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Sheila Long: Hello, everybody.

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Welcome to the Head of The Table podcast. My name is Sheila Long and I will be your host for today's show.

Today is a very special day. I have a long-time friend and trusted advisor. She actually served on my advisory council when we launched MalamaDoe, her name is Maggie Cain and she started an amazing start-up which is going to completely revolutionize purchasing plus-size clothing.

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The name of the place that she opened is called Three Wrens Boutique. It's an online clothing store. So, welcome to the Head of The Table, Maggie.

Maggie Cain: Thanks, Sheila.

Sheila Long: Alright. So, Maggie, let's go way back. How did we meet?

Maggie Cain: Our babies were babies together. We took Mommy and Me classes and let our kids play, and sing, and get out of the house when we really needed, I think, to get out of the house.

Sheila Long: We did. Yeah. And our friends - and our kids got along.

Maggie Cain: Yeah, they did.

Sheila Long: So, that helped.

Maggie Cain: That did.

Sheila Long: That helped - our friendship just blossomed because we knew they'd be entertained.

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They're similar ages...

Maggie Cain: Yeah.

Sheila Long: ...and they all played together, all five of them between us.

Maggie Cain: Yeah.

Sheila Long: And then, we had all the trials and tribulations of being pregnant and having multiple - a lot of kids within a short time period.

Maggie Cain: Mm-hmm.

Sheila Long: So, yeah. But anyhow, but now we've moved on, right? It's been many years.

Maggie Cain: We have.

Sheila Long: I've watched you guys few - and your husband started a business.

Maggie Cain: We did.

Sheila Long: And you were a huge inspiration for me when I wanted to open this business.

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Maggie Cain: Which was fantastic because then, you became a huge inspiration for me so I could start my own business this year.

Sheila Long: Yup. That's what it's all about, right?

Maggie Cain: That's what it's about.

Sheila Long: Alright. And then, I wrote a business plan for our listeners out there and I thought it was pretty good. Then Maggie a look into it and she said - she really should have a business, writing business plans. Anyone need - it was amazing. I had all these stats about women business owners and how it's this completely untapped market and Maggie just was - you summarized it and made it look really awesome.

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Maggie Cain: Well, it was fantastic because I was not that well-versed or knowledgeable about women on businesses at the time and reading everything that you brought to the table and everything you had to say about the resources and the capabilities of women, the really untapped resource in our economy, and that was really inspiring for me to realize that I could just kind of go out there and figure out what I wanted to do and start my own business as well.

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Sheila Long: Cool. Great. I'm glad that I helped you.

Maggie Cain: You definitely did.

Sheila Long: Great. So, where are you at now? What's your - what's your, um, journey? Like where are you at on your journey in life?

Maggie Cain: Well, it took me - oh, in life or in the business?

Sheila Long: Oh, no, it's all the same thing, right?

Maggie Cain: It really is the same thing. Your business becomes your life.

Sheila Long: Your kids are older now. Okay.

Maggie Cain: Yes. The kids are a little older and I wanted to go back to work. It took me about a year and a half I'd say, to get from, um, where I started, to where I got to open the business.

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And that was a little longer than I meant for that to happen, but life sometimes takes you in that direction.

Sheila Long: It does.

Maggie Cain: And what I did is, I started an online clothing boutique for plus-size women with really high quality fashionable, fashion-forward clothing. My original intent was to open a brick and mortar store because what I most wanted to do was to have a lot of contact with customers and with people and be out there in the community where I live, really making a difference in the lives of women that I know and that I see every day.

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But for a lot of reasons, I won't go into too much detail, I decided to put that off and I started the business online. Which was a huge change but still is providing me with, um, some great experience and some great challenges. And I am - I'm getting that underway - I got underway, I got some summer clothes, I'm now getting my fall clothes and so I'm into my second season. Purchased all the clothes for winter as well, so you have to...

Sheila Long: Awesome.

Maggie Cain: ...you have to go so far forward that that can be a little bit nerve-wracking.

Sheila Long: Okay.

Maggie Cain: Because I'm just getting the marketing underway.

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And just got the website up and now suddenly, we've got - you really keep having to plan so far in advance to buy inventory, so that's been an adventure but, um, that's pretty much where I am right now.

Sheila Long: Awesome. So, why, um, the plus-sized boutique? I know your spiel but everybody else doesn't know it, so...

Maggie Cain: I know.

Sheila Long: Let's hear it.

Maggie Cain: Um, it is very difficult for plus size women to find high quality clothing. And when you look at the market, you notice that the clothes that are out there tend to be in places like Target or Sears, um, JCPenny, clothing that is, um, very cost-conscious.

