

MASTERS by Winn Claybaugh, September 2022
Dhomonique Murphy
The Right Method



Dhomonique Murphy is an Emmy-winning TV journalist, bestselling author, and the founder/president of The Right Method, a full-service creative agency specializing in “Telling the World’s Stories the RIGHT Way.” Interviewed by **Winn Claybaugh**, Dhomonique embodies the power of storytelling as she shares her personal journey with the intention of helping others and teaches companies about branding and marketing. With her messages of “attitude is everything” and “chase excellence,” Dhomonique tells companies how to be memorable, relatable, and authentic to build a marketing plan that captures attention.

WC: Hey everybody, Winn Claybaugh here and welcome to this incredible issue of MASTERS. And I always want MASTERS to be video or audio, but I sometimes want it to be video, especially today, because I’m sitting with this incredible, beautiful woman by the name of Dhomonique Murphy. So, before I tell you more about who she is, Dhomonique, just welcome to MASTERS.

DM: Oh, my goodness. I have goosebumps, Winn. This is such an incredible opportunity. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

WC: It is a great opportunity because I have a large stage that I’ve been trying to build up for over 20 years and any time that I can use my power, my stage, my influence to introduce people like you—because you’ve been doing the same thing and the audience that you have to connect this. And for me to share your wonderful messages, the power that you have, is just such a pleasure and a privilege for me today. So, thank you in advance for all of that.

DM: Oh, I feel the same way, so right back at you. It’s a mutual appreciation society today, Winn.

WC: Well, I’m going to read this. So, Dhomonique is a three-time Emmy-award-winning TV journalist turned agency founder and entrepreneur with over 20 years of on-camera experience. I got to watch some of your interviews, some of the stages that you are on, you’re just right at home everywhere you go. She’s a nationally recognized speaker and interviewer, strategic advisor, bestselling author, Mrs. Virginia American 2020. You’ve got to watch those videos! And a highly sought-out expert who helps corporations, government institutions, individuals, and companies capture attention, which I want to talk about that; how you capture attention. She helps people protect their reputation and brand, reach larger audiences, and close more sales through what she calls the RIGHT approach, which we’re going to get into. Obviously, I’m reading this because I

have to fit all of this in. Dhomonique is the founder and president of The Right Method, which was established in 2013 and is one of only a handful of Black-owned, women-owned creative agencies in the world. Dhomonique has been seen on some of the largest stages and media platforms, including *The Steve Harvey Show*, *Essence*, *New York Times*, HSN, *Entrepreneur*, *Success*, NBC, ABC, Fox, CBS. I mean, this just goes on and on. Congratulations. Oh, one more thing before we jump into this interview: Dhomonique is also a recipient of the 2020 National Salute to Excellence Award from the National Association of Black Journalists. So, oh my gosh, how does it make you feel when somebody rattles off and reads all of those accomplishments?

DM: [Laughs] You know, it's interesting. I think, just like you, Winn—I mean, obviously you have an encyclopedia yourself when it comes to accolades. It's one of those things where you sit back and oftentimes you don't actually listen to it because it's so familiar. Today I actually am sitting here with the camera turned off so, I'm actually even more—my senses are more heightened and so it was actually nice hearing that because so often individuals who are go-getters, they don't stop and spend a minute to say, "Wow, that is kind of cool." Right? We're on to the next thing, on to the next thing. So, I'm honored. I feel so grateful for those opportunities in life. And I have to say, nothing happens solo. Anyone who says, "I did it, I did it," is not being accurate because there's always a team behind individuals who are successful. So, I'm just grateful to surround myself with an amazing circle, amazing network, and I'm just really honored for the success that has come.

WC: What does that look like for you, in surrounding yourself with the right people, attracting the right people?

DM: Yeah, you know, in life you have to take an audit of the people who you surround yourself with. I like to say oftentimes you have to clip your dead ends every now and then, and I'm not talking about your hair. So, in life, you are surrounded with two types of people: people who are either energy givers—they make you feel good, they make you come alive, they support you, they're your people. Or energy suckers—people who will say negative things, people who tear you down, people who will make those little jokes that have a little bit of truth in them. You know what I'm talking about. Like, "Oh, you look really happy today." You know, things like that where there's a little bit of a negative connotation there. Those are what we call energy suckers. So, in life, just like Zig Ziglar talks about taking a shower repeatedly—you have to do it every day to maintain cleanliness—the same is true with your mindset. The same is true with your circle. You have to be very cautious with who you allow around you because if you want to be a success story, you have to surround yourself with people who think differently. You have to surround yourself with people who want to see you win, who are not jealous, who don't want to see failure. It's just not an option. That's what has to happen if you want to be successful. Also, surrounding yourself with people who make you happy, which is also an energy giver. So, Winn, I know you're a dad of—a beautiful father, by the way. For the audience, before this interview started

