

14: How to Build a Business Without Social Media with Kate Kordsmeier



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With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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Welcome to *The Future Coach*, the podcast for independent coaches, in-house coaches, and the coach curious. I'm your host Kara Loewentheil, founder of The Socratic Coaching Academy. If you want to chart a new path, uplevel your skills, and build a successful career around coaching, you're in the right place. Let's go.

Hello, my friends. I'm so excited for this conversation today because so many people I talk to who want to be coaches have this huge fear around having to show up on social media. So since I do have a social media presence, I don't feel like I can convince you all that it's not so crucial, even though I had very few Instagram followers for most of my career and really didn't build my business that way.

But I decided to bring in an expert who literally teaches this and will affirm for you that it's not required and how it's possible to build your business without it. So, Kate, welcome to The Future Coach. Will you tell everyone who you are and what you do and brag about yourself a little?

Kate Kordsmeier: Yeah, thank you so much for having me. My name is Kate Kordsmeier. I'm the founder of Success with Soul. And yes, it's true. I have made multiple millions of dollars without social media. I quit in 2021. So this is going on five-plus years now. And you truly don't need it. It is an optional tool that you can use if you like it. So if you like it and it's working for you, more power to you. And if not, it's just one marketing tool, right? It's not the only tool in the toolbox.

So, yeah, I've been doing this for, well, I've been self-employed for 16 years now, and this is my third business. And I pretty much built the whole thing without social. But I sold my previous business for multiple six figures, and now I've worked with thousands of clients. I'm trying to think of, like, what are the braggy things I could say about myself? I don't know. I love my job. I love this work, and it's so much more enjoyable not having to be on that hamster wheel.

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Kara: Love it. So one of the things I love is that I think some people are like, okay, I could make a living with social media without it, but it would be more if I were on it. But your revenue actually grew after you quit social media. So I'd love to hear just in a starting point, what was your relationship with social media like before you quit and then what led you to quit?

Kate: My relationship with social media has always been very fraught. I never really liked doing it. I think when Instagram stories first came out, I was like, "Ooh, this is fun and different," and then quickly was like, "Oh my God, I have to live on my phone. Everything has to be documented. I don't want this." And of course, all the things that we know now and studies have shown about it being addictive and damaging to our mental health.

And I just thought my brain is my most important asset in my business and life, and I'm doing these things. It's like smoking knowing that it's bad for you. And it was sort of the same way. I just got to this tipping point with social where I was like, this is killing me. I hate it, and it's distracting me from things that I think might actually be moving the needle more.

And so when I quit, it was Thanksgiving of 2021, and I was just like, "I need a break." I didn't quit with this idea that I'm going to never come back to this and this is going to be the secret. I was just like, "I need a detox." And so I quit and just said, "I'm just deleting the apps from my phone through the end of the year." It was like just over a month, I can do that. And then what happened was that after a month or so of not being on it, I was like, "Oh my God, I feel so much better, so much lighter. I have so much more capacity.

I'm not in all this comparison and anxiety and FOMO and feeling bad about myself all the time." And nothing happened, like, business-wise. There wasn't this immediate drop. There also wasn't like an immediate boost. It just sort of, stayed the same. So then I was like, "Well, I wonder what would happen if I kept this going." And so maybe I'm not going to add the apps back now, even though it's January 1st.

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And then what I started seeing happening is that because of all this increased capacity, because of all of this brain space that I had opened up and not giving my brain cigarettes, basically, I started having more success in other areas. I had more time to do the things that actually did matter. I had the capacity to be able to figure out what those things were. And so I just started doubling down on what I was already doing that was working, but I didn't have the capacity for it before.

And that first year of being off social, my business grew 165%. And I was already making multiple six figures. So this wasn't like I was making a thousand dollars and then I made two thousand dollars. So after that first year, then I was, like, just fully convinced. And I always say, like, "I can change my mind at any point. If I ever want to go back to social, I can." But it's been almost six years, and that point has never come.

Kara: Amazing. I actually took social media off my phone a few months ago, and I felt conflicted in the sense that I've learned a lot on social media. I think there's certainly like accounts that I found really educational and supportive. And as a business owner, there's, like, always so many things you could be doing, and I was just feeling like there's too many inputs happening. Like, I can't keep up with all the inputs, and scrolling never feels good.