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And, um, that's fine, that's great, that's a really fantastic market, we definitely need to have that offering. But the higher quality you get in terms of the cost of the clothes and the quality of the clothing, the harder it is to find plus-sizes. So, if you look at the entire - let's see if I can remember these numbers, if you look at the entire women's apparel market, plus-size women spend about 18% of the total apparel spend for women in the United States.

Sheila Long: Wow.

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Maggie Cain: And given that size 14 above accounts for about two-thirds of women in the United States, that's really not a large enough - I mean, that's not proportional. Quite honestly, it's shocking, you know, that they even managed to purchase 20% of the clothes that are purchased because, uh, less than 3% of the clothes offered in major online retailers is plus-size.

Sheila Long: Awesome.

Maggie Cain: So, there really is a large untapped market there...

Sheila Long: Huge market.

Maggie Cain: ...of women who are lawyers or bankers or have the money to be able to spend more on clothes and they really can't find clothes that are made for them and that are as high quality and fashion forward as they would like them to be.

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Sheila Long: So, you're here to help them?

Maggie Cain: I am here to help them.

Sheila Long: Alright. Awesome. You had - I know we've been talking about this for a while but there's something about the cut that you were mentioning of the clothes?

Maggie Cain: Oh, there's - it's kind of an awkward break sometimes when you're right in the middle because the - what we call straight-sized clothing or what's misses goes up to about 16 or 18 and that's cut a certain way.

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Maggie Cain: And then the plus-sized clothes that you think of as being like 1X, 2X, 3X or as you get into the 20s, that's cut very differently. And then there's the middle area where the plus-sized clothing starts at 14 and actually goes up. But if you're going up in the misses, you get to 18 and that's about a 14W.

It gets very complicated to try and find the clothes when you're in that in-between area...

Sheila Long: Okay.

Maggie Cain: ...and it's really hard to know how to buy them, which is one of the reasons that I really wanted the brick and mortar store, so that I could bring these clothes to people for them to try on.

Sheila Long: Oh really?

Maggie Cain: Yes.

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Sheila Long: Okay.

Maggie Cain: But what I do instead to try and mitigate that in the online world is first of all I make returns really, really easy...

Sheila Long: Great.

Maggie Cain: ...and free to ship it back to me. I pay for that shipping. And the second thing is that I measure every size of every piece of clothing that I put on, on my website.

Sheila Long: Wow.

Maggie Cain: So, normally you would look and say, "Okay, you're a size 16 if your bust measurement is this and your waist measurement is that." But then every designer cuts their clothes completely differently, so that has nothing to do with the clothes that are actually on the site.

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What I do is, I say, "For this black shirt, these are the measurements for a size 16, 18, 20, 22, 24."

Sheila Long: Okay.

Maggie Cain: "For this white shirt, that is the by the same designer but is a different cut, these are their..."

Sheila Long: Awesome.

Maggie Cain: "...measurements." So, if a woman knows her measurements, she can come on to my website and find the exact piece of clothing that's going to fit her best.

Sheila Long: Awesome.

Maggie Cain: Which is very difficult when you're a plus-size.

Sheila Long: Okay. And just the free returns.

Maggie Cain: Yes.

Sheila Long: And I don't think you need - well, Mag and I, we go way back but you don't really need that store, you know.

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Maggie Cain: I know.

Sheila Long: Just keep shipping it back to people but you want them to like it. But at least they'll try and it's nice to have clothes that you like to wear.

Maggie Cain: Yes.

Sheila Long: And you feel so good, it's so great for your self-esteem and...

Maggie Cain: Yes.

Sheila Long: ...your presence.

Maggie Cain: It is an emotional journey for plus-size women to do the online shopping that I think straight-size women don't fully understand. Because it's so - you know plus-size women just aren't treated very well by the apparel industry.

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When you go into a store, the plus-sized clothes are always in the back, it's never the pretty stuff that it's in the windows. It's - emotionally feels very defeating to go clothes shopping. So, it's hard for a plus-size woman to go and then say, "I'm going to buy, like, four different pairs of jeans and keep the ones that fit right for me because it just never feels like anything ever fits right." So, it's - I feel that it's really important to be able to get those clothes on and there is something out there that fits you.

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There is something that look good on you. There is something that will make you feel great. You just have to buy a few different sizes and a few different styles and ship everything back to me and we'll take care of it.

Sheila Long: Awesome. Way to go.