I witnessed this beautiful moment with Winn and his daughter and it was so sweet and she was there supporting Dad and she was right by his shoulder and not at one point did Winn say, "Okay, I gotta go. Alright honey, bye." Like not once. And I'm very sensitive to things like that because I'm a mother as well and so often when you look at people who are entrepreneurs, when they have a call or when they have a meeting or a Zoom or a podcast, that takes precedence over the family. You see it all the time. And so, I have to spotlight you, Winn, quickly, because that was something that was so powerful for me before this interview started, seeing you as that father figure and just embracing your daughter and spending the time with her and even giving her that sweet little kiss before she walked away. It was really cool to see, so a shout out to you on that but—

WC: You're so good at what you do because you've already turned the tables and you've already got me crying here—

DM: Oh, Winn.

WC: —with your beautiful words because, yeah, I think that leaders are transparent and I read that in the work that you do and as some of the things that you focus on and transparency is part of your content, your mission statement. And I think that we focus so much on our performance onstage and we forget about our performance offstage. We lose credibility offstage because we forget about the value of being a good dad and a good human being and being transparent and the difficult task of clipping your dead ends, as you say. That's not easy. Surrounding yourself with the people that have made you who you are today, that keep you on track—and by the way, we all need that. That's not an easy process.

DM: Oh, it's not easy at all. No, no, no, and it's extremely hard, especially if you've never done it. And so, it's one of those things oftentimes people will say, Okay, Dhomonique, I agree. I have people in my life who are sucking my energy but what do I do? It's my mom, it's my brother, it's my husband, it's my child. What do I do?" And I actually have a solution that I teach everyone that asks me this question. And essentially what you do is you take a piece of paper and you draw a line top to bottom, like in the middle of the piece of paper. And on one side, you write LOVE, and on the other side you write MALICE. Everything in life is done out of love or it's done out of malice. And you start to make a list. Because oftentimes what we perceive as someone who's draining us and they're negative, the reason why they're doing it, when you do this exercise, you find is actually out of love. So, that parent who might say to you, "Hey, you really shouldn't be an entrepreneur. Hey, you really shouldn't do that, you're going to invest this in what? I don't think that makes sense." They're not doing it because they want to see you fail. They're doing it because they're trying to protect you. So, that parent who might be draining your energy because they're telling you not to do something that you want to do is not necessarily malice. Usually, it's because they love you and they just have never done that themselves, so they don't have a full understanding of what that actually means. So, when you do the exercise

you do it per person and you say, “Love, malice? Okay, this person, when I post on social media, never likes my posts or they say something negative.” That is malice. “This person tells me to be careful, be careful all the time. I don’t like it but they keep telling me to be careful.” That’s probably out of love. So, when I became an entrepreneur, I had people in my family who were like, “Oh, are you sure you want to do that? It’s not really safe.” Really? That was based on their experience. So, what you have to do in those situations is say, “You know what? I love you and I’m going to do this because it’s what I need to do to set my soul on fire and we’re going to go at this full tilt and see what happens.” Now, you don’t have to be negative back but you have to stand your own ground and if that means taking two steps away and saying, “Hey, I love you. I’ll be over here and I’m not going to share information with you as I move through this journey.” That is okay but you have to, you have to, have to, have to surround yourself with people who think like you. And if you want to be successful—let me put a caveat on there—who are winners’ mindset. Because there’s a lot of people who are in negativity mindset, crabs in a barrel: blame, shame, justification. Ninety-five percent of people in this world live below the line in blame, shame, and justification. Only five— five percent of people live above the line in accountability and responsibility. I challenge you to be in that five percent. Be in the five percent that thinks differently, that embrace each other, that hold each other up, and that are success mindset. It’s about playing big. But if you have someone in your family, just to clarify, Winn, who is saying, “Hey, be careful, be careful, I don’t know,” and they’re draining you, you have to do the exercise and identify are they being malicious or are they just trying to protect you because they love you? And there’s a very big difference but the water often gets muddied until people do this exercise.

