tell a story. **Because as bloggers, we should be telling stories.** Cooking your audience, really creating that authenticity with them. So I told the story about how we had Caribbean fish tacos with this beautiful image, of course, and my youngest daughter threw out her leftover fish taco into the garbage. We left that night for a four-day weekend, away at the

mountains, and we came back and the house didn't smell like fish even though her fish tacos had been in the garbage for four days!

JACLYN: That's so brilliant.

JENNY: They were like hmmm....

JACLYN: What?!

JENNY: And they kind of gave me some pushback first. They were like...

JACLYN: This could be a TV commercial! This is so good.

JENNY: Exactly! Then I said look, your talking points are here. I put in there exactly what you wanted me to have. They were like alright, fine. Not only did it do well with my audience – it went viral on Pinterest because the image was beautiful; a year later, Glaad came back to me and said we want the rights to your photos. Because they wanted the fish tacos on their site.

JACLYN: [laughter] Oh my gosh, this is the best story! And the perfect illustration. **It's not just about being authentic to the brands you're aligning yourself with, but about how you're delivering this content, too.** Omigod. So what did you do? Did you give them (the photo)? How does that work?

JENNY: As bloggers, you own the rights to your photos, and it's something that you should really pay attention to. Anytime we're working with brands, if they ask for rights, you need to understand that they can take those photos and do whatever they want with it. They can put it on a billboard. They can make it their manufacturing. And if it's a picture of your kids, you have to realize this. So rights, I charged double for the rights to my photos. So let's just say for math purposes that they paid \$1,000 for the recipe; when they came back wanting the rights to the photos, I charged them another \$1,000 for the photos. So they could do whatever they wanted with it. All they wanted to do was put it up on their website...

JACLYN: Right? So now when they put it on their website, do they also link back to you?

JENNY: They did, yes. They didn't want the full recipe. They wanted to just be able to have the little pictures on there that they could just say. And there's a lot of fish recipes and things that would work for the Glaad trash bags. **The big thing that I think a lot of times bloggers miss and also the brand sometimes would miss is that sponsored content isn't about selling the product. And I know that this is gonna blow some people's**

minds. When you do affiliate marketing, you need to sell stuff because that's how you make your money. And it's your job to sell it. When you do sponsored, it's about influencing your readers to now go to the grocery store and get Glad trash bags over Hefty. They're not gonna buy Glad trash bags from your website. So you can link to them all that you want. It's supposed to be about shifting their mindset to choose a product over it, not about making the sale and link them in there. So for me, I've always leaned over sponsored posts because when it comes to affiliate, I then have to rely on the brand's website to be able to sell the product. Whereas when it's sponsored, I don't need to rely on the brand to sell it because they're not necessarily looking for that. They're looking for the word of mouth and the idea and influence that comes from that. That when they go to the grocery store to buy a product like that, they're gonna pick up theirs over another because they heard me talking about how my house smells so good even though there was fish tacos in my garbage.

JACLYN: This is such a good point because they might think about it right away. They might read your blog posts and go grocery shopping over the weekend and make that choice. But it might also take a month. Maybe they're cooking fish in their house and they had that same experience, and then they remember you and your story, and how crappy their house is smelling. And I've totally been there before so I resonated with your story. And they'll be like oh, I need to go get those trash bags because this is totally stinking up the house. So it might not be direct at all. And even if they did go the next day to the grocery store and buy them, it's not really something the brand can track. So I'm curious, when you do a sponsored post or when your clients are doing a sponsored post, what does success look like? How do you know the difference between it being a success and falling on your face? What is the difference between those two things?