Maggie Cain: I want that emotional experience at the end of it for her to feel like she was treated as well as she could be anywhere else and that she got all the clothes that she wanted and looks and feels beautiful. That's the most important thing.

Sheila Long: I'm like - I'm going to cry. I feel so happy. I'm so glad that you're serving all these people.

Maggie Cain: I do. It's important. In my career, I've really kind of gone back and forth between trying to make the world a better place and then like I was an elementary school teacher, and I was a yoga instructor, and I love those things, but then I was also a manager with Accenture, and I also started a business with my husband, and I kept the books, and did the finances. So, that was more of an intellectual challenge. And I feel like, what I'm doing now really satisfies both of those, because when you open a business, there's so much business stuff to do and it's so challenging that way, but I found a group of people that - and you know, a customer base that I'm really passionate about helping and serving, and that deserves to be treated as well as she can possibly be treated.

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So, I feel like I can help make her life better as well and that, I feel like I've really found a business that allows me to do both of those things.

Sheila Long: Great. Congrats.

Maggie Cain: Thank you.

Sheila Long: I'm happy for you.

Maggie Cain: I am too.

Sheila Long: And that awesome background, like, you have everything. That's the beauty of middle-aged women.

Maggie Cain: It really is.

Sheila Long: Yeah.

Maggie Cain: I feel like women and I think working with you might have taught me this.

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We have a tendency to feel like we can't do a job unless we've already done all the parts of a job and we, when we look at an opportunity, we look at the list of job qualifications and think, "Well I can't apply for that job," or, "I can't open that business because I can't do this, this, and this yet." And what women need to realize is that what we bring is experience, and intelligence, and agility, and we should be looking at those opportunities and saying, "Okay, here are the things I can do, here are the things I'll need to outsource, here are the things I need to learn how to do, and here are the things that I am just going to take a stab at, because I have good judgment and it may work, it may not, but I can redirect tomorrow and try something else."

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Sheila Long: Okay. And that's why I handed her my business plan, everyone, and I said, "Maggie, you could make this sound a whole lot better." No one's ever really read the business plan, by the way. We just kept moving forward. But thanks, you helped me clarify the thoughts.

Maggie Cain: I think it was General Eisenhower, I could be wrong, who said that, in battle, plans are useless, but planning is essential. I also made a great big business plan that no one's ever read, but me.

Sheila Long: Right, okay.

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Maggie Cain: But it gets your own head around what you're doing and having that plan really helps you set the direction for where you want to go and helps you to explain it and sell it to other people.

Sheila Long: Okay. Alright. So, since this is called the Head of the Table podcast, I think you are officially the head of the table for the plus size market...

Maggie Cain: Oh, thanks, Sheila.

Sheila Long: ...for helping people really understand and enjoy shopping and making - so that they have clothes that really look good at them. So, I'm deeming you head of the table...

Maggie Cain: All right, I'll take that. I'll sit there.

Sheila Long: ...for - on that marketplace, all right.

[0:12:00]

And then let's see. Role models or influencers, sounds like you've had such a great background with many different people helping you along the way.

Maggie Cain: I have. I have and I do want to give out a shout-out, not only to you, of course, we've already talked about how we influenced each other, but I have this really amazing husband and he - and I started the business about 10 years ago and he has been so influential in teaching me. Really had to pick yourself up on the days that you really feel like just throwing in the towel and think you're overwhelmed and you think how can I possibly have done this, that you just have to keep putting one in front of the other.

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And you have to push through those days because tomorrow is going to be a better day and tomorrow, you're going to experience some success that you never even thought. Some opportunity is going to fall on your lap, that you never even thought you would have. So, that was a really fantastic thing for me to be a part of and really brought me to be able to where I am today.

Sheila Long: Alright. Well, great, that's wonderful when you have those great people in your life that really help you and inspire and move you forward.

[0:13:02]

All right, okay. Well, I want to thank everyone for being - for listening to the show today. Where can people reach you? What's your social media?

Maggie Cain: People can reach me - the website for the store is www.threewrensboutique.com.

Sheila Long: Okay, here you go. It's okay.

Maggie Cain: And it's www.T-H-R-E-E-W-R-E-N-S-B-O-U-T-I-Q-U-E.com, all written out, Three Wrens Boutique.

Sheila Long: Okay.

Maggie Cain: And Instagram, it's written out, Three Wrens Boutique.

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Sheila Long: Well, thanks a lot for being on the show.

Maggie Cain: You're welcome. Thanks for having me.

Sheila Long: Thanks to everybody for listening to the Head of the Table podcast. Please feel free to look for us wherever you find your podcast. Let your friends know as well.

Thanks everyone.