Love at First Startup: Kass and Mike Lazerow on Navigating Entrepreneurship

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In this episode of The Speed of Culture podcast, Suzy founder and host Matt Britton sits down with entrepreneurs and investors Kass and Mike Lazerow. The Lazerows explore the realities of startups, sharing their journey from founding social media marketing platform Buddy Media to navigating the challenges of venture capital. They discuss the importance of trusting your gut, the value of resilience, and strategies for maintaining strong partnerships in both business and life.

“It was never about the money,” Mike says on the podcast. “We look at investing as our way to help entrepreneurs and align interest. We win together, we lose together.”

Mike Lazerow, known for his pioneering work in social media marketing, and Kass Lazerow, with her extensive experience in strategy and operational leadership, have co-founded several successful companies. Their collaborative approach and unique perspectives on business and technology have positioned them as thought leaders in the venture capital space. Together,

they offer deep insights into the intersection of technology, consumer behavior, and business growth.

Listen to Kass and Mike Lazerow on The Speed of Culture podcast to gain insights into the realities of entrepreneurship, the art of pivoting, and the power of strong partnerships.

Key takeaways:

00:00:57-00:02:06 Shoveling $h!t: A Love Story – Kass and Mike share the motivation behind their new book, Shoveling $h!t: A Love Story, aimed at guiding aspiring entrepreneurs through the tough terrain of building and growing a business. Drawing from their own journey, the book shares valuable lessons and insights, emphasizing that entrepreneurs who embrace the grind and love "shoveling" are unstoppable.

00:02:06-00:41:13 The Reality of Entrepreneurship – Entrepreneurship is often glamorized on social media, focusing on the "sexy" aspects. However, the reality includes significant challenges like raising funds, hiring and firing employees, and dealing with setbacks. Initial funding is just the beginning of a demanding path requiring continuous adaptation and resilience. He shares personal stories about the emotional and mental toll of building a business, emphasizing the importance of perseverance and having a solid support system.

00:05:21-00:06:25 The Art of Pivoting – The Lazerows share their experience with Buddy Media, emphasizing the critical importance of knowing when to pivot. Facing challenges with early iterations of their company, they had to shift their focus and strategy. Recognizing and responding to what wasn't working was key to their eventual success. They stress that regularly evaluating strategies and being ready to make necessary changes can be the difference between success and failure in business. The couple highlights the emotional

resilience required to pivot effectively, as it often involves tough decisions and the willingness to abandon initial visions in favor of more viable paths.

00:06:25-00:08:17 Building and Selling Buddy Media – Buddy Media began as a small operation and eventually became a major player in the social media marketing space. Kass and Mike share the initial struggles of launching the company, from working out of their apartment to securing their first round of funding. They discuss pivotal moments that defined Buddy Media's growth, including key partnerships, strategic pivots, and significant milestones. The eventual sale of Buddy Media to Salesforce in 2012 highlights the emotions, negotiations, and strategic decisions involved in the acquisition. This sale left a significant impact on their personal and professional lives, as well as the broader tech industry.

00:09:37 The Foundation of Their Partnership – Trust and complementary skills are crucial in Kass and Mike's partnership. Their ability to work independently while maintaining a shared vision has been key to their success. Mutual respect on a professional level further strengthens their collaboration. The couple emphasizes the importance of having a partner with complementary skills to foster a productive, trusting, and effective working relationship.

00:20:46-00:21:21 Creating a Positive Work Environment – Kass discusses the significance of building a cohesive team and fostering a positive work culture. By understanding employees' personal challenges and aligning them with the right roles, companies can enhance productivity and job satisfaction.

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