JENNY: **You always wanna ask the brand what they're KPIs are. What are their Key Performance Indicators as far as what are they looking to really establish with the content. Are they looking to just have more followers on Instagram? Or are they looking for the hashtag to be seen more out there? Are they looking for better engagement? What I measure whether or not it's doing well is the number of engagements that I get on content. Whether it's on social or whether it's on my blog.** So a like, a share, a re-share, a re-pin – whatever it might be. And especially those comments, which again is why Instagram is so huge. **I'm not talking about the feed, which I know most people assume that's what I'm automatically talking about. But if you're wanting to work with brands right now and you're wanting to make a difference, Instagram stories is where it's at. Because you can get into people's DMs and start really**

having a conversation about the brand. And then the brand, you report back to them with any of those conversations that have occurred. So there's different techniques where you can actually... let's say for example, I had a client that worked with an orange company. The deal actually wasn't agreed upon yet. She had put in the proposal for \$8,000 for a packet that she was gonna put together. And they said we'll get back to you next week, we gotta run this by everybody; we're not really sure, we think this might be out of our budget. So she said to me I really want this deal; what do I do? I said do a couple of Instagram stories and start talking about their oranges. I want you to do a poll. In the poll, I want you to ask your audience "Do you hate peeling oranges for your kids? Yes or No?" And when they say no, you then have the ability to see who has said no. So you can DM them and be able to say hey, have you ever heard of this specific orange? And if they say no, you can then say oh, well listen, it's actually easier to peel. Whatever their things are. And then you have all of that evidence, which you did, to be able to go back next week on Monday and be able to say oh, by the way, if my audience really wants to learn more about your oranges; these are the conversations that occurred from one Instagram story. **So it's about that engagement that you're getting on the content that you're creating for your audience.**

JACLYN: Oh, this is so good. Now, I'm curious because one thing I've seen, and I've seen this especially locally; there are a lot of bloggers and influencers that have really engaged social accounts. Really active high volume blogs. And I went to a conference and we had a lot of local companies talking about it. And I have not blogged since March of 2017, true confessions [laughter]. Although I have thought about maybe doing something on Instagram. And I am gonna start blogging soon. I don't count show notes. But one of the jaw-drop moment was some of these really big brands locally, they were talking about all the things that they looked for and I was getting a bit excited. Like wow, maybe I should be leveraging some of my audiences. And by the time we got to the end of the session and got to the meat of it, it was like yeah, give them a free meal. Wait, what? People are doing all those stuff for free food? It was very small amounts of money, like two to three figure dollar amounts. Or even just evaluations. And so that blew my mind. Why are people doing all this work for not making money. So is there a way to know from the outside what kinds of brands are actually going to pay? Or does it make sense to kind of start with some of these brands that are just looking to give you some freebies to kinda work your way up? Any advice there?

JENNY: I think it really depends upon your size and what you're willing to work for. If you're just starting out, doing something maybe in exchange for product especially if the product is something that you would normally

buy. And you're not doing a full blog post. I don't care if they give you a bag of granola; you're not doing a full blog post on a bag of granola. It doesn't matter how small you are – don't do it. Because you can do an Instagram story and you're still gonna get some traction on it. That's worth your time, not a blog post, which is a lot of time and energy that you're doing. So I would say you could totally start there and be able to have that as a way to kind of start that relationship. But then if you're looking, you know that you have 10,000 across social media and page views added together. If you're around 10,000 as far as reach, you shouldn't be working for free. And actually use a renegotiation script. Because a lot of times they'll send out these mass emails to bloggers and they'll be like we want you to do this but they have no idea who you are. And they're asking for free. So I'll hit them back with "Your product's great, I think this is how I think it would work with my audience..." In order to keep the integrity of my site, my readers, and any of the previous brands that I've worked with, I only work on sponsored content. I'd love to send you a media kit and a proposal for your review. And a lot of times, they'll get that and go oh, yes, send your media kit and a proposal. It's not that they don't have any money. It's that they don't know who you are. They're just sending out a mass email, hoping to get some sort of traction in there. Neutrogena, I started a relationship with them that way. They reached out wanting me to do a Facebook post, a video of Kristen Bell who I love and I think she's adorable. But I wasn't doing it for free. And they came back and it has resulted in long term contract with them. I've had over \$11,000 just with Neutrogena because I was able to come back to them; tell them this is what I do and put together a package or a proposal; and then hit them back afterwards and say listen, this is how well I did. I'd love to put a long-term contract with you for three posts. **That's how you get long-term relationship: proving your worth and being able to show that you're worth it.**