And I really, it's fascinating to me how much it's not just social media, at least for me, it's like also the phone itself, because I didn't delete my accounts. I can go to Facebook or Instagram on my laptop, and I go maybe once a day for five minutes each to, like, because I still have people who I know who DM me or whatever. But it just doesn't have the same feeling. It's not the same effect, right? When you're not holding it on the phone in front of your face. It's so fascinating. Anyway.

So, I'm sure you had some fears around quitting it as a business owner. What were you worried would happen if you weren't online all the time?

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Kate: Well, I definitely had some fears, but I had this growing suspicion that it wasn't actually doing as much for me as I thought maybe it was, or as we've been led to believe. So I will say that I didn't have a ton of fear. I had a little bit more of an experimental, like, "I wonder what would happen if I didn't post on social anymore." That was more of my mindset going into it. But I mean, of course, especially long term, like, once I was like, "Well, I'm not going to come back now for a year and see what happens."

It was like, "Well, what if things dry up or what if my launches are smaller now because I'm not posting about them on social or whatever? What if people forget about me?" But I found that pretty much for everything, there was, like, a solution for it, or it really wasn't a thing. And I had just been led to believe that it was. I mean, Meta is very good at marketing, and so they have really done a great job convincing all of us that we need to be on here all the time.

But for certain things, like, okay, I'm on this podcast, and let's say we're not talking about how I'm not on social, but I'm talking about something else. And the first thing people are going to do if they're interested in learning more about me is they're going to open up Instagram and type my name in. And I didn't want to have this, like, dead account that looks like, "Oh, maybe she's not doing this anymore," or, "You know, she's not really active here," whatever.

So I just created an Instagram, you know, we call it, like, the nine grid, that's basically just a mini website that when people land on it, it has nine posts that direct them outside of Instagram. And the last post says, "I'm not here. You can't reach me here. Here's where you can find me. Here's why I'm not." So now people, if they go to search me, they don't find this dead account. They find an account that's very intentionally not posting there, but here's how I can help you elsewhere.

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And that's really solved, like, the biggest problem I think that you could have of just like, that's why I didn't just delete my account. I deleted the app from my phone, but I kept my profile.

Kara: I think that's such a smart strategy. So for people who are worried, who are like, "Well, I don't want to have to show up on social media, but I know that people use it as a search engine, or that's where people go to look up." I think that's such a smart move. It is interesting. I think that idea that, like, we've been convinced that social media is so important for your business. And for a category of people, that's true. If you are an influencer on social media, that's very important for your business.

And you know, we keep our social media for various reasons, but when I look at the statistics of, like, where are most of my customers coming from, they're not actually coming from social media. And we grew our following a lot in the last year, I think, by 50% in the last eight months, and it hasn't really made a measurable difference on my business. So, like, I think just that, for those of you who are listening to this because you don't want to have to be on social media, just remembering that, like, the thing you keep hearing that you need to do that is just propaganda. That's just marketing and messaging, right?

Kate: Exactly. Something you said, I just want to touch on real quick, was that the influencer model works really well on social media because they're paid by the eyeball and not by the conversion necessarily. And so one thing that we talk about a lot in my community is that if you want an influencer business model, like, that's fine. You can go do that. But that's not the model that coaches are running. Like, coaches are not influencers.

We make money by getting people to pay us for our services and our products. And Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, whatever, is really not a great way to sell those types of things, especially organically because as we've

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seen, like, reach has dropped so significantly year after year. And there's studies in 2026 now saying that organic reach is down to 2%.

And one of the things that I always say that people are like, "Oh my God, I didn't think about it this way," is that means there's a 98% failure rate on organic social media posts. And so, I mean, it really is now, like, shouting into the void that even the people who chose to follow you are not going to see your content.

Kara: Yeah, it's interesting if you think about it in the sense of, like, you're using an app that already has a business model, which is to promote paid traffic. So if you are on there, you're trying to promote your business organically, that is actually at odds with the primary business function of that app. And I think it's also a good specification to call out that when we talk about using social media, we're talking about organic social media, having to be on there with your face, talking about your life, whatever.

Paid ads and paid traffic and using social media as a tool where you run your ads, I think is a different thing, and you can do that without having a sort of personal social media presence that depends on your influencer style brand.

Kate: Right, 100%. And I will say I've made multiple six figures a year without even running ads. In the last couple of years, I do run ads on meta platforms now. However, it is exactly what you said, a very different experience. I never even log into the app. I create my ads in Ads Manager. And I always use the analogy of, like, if I run an ad on the side of a highway on a billboard, it doesn't mean I'm also sitting in traffic, like, driving on that highway. It's the same thing.

