

**The Big Picture Business Podcast – Episode 10**  
**Leading Your Business from the Heart**  
**Featuring Franchesca Duval**

### **Introduction**

- In this episode of The Big Picture Business Podcast, Dominica and Rory are joined by successful businesswoman Franchesca Duval.
- Franchesca runs Alchemist Farm and Garden and is set on using her company to not only make money but to work toward bettering the global environment and educating others about the problems our world is facing and how we can go about making changes in our lives to slow or reverse these issues.
- In this episode, the conversation explores having support when starting up a business, setting achievable targets, and the ins and outs of running a business such as Alchemist Farm and Garden.

### **Getting to Know Franchesca Duval**

- This episode's guest is a renowned businesswoman and innovator who also happens to be Dominica's sister.
- Franchesca Duval is the founder and owner of the first humane and 100% plastic-free chicken and quail hatchery.
- Through her business, she shows that the poultry world can be a profitable business without exploiting the natural world and the environment.
- Franchesca has managed to build a tight-knit and loyal customer fanbase using Instagram.
- Franchesca describes herself as a person with many varied interests. Through these varying interests, she felt that she was putting, for example, 20% into each of her interests. Before starting her business, she was interested in chickens, having been

surrounded by them all her life. She was also interested in fertility, considered becoming a midwife, and pursued a career in teaching. With all of these various interests, she felt that she was putting 20% into each one and not reaching the level of progress she desired.

- Her focus zoomed in one day when she saw beautiful dark chicken eggs on Craigslist. This led Franchesca to question why she never sees these eggs in the grocery store. She was fascinated by the different variations in eggs and the colors of these eggs and felt that this was a good entry point to educating people on where our food comes from.
- She saw Alchemist Farm and Garden as so much more than a way to make money but as a way to educate and a way to give the world an insight into a whole lifestyle that people could have.
- It is important to Franchesca to educate people on their foods' backgrounds without going the traditional route of trying to 'shock' people into change. When Franchesca discovered that 90% of all male chicks that are born are killed, she wanted to make that statistic the cornerstone of her business and promised herself that she would go against this statistic when conducting her work.
- Franchesca wanted to go against the grain and did not want to support the greater industrialized food system. So, she decided to grow her own food and raise and hatch her own animals.
- Her decision making in her business was to follow the heart of what felt right to her, rather than following the money. No elements of her business are kept a secret from her customers and competitors. She gladly tells others how to ship plastic-free and encourages others to join her.

## **Shifts in Mentality and Removing the Marketing Veil**

- Initially, Franchesca only pursued the goal of discovering how to treat animals humanely.
- Upon achieving that goal, she discovered a more significant shipping issue, which made her question whether or not she would have to shut her business down. She found the industry standard of companies shipping a lot of bubble wrap, mattress foam, and more that will rot away on the Earth for hundreds of years before finally decomposing. The moment of being on auto-pilot and assuming that this is just the industry standard of what

needs to happen came to an end one day for Franchesca. She began her research into how she could go against the industry standard for shipping goods.

- Franchesca now ships using pine shavings. It has better insulation and excellent shock absorption for eggs.
- The box also comes with a newsletter enquiring if customers would be interested in educating themselves on plastic-free shipping. This gets the wheels turning in many clients' heads to join Franchesca on her mission to mass-reduce plastic usage.
- With Franchesca's business, there is no marketing veil. Her customers know that this is not all about the money for her. They know she is doing all she can to pursue a bigger goal than just for herself or her company. This is something that brings people out of the woodwork across America to support her genuine efforts.
- For comparison, companies often use terms that they are not fully committed to, purely so they can reap the benefits of having the word associated with their product. An example is the term "organic." This term can be used in the United States on a product, even if it is only 10% organic.
- Rory contributed to saving the planet with a record label he formed two decades ago called The Gaia Project. The Gaia Project was one of the first record labels to begin donating some of the proceeds from every album sale the band made. They also expanded and partnered with organizations that were all about preserving and saving the world and the environment.

## **Humility, Setting Targets, and Having Support**

- One of the things that Dominica noticed was that Franchesca never gave up. If you go to Franchesca's Instagram @AlchemistFarm, you'll see a compilation of genuine, truthful, and heartfelt posts set on educating others on the company's message.
- Franchesca is the type of person to always lean in with humility. She does not describe herself as the "president" or "owner" of the company. She jokingly refers to herself as the "head chicken wrangler."
- When asked about what she stands for as a farm and as a business, Franchesca states that the first ideology was to stand for the humane treatment of the animals, then to provide

beautiful and unique coloring in the eggs that were being supplied, and then temperament, which is something that not many companies in the poultry industry are looking at.

- For those who are aspiring to start up a business or passionate about something, Franchesca recommends ensuring you have people in your corner who can see your passion.
- The importance of having someone who can see the goals you're striving for is something that cannot be underestimated. Dominica was this person for Franchesca while Franchesca was pursuing her goals. At first, Franchesca didn't have a logo or even a website and only had four birds to her name, yet Dominica helped her build a foundation that was a massive part of getting her business to where it is today.

