

EPISODE 200

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:02.7] PF: Welcome to episode 200 of Live Happy Now. I'm Paula Felps, thanking you for joining us today for what we think is a very special episode. If you've been listening since the beginning, you already know that Live Happy Now has evolved in many different ways since we launched it in 2015.

Thanks to listeners like you, we've been able to exceed our own expectations and hopefully have exceeded yours as well. This week, Live Happy CEO, Deborah Heisz, sat down with me to talk about how the podcast began, what we've learned during our first 200 episodes and what to expect going forward.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:33.9] PF: Welcome back to the show. It's always a pleasure to have you come by and chat with us.

[0:00:39.1] DH: Well, it's always fun to do this. This is probably my favorite thing that we do at Live Happy.

[0:00:43.7] PF: We've been doing this for a little now. It sneaked up on us.

[0:00:47.9] DH: It did. This is our 200th podcast, which is unbelievable to me.

[0:00:53.5] PF: Yeah, especially did you know that the average number of podcasts that someone puts out is seven?

[0:01:00.9] DH: That's incredible.

[0:01:02.0] PF: I know. I know. I remember when we were going to start this and we had no idea that one, that we could pull it off, and two, that it would do as well as it's done and would lead us to this. What was the idea behind wanting to start Live Happy Now?

[0:01:17.1] DH: Well, I actually – before we started this, I discovered podcasts. I do a lot of traveling and I started listening to them when I was traveling. Then I start doing some research into podcasts and looking at them and I asked some of the staff members that Brittney was a key part of it, you were a key part of it, Chris was a key part of it, looking at how people were to do a podcast and what audiences were like. We just started really looking at it and we were talking to everybody.

The conclusion that we came to quite rapidly was that podcast provided people information in a way that was very comfortable for them to consume it. Something that didn't require extra time out of their day, because they could listen to it in their car, or listen to it while they worked out. It was really attracting our core audience, which is people who want to improve their lives. They're one of the main audiences for podcasts. It really became obvious that launching a pod – Live Happy launching a podcast would be a benefit to the people that we're trying to reach.

[0:02:15.3] PF: Yeah. I do know too that a lot of thought went into making sure it was a specific thing under 30 minutes, so people could listen to it on their commute. Then I think some of the things were decided like dumb luck. I mean, we just decided like, "Hey, let's try this," and things really worked.

[0:02:33.4] DH: They really did. We fortunately have quite a few listeners or readers at the time when we launched. We launched the podcast and we hit the top of the iTunes podcast list for our category in the first week. We had an instant success. You're right, some of it was a little bit of dumb luck and some of it, I think obviously everything in the world is a little bit of timing. I really think it was also that this is a topic that really appeals to people. When they as an option in their podcast list, they started adding it.

It's quite incredible that our first few episodes exceeded 10,000 downloads a piece, which is as you know, you talk about most podcasts only produce seven. Most download are not anywhere close to 10,000, or not typically in the thousands even.

[0:03:20.0] PF: Yeah. A lot of them stay in the double digits. I remember being nervous. We were like, we had no idea exactly what would happen. We knew what could happen and

depending on which way it went, that could be fantastic or less than fantastic. We really were a little anxious about how this was going to go.

[0:03:40.0] DH: We were. The good thing about podcasting I think though and one of the most important reasons to continue doing it for us is that podcasting really does lend itself to being – learning, a learning and engagement medium. Reading a magazine, reading a website of course, that's our anchor, that's where we started, that's who we were. The reality is that most people don't have the time to consume information that way and podcast really lends itself to the type of content we were producing.

Also for me doing a podcast and for you doing a podcast, talking about it with you, you get to really deep dive into topics in a way you can't, that you get to as an interviewer when you're doing the writing for an article, but you don't ever get to really share with the reader. With podcasting, you do. You get to share that same deep dive that you got to take as the interviewer before creating an article with your audience that they usually don't get to see.

[0:04:35.5] PF: Yeah, absolutely. I think it's so helpful in letting people better understand the subject. As you mentioned, we could use that information in a story, but they don't get all that backstory and they don't get the personality of the person coming through. Initially, we were using the podcast to supplement the stories that we were running and we interview a lot of the experts who were featured in the magazine.

Now what's really exciting to see is how Live Happy Now has gone on to become its own entity and to independent of any other stories being done, we've got such a great lineup of experts and people who want to come on the show and talk about what they're doing. I'm always impressed at how open and candid they are. They really develop a relationship with that listener in less than 30 minutes.