If my ad is in Times Square, it doesn't mean I'm there with the crowd. It's just a platform to put your advertising. So that's a very different experience than organically posting new content every day.

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Kara: So what strategies are you using beyond paid ads in your business that take the place of all that time that people are spending talking into the void?

Kate: So one of the ways, which is how you found me, is that I work with partners. And so I just did a partnership with Jenna Kutcher. I have partnerships every month with different other complimentary business owners. And so I borrow other people's audiences to grow my own. And so that's been one of my most effective strategies over the last couple of years is partnering. And that could be doing a free list swap with somebody who has a similar audience or a list size, you know, too.

It could be doing like JV webinars, which is the strategy that I've mostly been doing. It could just be contributing to different events, you know, being a speaker at a summit or contributing to a bundle. But some things like that where you're just collaborating with people, and it's all borrowing other people's audiences. And that's my number one strategy for growing without social.

Kara: And so for people who are listening who are like, "Oh, but no one knows who I am, and I don't have a big audience, and I don't." Right? Jenna Kutcher's not going to have me on. What do you say to that?

Kate: It took me seven years to get Jenna Kutcher to have me on. So it does take time. It's definitely not going to be possible for you to get that level of partnership on day one.

But there are so many opportunities for people who are brand new, who have no following so to speak. And that's, like, bundles and summits are one of my favorite strategies for people like that. I think it's the fastest, freest way to grow your email list is to speak at summits. In particular, I've found that's a really powerful strategy to grow your email list quickly

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because thousands of people come to these virtual summits. You either do a live talk, or sometimes it's a pre-recorded presentation or something.

And then you have a freebie that goes with your talk, and people opt into your email list from that. And so I've grown my email list by 10,000 people probably at this point by doing bundles and summits over the last year or two. And they're not necessarily even asking you, "How many people are on your email list? How many followers do you have?" Your content is what is helpful to the summit hosts. So that's a great way to get started even if you don't know anybody.

Kara: I think even as somebody who has to create a lot of content for now two brands, if somebody who doesn't have a big following, they're not super known, but they come to me with a really good pitch, I am open to it. If you can, if I don't have to write my newsletter for a week or like if I can interview you on the podcast and it saves me four hours of my week writing a podcast, like, I'm open to it, as long as that content is really targeted.

So, I think if you are just starting out, yeah, you might not get on Jenna Kutcher. You might not get on my podcast right away. But there are people at every stage and every level who are looking for valuable content for their audience. And when you're just starting out, you don't need to be on a 100,000 distribution email list newsletter.

Like, you're trying to get your first few clients. You can swap with another friend, and you each have 300 people on your email list, or you have 20 people, whatever it is. It's just like anything else. You start small, you build the skill, and then you can grow it. And it's not generally realistic or useful to be, like, thinking about how do I get onto this one of the top platform creator audiences in my first year.

Kate: Yeah, exactly. And guest podcasting is, I'm glad you mentioned that because that's another great way where again, borrowing other people's

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audiences. And most podcast hosts aren't really that interested in how many followers you have or what the size of your email list is. Like you said, they're interested in, "Is this good content that will fill a space on my podcast that I need to fill?"

And so if you can pitch somebody a great idea that makes their life and job easier, it's going to be a yes, whether you have one follower or a million followers. That's been my general experience. Of course, I'm sure there are some shows that do ask that, but that's more the exception than the norm. And then likewise, SEO has been how I built my first business was a traditional blog. We grew it to 250,000 page views a month.

And I brought what I learned about SEO, which is search engine optimization for anybody not familiar, into this next coaching business that I had that I have currently. And now there's GEO, which is basically how to get cited by AI tools because obviously AI has really changed the search landscape. But that would just be putting out your own content, whether it's a blog, a podcast, or a YouTube channel.

All three of those are search-optimized channels and platforms. And so that means people find you because they're actually typing something in and you're going to show up. And now whether that's on page one of Google or on the recommendations in chat GPT, there's a strategy behind that. And that's another great way. It's more of a slow burn, which is why I kind of put that second.

I like the, "Here's a fast way to grow your email list by a hundred people tomorrow." But SEO, GEO is definitely kind of like my slow burn back-end strategy that I've used for years as well.

Kara: And you talk about that as something that compounds as opposed to, like, you spend time putting up an Instagram story, it's gone in 24 hours.