## **Maintaining High Levels of Passion**

- Having that “never-die” mentality is necessary to create a sustainable and successful business. For Franchesca, it took seven years of striving past barriers and reinvesting into the business before she finally reached a point of hiring people and earning money.
- Maintaining passion and interest is a crucial component to having a successful business. Jumping on the bandwagon of creating a business off initial passion is a good start, but many companies fall to the wayside a year or so later when profitability isn't instant, and that initial drive begins to fade.

## **Making the Customer Experience a Priority**

- The process of being a customer of Alchemist Farm and Garden may start as an initial interest in purchasing a bird or eggs, but what Franchesca has noticed is that people are also interested in buying her time.
- Despite her brilliant customer service skills, Franchesca acknowledges the need to find ways to streamline customer service due to how much time it takes up in her day.

- Franchesca's company is usually found through Instagram through effective advertising and appealing posts. This usually leads to customers ordering via the company website, which will result in them hearing from Franchesca herself via email regarding the process involved in buying chicks.
- Customers have told Franchesca that her business has been so much more than a process of ordering chickens; it has been eye-opening to a whole different lifestyle.
- Customer service is always of the highest priority to Franchesca. She always treats people how she'd want to be treated, often offering extra chicks and other bonuses. She says that a bad customer is a "1 in a 1000" event.

## **Instagram Strategies**

- Instagram has become Franchesca's go-to platform for brand promotion.
- For Instagram to work, you need to have a very specific brand.
- Do not buy bots for followers on your account. It is better to have fewer followers who are real people than to have many followers who are all bot accounts. Bot accounts replying to your posts also take away from the reputation and legitimacy of your company.
- Instagram is a good fit for her brand due to her ability to have something beautiful to show the world, which is encouraged on Instagram.
- Tagging magazines is also something utilized by Alchemist Farm. Show magazines that your page or business is worth featuring. When Franchesca did this, she was eventually reached out to by Sunset Magazine.
- Utilizing giveaways using Instagram is also a really powerful way to gain more followers and engagement. It can also be a great way to show you're giving back to your supporters.

## **Donating to Causes You Care About**

- The more generous we are with what we have, the more gifts will pour back over us.

- Alchemist Farm and Garden is very generous with donations. One way it donates is by providing eggs to local schools.
- Franchesca discovered 1% for the Planet Foundation by seeing it on the packaging of brands in supermarkets. Her initial reaction was to disregard the idea because companies like Nutella were \*only\* donating 1%, yet were somehow proud of that.
- However, she researched more and realized that it is 1% because out of all the dollars throughout the United States, less than 1% goes toward ecological causes. Franchesca has committed more than 1% towards the foundation. You can choose from various organizations that have been vetted by the foundation themselves to donate toward.
- Franchesca's first chosen organization to support was End 68 Hours of Hunger. 68 hours is how much time there is from Friday when school ends to Monday when school starts again. During this timeframe, many children go without food. This was enough to make Franchesca heartbroken, and that is why End 68 Hours of Hunger was her chosen organization to support through the 1% for the Planet Foundation.
- The second year, Franchesca's chosen organization was the Children's Eternal Rainforest. They are the largest rainforest preserve in the world due to elementary school children finding out about the rainforest's devastations. They set out to raise some money and reached astronomical success.

## **Earning Two Dollars for Every Dollar Spent and Managing Purchases**

- As a business owner, utilizing money should be top of your mind when spending money. When Rory spends \$500, he sees it as him having to earn \$1000 to allow himself to purchase that \$500 item.
- This idea can be used as a reminder of finding out the little ways in which your money is being spent and finding ways to save that money, which can then be used to enhance your life in general.
- For Franchesca, it was a powerful transition to stop herself from just buying things to fulfill herself.

- Being present with your family can be more fulfilling than buying things. However, Franchesca acknowledges the challenge she has faced with stripping away all the luxury items her family buys for each other to the bare bones of just being present with your children.

## **Advice for Those Looking to Get into a Zero-Waste Lifestyle**

- Zero-waste, in general, is the idea that we are creating no trash whatsoever. This is important due to landfills filling up rapidly and quickly becoming one of the most significant climate change drivers.
- Franchesca has found that she can never go 10% in life. She always finds herself barreling in and burning out quickly. This has left her feeling very depressed about not reaching the heights she expects of herself on numerous occasions.
- When beginning a zero-waste lifestyle, she decided to choose one thing she could replace in her life. The first change she made was with yogurt. She now utilizes a woman near her home that uses her cows to produce yogurt, ensuring that glass jars come and go back to not only prevent waste but to support her local economy.
- Despite struggling to fully commit to zero waste initially and being harsh on herself for that, Franchesca still found a way to make a zero-waste lifestyle happen for her. This shows her commitment and attitude of never giving up once she is set on an idea.

## **Resources and Links Mentioned in Episode:**

- [Alchemist Farm and Garden](#)
- [Alchemist Farm and Garden Instagram](#)
- [Alchemist Farm & Garden Sunset Magazine](#)
- [1% for the Planet Foundation](#)
- [End 68 Hours of Hunger](#)
- [Children's Eternal Rainforest](#)
- [Big Picture Business VIP](#)