[0:05:22.0] DH: They do. You're right. The experts, it's easier for them too. I think there's a bit of a – a bit of a less risk when you get to tell your own story, versus relying on somebody to tell it for you. Frankly, it's more interesting to listen to somebody tell their own story than it is to have somebody – when you tell a great story about yourself and then somebody tries to repeat it, it's never quite has the emotional –

[0:05:44.4] PF: Emotional bite. Or telling a joke. It's like, "Yeah, you almost got that."

[0:05:49.8] DH: You got really, really close. The other thing really about the podcast that's amazed me is simply the amount of reach it's had. I mean, to sit here and know that in a little over two years, almost three at this point I guess for the podcast, we've had more than 2 million downloads. That's amazing.

[0:06:09.9] PF: That's astounding. Those are big numbers.

[0:06:12.6] DH: They really are. Then to be now be available on all the different mediums, I know our reach is going to increase now that we're on Pandora now, we're on all of –

[0:06:22.5] PF: Spotify.

[0:06:23.7] DH: We're on Spotify. We're really anywhere people want to access podcasts. We're there now. To know that we can reach those people who maybe don't know Live Happy Magazine exists, don't know livehappy.com exists, but they're going to take a few moments out of their day and listen to something that they think might enrich their life. I just think that that's wonderful. It really increases our ability to make the world a happier place.

[0:06:45.4] PF: It does. I was at a conference about podcasting probably eight, nine months ago. They were asking what's the subject of your podcast? The basis was trying to figure out if you're relevant or not. Do you even have a market? I said it's Live Happy Now. They were like, "Who wouldn't want to listen to that?" Because who doesn't want to be happy? That makes it pretty easy on our end, because when you get to go on and you get to talk about happiness every week, it's not people are like, "Yeah, not really interested in the happy thing." I think that's really helped us.

[0:07:20.7] DH: Well, and I like the way the podcast has evolved. I mean when this started you're right, we're doing it as supplements to articles. Being that all of us came from the print media and not from the broadcast media, we were really focused on making sure we ask the right question and got the right content, almost trying to structure the podcasts like an article, but we've really evolved it in just having conversations with a lot of these people. Really just

what comes out now is different and it's more personal and it's more engaging. I think it's easier to listen to.

That we've recognized that yes, we need the information, but you also need the personal touch that you get from talking to people. You allow the conversation to go where it's going as opposed to trying to force it into okay, I have these seven points I need this podcast to make.

[0:08:04.7] PF: Right. We even know that as interviewers. When I'm talking to someone and when you or Chris, we know that it's going to be a 20 25-minute show. A lot of times, the files go on for 40 minutes, because we don't have – we're not saying, “Okay, that's the information I wanted. Goodbye. Thanks for being on the show.” We have these conversations. I think that allows us to then just include the very – the best nuggets that they gave us within that show.

[0:08:32.4] DH: Yeah, it does make a difference on our approaches. I'm really proud of it. I'm going to ask you, what is your favorite podcast that we've done? Or favorite two or three. Which ones have you done that you've said, “I am so happy we sat down and did this. This changed my thinking.”

[0:08:49.7] PF: Most recently, I would say Rick Hanson; his new book on resilience. We started this season with him. He's got a new book on resilience, which was really a different style of writing than his previous books. I think that was my favorite one this season, but we also recently did Mary Pipher who she wrote *Reviving Ophelia* and she now has a book called *Women Rowing North*, and it talks about happiness in later life.

We're all going in that direction. We're not getting younger. It was very inspiring and heartwarming to see how women are approaching life in their later years. Instead of being like, “Oh, crap. I'm getting older.” It actually gives you something to look forward to. I think those were two of my favorites and really anything doing with gratitude. You and I talk about this. You and I are both gratitude junkies, so we always end up talking about that anyway.

[0:09:42.2] DH: That's true.

[0:09:43.9] PF: Anytime I have the chance to talk about gratitude, I've learned something and have gained a better grasp of how I can improve my gratitude practice.

[0:09:51.4] DH: Yeah, gratitude is always a big one for me. If nothing else when we talk about it, it's a reminder. I always tell my kids, it's difficult to want something when you're grateful for what you have.

[0:10:01.8] PF: Yeah, that's excellent.