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Whereas if you put that time into SEO. So can you talk a little bit about why that compounds better over time?

Kate: Yeah, absolutely. Well, right, as we know on Instagram, things have a shelf life of really, like, an hour now. But let's call it even 24 hours. It's all about what's new, what's freshest. And search content, content found through search engines isn't necessarily about what's freshest. I mean, that might be a factor in certain cases, but it's really about what's the best content, what content answers this question in the most useful way.

And so I get traffic to blog posts that I wrote years ago. And it's because they're ranking, they are showing up in these tools, they're formatted and optimized in the way that the AI robots can read and figure out, "Okay, this is where I need to send people." So like, if you search in chat GPT, "who's a business coach that teaches marketing without social media," I'm the first result that shows up in that.

And it's because I've structured my website to be able to do that. And so it doesn't matter how old the post I wrote about that was. It matters that the post is helpful, and now it can send people there. And sometimes the longer, like, the more traffic something gets over time, the more people start linking to it, the higher you can go in the ranking. So sometimes, like, longevity actually works in your favor as opposed to social where it's the total opposite.

Kara: Yeah, it's interesting to think about the idea that we're all so convinced that now things move so fast and we have to keep up with them. But again, that's something that makes us think, "Oh, I have to be on social media and using that all the time," right? It's useful to the meta overlords if we have that belief that we need to always be doing more and more, creating more and more because everything's moving so fast.

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So you also, although this isn't what you teach on, you talk and you've documented sort of building your business with chronic illness, and I would love to talk about that as well. I'm somebody who has chronic pain, and a lot of people who are in my audience who want to become coaches worry that they have chronic pain, they're neurodivergent, they're in perimenopause, they're whatever, that they imagine, "Well, I need to be a 25-year-old with unlimited energy who can work 18 hours a day in order to start a business.

And now if I'm older, if I have health limitations, if I have trouble with focus and executive function, whatever, I'm not going to be able to do it." So not that you can speak to all of those, but I think it's so helpful to hear from people who have a substantial impediment of that kind and are still able to be really successful.

Kate: Yeah, absolutely. Well, just for my personal background, I have OCD, so that's my neurodivergence. I also have family members, my kids, my husband with autism, with ADHD. So we just have a lot of caregiving.

Kara: I always say in our house, there's not a neurotypical person in here.

Kate: No, that is very true. I'm pretty sure even the dog is, you know, got something. So there's a lot of caregiving around neurodivergence. And I also have chronic illnesses. I've been diagnosed with POTS, I have PCOS, I have thyroid issues, I have MCAS. I mean, I feel like sometimes I'm just like a walking acronym.

Kara: That's the neurodivergent cluster. Like, hypermobility, MCAS, POTS, that's all...

Kate: Exactly. You know it. And I have kids that are six and eight. So I don't have unlimited capacity to work 24/7, nor do I want to. So I work about 25 hours a week, and I take a lot of time off throughout the year as well. And

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also sometimes the time off is not scheduled. Sometimes it's like, "Well, I'm having a panic attack today," or "my energy is so low. I'm blacking out every time I stand up. So this is going to be a bed day."

So I can definitely relate to that. And I've really tried to build my business and then help other women that are struggling with similar things build their business in a way that can support that and isn't necessarily competing. And so, of course, I always have to give the caveat, like, you still have to do some work. You know, the same way that when people hear, "oh, no social media," that does not mean no marketing ever.

It just means no marketing on social. You still have to put yourself out there and do the vulnerable things of asking people for money and asking people, you know, "can I come on your podcast," and things like that. So there is still that piece of it. But I will say the two things that have helped me the most with this is not being on social because you have no idea until you do a true audit how much time and energy and brain space being on social takes up, not just actually doing the posts and making the reels or whatever, but thinking about it constantly and the, "oh, do I need to post about this?"

And how did that post perform? And oh, I forgot I needed to document this so I could..." you know, it's just this constant barrage. And so again, you free up so much capacity to do other things that are actually more efficient, more effective. And then the second piece, and I don't know how you or your audience feels about this, but is AI. And I have heavily relied on AI over the last few years to do a lot for me.

And some of it is just helping me manage all of my busy brain thoughts and, like, make a plan for things and figure out where I should focus and what's working and what's not. And now, like, this year it's been a lot of, like, actually delegating the work to AI. And so I used to have five W-2

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employees on my team, and it was very stressful, high pressure. It was not the business model for me.