JACLYN: Right now, my jaw was just dropping again, people [laughter]. This is amazing! I love it. So many good tips. Okay, I'm gonna put you on the spot a little bit. Do you have anyone that you – either your own accounts or your clients' or just other people in the industry – that are just doing such a great job with this that we should be following them on Instagram or that are good examples? Because I wanna see how people are talking about this in their Stories. I wanna see it in action. Does anyone come to mind?

JENNY: For a food blogger, her account is @veggiesdontbite. She has a lot of clean eating recipes. Her Instagram Stories are awesome. She does a really good job not only with the brands but also with her audience. Another parenting blogger, morganmanagesmommyhood. And one of the things you're gonna notice about both of these, which is a little bit of

a trick, is that they both have over 10,000 followers so they have the availability to swipe up; they don't use it and there's a reason. Instead of just telling people just to swipe up to get a recipe or get whatever, they will write on their photo or on their story "DM me for the recipe; DM me for this". And what has happened is people, if they DM you they're gonna follow through. They're gonna buy whatever they're asking for or they're gonna go to the recipe and actually take the time to read the entire recipe. They're going to buy that affiliate product. Whereas if you just tell them to swipe up, we swipe up all day long when we're going through a feed. It's so lazy. Do you know how many times I have a banded cart from swiping up on a sponsored ad or someone has done an affiliate product? All the time. But if I had actually said to that beauty blogger who's recommending a certain mascara, "Can you DM me that link?" You better bet your butt I'm gonna make sure I'll buy because now I've told her that I'm going to. So they are much more committed when they are doing the DMs. Plus, DMs are wide links. So when you go to a DM, it's not a link that you have to copy-paste for it to work. They just click it. So instead of telling them link in profile, which just drives me crazy, because no one is gonna take time to come out of Stories to then go to your profile and then click; it's not gonna happen. I don't care if you have link trade. Just DM me for the recipe. It's less work on your part because you have to then go through your DMs to drop these links, but it's worth the commitment. I'm selling my own services to thousand dollar products in Instagram stories.

JACLYN:

It's so funny. So I have two Instagram accounts. So jaclynmellone, my personal brand, is one. And then I have the go.to.gal account. But on that account, it has 31,000 followers but it's a personal account. I never switched it to a business, so I don't have the swipe up. And I link my business account to my jaclynmellone one, so I think I have to open up another business account. I just never did, and then there are some people that say that your engagement is better if you're a personal account and not a business. So I had just never switched it. So I don't have swipe up, so inadvertently, we've been saying DM for whatever, and I haven't really been selling anything in there. But that is so cool to hear. These people that have it have already been using it, and I've just kinda been using it by accident. And it's brilliant. And I love that it's working for you for your thousand dollar plus programs. That this isn't just for a \$6 thing or a recipe. This is working across the board. So good.

So, where can we follow you and why don't you plug if you have a course that helps us on this because you give such good value. I know that there are people who are gonna want to take that next step and learn more. So tell us where we can follow you and where they can find out more about your course, too.

JENNY: Absolutely. So jennymelrose.com is my website. I also have a podcast, Influencer-Entrepreneurs with Jenny Melrose. And the course is, if you go to jennymelrose.com/pitchperfectpro, the name of my course is Pitch Perfect Pro and all the information will take you right to the sales page. If you want, I can give you the link for the renegotiation script that I gave when we were talking about the free product. I'll send that over to you so you can put in the show notes.

JACLYN: This was amazing! Always so fun chatting with you. So much gold today. I very much appreciate you. You're bringing all the good stuff for us, Jenny.

JENNY: Thank you so much for having me, Jaclyn.