[0:10:03.9] DH: You have to look at it from the standpoint of if I'm so focused on what I don't have, it's impossible to be grateful for what I do have. The flipside is also true. If you're so focused on what you have, it really does take your disappointments, or your desire, or your obsession, because I have young kids so they can get obsessed with wanting whatever the toy is they saw on the commercial 30 seconds ago for the rest of the day. "We got to go buy that." "No, we're not going to go buy that."

Getting everybody focused on gratitude. For me, it's the reminder, always the reminder to talk about. It's almost this huge release comes over me when we start talking about gratitude, because that's like, "Oh, yes. I can remember, or here I have so much to be grateful for in my life." When you don't talk about it, you get away from it. It's really point topic to talk about not just to feel and express, but to actually talk about it.

[0:10:54.9] PF: What's funny is at Live Happy I mean, obviously we're in the business of researching and learning and sharing happiness, but it's still work and it still has those moments where it doesn't necessarily feel happy. I think the gift that I get from doing the podcast is you can't stray too far away from that. You can't talk about happiness and not be happy. That's been helpful.

[0:11:19.3] DH: That has been really helpful. The other change that the podcast brought to my thinking about Live Happy, we're always very conscious of being scientifically-based. We don't want somebody who's just got an idea of how to be happier out there. We want to make sure that when we're sharing something, it's with the scientific backing, whether it's dr. Seligman, or whether it's Tal-Ben Shahar, or whether it's Lee Waters, or whether it's James Pawelski, anybody who's – Alejandro Adler, anybody who's doing good research in the area of well-being, happiness, positive education, strengths, whatever that is, we want to make sure we incorporate those.

In the magazine and online, we are very, very cautious to make sure that we vet everybody and everybody squarely in this space. The podcast has allowed us to talk to and about people who are just fascinating, because of their approach to life. It's not necessarily a happiness scientific talk, but it's they're different because of how they are. I'm thinking about the conversation you had with Colton Moore, the snowmobiler.

[0:12:29.0] PF: Oh, my gosh. What an incredible story.

[0:12:30.9] DH: Right. That's a story about happiness. It's not just the science. We've been able to bring that in. Or I was able to interview Tal-Ben Shahar on his book *Shortcuts* –

[0:12:41.2] PF: Right. That was a fun interview.

[0:12:43.4] DH: Right. About stuff he learned from his barber. Tal of course is a giant in our space, but it really opens your eyes so you can learn a lot about everything through people's personal stories, not just through the science behind them. The ability to take that content and intermix it with a lot of the scientific content is really to me made the podcast better in a lot of ways, because it is that oh, here's something I – or you might be in an emotional interview once, followed by a scientific interview the next time, but they both matter and they both bring meaning to the conversation.

[0:13:18.8] PF: Yeah. It's more multi-dimensional, I think than we were able to be in print, or then even we were in the beginning.

[0:13:25.7] DH: I agree. That's why I say this is my favorite part. This is my favorite thing that we do, because I think it reaches more people and it reaches them differently and it touches them. I'm very grateful for the opportunity to have been able to do this and to really move into something that's an emerging media, but to be successful in it on our first try, which is odd.

[0:13:47.2] PF: One thing that really did strike me, not being political, but things changed in our world around 2016. We noticed that – we felt that with the increase in readership, the increase in listeners, because I think people began looking more seriously for content for things that could help uplift them and could encourage them.

[0:14:11.6] DH: Yeah, I do think that's the case. I think that forget about your politics, just the negative dialog in the media, just the over – I mean, we always – we've talked a lot about and scientists have talked a lot about not exposing yourself to all that negativity. Being careful what you put in your brain. If what you do is you sit down and you watch the evening news every night, you are going to become fearful of that there's a murderer in town. Well, we live in a town of three and a half million people and that really doesn't have anything to do with you personally.

I mean, you feel bad for the people, you have sympathy for the families involved, you have all of that and for the police and everybody who's involved in trying to resolve these issues, but really what is that bad traffic accident have to do with my personal life that I'm watching it every noon, every evening? You're constantly putting bad information in your head anyway. Then the national dialogue turned so combative, and so extreme – both ends extreme.

We had a sea of negativity in 2016 everywhere. I think you're right, people were finally had enough of it and they were trying to get away from it. We were a nice escape, but also a nice tool for a lot of people to combat that negative influence on their life.

[0:15:28.2] PF: Yeah, we're like that little island in the middle of the ocean of negativity.

[0:15:32.1] DH: I keep telling people, don't be scared to be in the Pollyanna in the room.