And now I have one part-time contractor and like a hundred AI employees, and I'm making more money than ever before. I'm having more fun than ever before. It definitely works well for my OCD because I'm more in control than I was with... So yeah, that's been a huge piece of how I'm able to work 25 hours a week and still have a really successful, high profit business.

Kara: And for those listening who are now overwhelmed with thinking, "Oh my God, I have to learn all of AI," you also need to remember you are at a certain point in your career. When you're starting out, you don't need five W-2 employees either. You don't need this huge team. But I think that one of the things you said is really important is people equate working hard with hours worked and even, like, effort put out.

And when we say, like, "No, you are going to need to actually work hard," it's much more about taking focused action and actually putting yourself out there and focusing on, I mean, I think it's harder sometimes to focus on just the few things that will move the needle than doing a million things because you have unlimited energy and you're 25. But only a few of those things are really necessary.

So before we wrap up, I want to ask you, let's say someone is brand new. Okay, so like they just got certified, they don't have an audience, they don't have an email list, they don't have a platform. What is the first thing they should do?

Kate: Okay, brand new, I would say the first thing that you should do, the first thing I would do is put up a nine grid on Instagram so you can just check that box, delete the app from your phone, and be done with it. So then you don't have to worry about that ever again.

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And then I would set up some kind of freebie to tripwire funnel in your business so that you have a way for people to join your email list, and then as soon as they join, you're able to sell them something, low ticket that gets them a quick win, an easy yes. And then that will upsell them into most likely, like, your coaching packages or something that's higher touch, higher ticket down the road.

Kara: So let's just break that down for folks who may not know what all of that means. So your nine grid on Instagram is, it's just when you look at an Instagram page, there can be nine posts on it. And those are just going to have some little bit of teaching or content. So you are going to make nine posts, but then you're done.

Kate: Yes.

Kara: And then it just says, "Like, come find me here. Here's where you can learn more," etc. And then that's going to link to a page that you can also share with people through your network, share with people through anyone you know you can email, through a, whatever it is. And that is going to have some sort of free downloadable resource, like a video or a workbook or whatever, that teaches something.

And then from that, you're going to send emails that would sell something low cost, like ten dollars, 15 dollars, something a little bit bigger than the free thing. And then you're going to invite people to have a consult with you for one-to-one coaching.

Kate: Yes. Essentially, that's the method that I teach. I do have what we call a tripwire, which is as soon as they opt into your email list, the thank you page for, like, "you're in," that's the first time that we present them with this low-cost offer. We talk about, I have this feminist flywheel, which is kind of my methodology for running this social free business. And the way that it

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differs is that a lot of people say first you attract, then you nurture, then you convert.

And I say, "No, you attract, then you convert." I want to get people to buy for me the first day that they hear about me, the first time that they're on my email list because the people that are the most likely to join your higher touch stuff are people who have already bought something from you, already gotten a quick win. And then they're in the habit of buying from you.

They're not going to be surprised when all of a sudden you send an email selling them something. I'm a business. This is how this works.

So having that tripwire page is really important. And then yes, I have a course called Evergreen ecosystem, and it teaches, there's lots of different funnels that I help people set up. I know you're asking, like, what's the first thing to do? So I don't need to get into all of them, but that's sort of where we would go from there is, you have the tripwire and then they get put into these email funnels.

And each one has a different purpose, but essentially they're all selling them into whatever it is that you sell. If it's a one-on-one coaching package, and it could be that you have a call up front, like a consult, or not. Maybe it's a course, maybe it's a group program, however you want to sell it.

Kara: So if people want to check out more about this program you offer, learn more about you, where can they find you? We know that if we go to Instagram, we'll get the nine grid that will send us to where we need to go. But where could people find you directly?

Kate: Yeah, absolutely. Well, successwithsoul.co is my website. So that's the best place to go. And on there, you'll see, I think this is really the best way to do it, is because you'll see a bunch of different opt-ins that you can get a free resource from me. Just opt into one of those. You'll get on my

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email list, you'll see my tripwire funnel, and you don't have to buy anything, but you can just see how it works.

And then you'll start getting emails from me, and you'll be able to kind of watch both as, like, funnel hacking and an observer, seeing how I set this up. And then also there, you know, maybe some opportunities that you feel like, "oh, this is exactly what I need."

Kara: Love it. Thanks so much for coming on, Kate.

Kate: Thanks for having me.