[0:15:35.8] PF: That's right.

[0:15:36.7] DH: Our nature and our social interactions, we scoff at the person who's always got a positive outlook, but really who do you want to be around?

[0:15:44.8] PF: Oh, my gosh. Yeah, yeah. That's absolutely the case. As we we've evolved, we've changed approach, we've tried some different things, we learned what works, we've seen which topics our listeners want most of. Now we're looking at okay, we've done our first 200 and now we get to move forward. What are you excited about as we look forward and for our next 2,000 episodes?

[0:16:10.1] DH: Well, one of the things I really do want to see us do is find more of those personal stories to bring in on an occasional basis. I don't want them to be all the time, because I do think that we need to be anchored in the science and the how-to. There's so much that we've done on everything from brain chemistry, to how to discover your strengths, to how to spend your time. If anybody tried to do everything on our list, it would take all day. We get that.

I think that you have to emotionally touch people in order for them to remember, for them to learn. I think it's easier to learn if you have an emotional connection. The direction we've gone, having more of those stories I want to continue to grow in that direction and I also want us to not be scared of repeating information, like you and I talked about earlier; gratitude. We talk about it all the time. It hasn't changed. We have no new information about gratitude that we didn't have two years ago. It's all the same information.

We have to continue to have that dialogue. I'd like to see us continue on the vein of not being scared of repeating information, because somebody discovered us yesterday, right? Also bringing more ways to look at it, more angles to look at it and more personal emotional stories.

Of course, the number one thing I'd like to do is to have everybody who listened to this podcast share it with somebody else, share it with five other people. It would be great to have a dialogue around the podcast. It'd be great to have a better dialogue around the podcast on our website, to have more feedback, to have more conversations with our listeners and readers. Finding out more about what they want from us and how we can get better, because you're never done, right? You're always getting better. If you're not getting better, you're getting worse.

[0:17:52.8] PF: Right. That's not the good way to go.

[0:17:54.3] DH: No matter what change go, change happens all the time. I'd like to be involved in a better dialogue with our readers and our listeners and have them help share and shape our content in a way they haven't yet. We need to do more talking about that here at Live Happy and figuring out how we can make that happen.

[0:18:10.2] PF: Well, I am excited. I feel the opportunity to do Live Happy Now has been truly life-changing for me. It's been incredible to be able to talk with some of the people that I've been

able to talk with and to see people respond has been really gratifying. I think it's just been an incredible experience all the way around.

[0:18:29.2] DH: It has been for me as well. It's one of the things in my life I am most proud of. Thank you so much for being our shepherd on it, just in terms of the rest of the world, Paula really does take the lead on the podcast. I started it and I've got my hands in a million different things and she has embraced it and made it ours in a way that I'm really proud of.

[0:18:51.9] PF: We have shared custody now.

[0:18:52.8] DH: We have shared custody. Yeah, but we don't have visitation rights. I guess I have visitation rights. It really has been a joy to watch the entire staff work on it and grow with it. I know it's something we're all proud of.

[0:19:06.4] PF: Yeah. I think we do want to send that message that we're interested in hearing what listeners want and what more things they want, how they want to interact with us. I think we really – it's not a one-sided dialogue, even though it's just us talking right now. There really is a lot more to it and we depend on them to give us feedback and to participate in this conversation, so we can keep it going.

[0:19:27.0] DH: Absolutely. I mean, the one disadvantage of this not being a live radio show is we can't take callers, right?

[0:19:32.5] PF: Yeah. It's a little tough that way.

[0:19:35.0] DH: It is, but it is always a joy to do these and I always get – I get energized just by having the conversations with the folks we get to have conversations with. It energizes my whole week, my whole month and I hope our listeners get that as well. Like you said, reach out to us, e-mail us, log on to the website and comment. We are always wanting your feedback.

[END OF EPISODE]

[0:19:59.1] PF: That was Live Happy CEO, Deborah Heisz. If you'd like to join the conversation and we do hope you will, please visit us at livehappynow.com to leave your comments, or e-mail

us at editor@livehappy.com. We hope you're already a subscriber to Live Happy Now. If you're not, please find us on the Pandora Podcast Network, Spotify, SoundCloud, iTunes or Google Play. Just look for us on your favorite platform and then hit subscribe so you'll never miss an episode.

That is all we have time for this week, so we'll meet you back here again next week for an all-new episode. Until then, this is Paula Felps reminding you to make every day a happy one.

[END]