WC: Wow, that is just such great, great information and great input. So that we don’t respond—because they’re not coming from malice, they’re coming from love, and we don’t want to respond with malice. We don’t want to respond with our fear but respond with love. So, that’s what you’re teaching people to do. So, thank you. I want to switch gears here, a little bit. So, talk to us about The Right Method. And by the way, just so people know, you can go to therightmethod.com to learn more. But this is this dedicated, very talented—you even said Emmy-winning group of people that you have gathered together and you believe in transparency. I love that you talk a lot about storytelling, which I also want to get into. I believe that the best teachers and mentors and parents and heroes are storytellers. So, the fact that you have included storytelling as part of your plan to help companies and individuals build their brands, I think that that’s wonderful. But go back and share with us exactly what does The Right Method mean? What’s that all about?

DM: Sure, sure. The Right Method is a paradox. There is no “one size fits all” right method. You have to find what’s right for you. We pride ourselves on telling the world’s stories the right way and we specialize in six divisions, which is public relations, communications, video and photo production, marketing, social media, and executive presence. The reason why The Right Method was created is

because anyone who is looking to reach a larger audience—we call it scaling. Anyone who’s looking to scale, they have to be visible. And I’m going to give you a formula of mine that I teach everybody that I work with because it really simplifies the whole process and what it is, is: visibility equals credibility, which equals profitability. Visibility is being seen and being heard. Being seen and being heard. Visibility equals credibility. The more you are seen, the more you are heard, the more credible you become. You become an authority, you become an influencer, you gain the attention of an audience. And what happens when you have the attention? You convert. You profit exponentially. So, a lot of times people come and they say, “I want to make more money. I want to grow. I want more money, more money, more money.” And I always smile and I give them the quote from Earl Nightingale which is, “The only people who make money work in a mint. The rest of us must earn money.” And the way we earn money is by providing products and/or services that are needed and useful. So, when people are looking to earn money, the thing they need to focus on is not money but rather visibility. And I’ll give you a real-life example. Let’s say I was to tell you, Winn, think of an auto insurance company, any auto insurance company—

WC: Okay.

DM: —in the world, okay? Name one.

WC: Oh my gosh, the one with the duck.

DM: Okay, Aflac [*laughs*].

WC: Okay, got it, got it.

DM: [*Dhomonique quacks “Aflac” the way the duck in the commercial does.*] So, you know, I don’t work for Aflac and no one here works for Aflac on this call; neither you nor myself. We don’t work for Aflac but yet you thought about them. So, they’re a solution to a problem and they’re not even here, and that’s the goal of every company. You want to be a solution to your avatar’s problem when you’re not even there. You want to be the person they think of when they need your help. The way that you become that person is through visibility. So, on the flip side, let’s say I was to tell your audience that I started a new company and it’s called Dhomonique’s Auto. [*Sings*] Dhom’s Auto [*laughs*].

WC: I love it.

DM: Right? Now the reality is—by the way that’s not a company, just so you guys know. Don’t Google “Dhom’s Auto.” But let’s say, for the sake of this conversation, let’s say it was a real company. Most of you would either just say, “Uh, I’ve never heard of it, no,” or you might look it up and you wouldn’t really see anything about Dhomonique’s Auto. So, chances are—and those chances are like 99.99999 percent—that you’re going to go with the company you thought of with the duck as opposed to Dhomonique’s Auto. And the reason why is because of visibility. You’ve never seen, heard anything with Dhomonique’s Auto but the

other company that we spoke of earlier, we've seen them everywhere. So, that's what everyone needs to be thinking about. If you want to gain profitability, you have to be visible. And so, The Right Method was created because what I found in the marketplace was that every company—most companies rather—were missing fundamental pieces of the puzzle. They would have a marketing agency, which is one piece of it but you need PR or you need video and photo production or you need social media. And there'd be things missing. So, The Right Method was created because, as I mentioned, you have to find what's right for you. So, when an individual or a corporation or a company or a government institution comes to me or to the company, they come in usually with one problem that they need solved. So, let's just say, for the sake of this conversation, they come in looking for public relations. Okay. So, we build out and strategize and create a customized plan for them from a PR standpoint to get them visibility in front of their ideal clients and customers. That's one part of it. Now, if we're adding in appearances and things like that, what's going to happen when people see this company on TV or on magazines, on the radio? What are people going to do? They're going to Google them, and most people like to go to social media pages first. And if the social media page is not active, if they don't have a good content, what happens? You've lost the client before they converted. They were interested but you lost them. So, with The Right Method, we are able to build on every single piece of the puzzle based on what said person actually needs to gain the exposure and ultimately the ROI that they're looking for.

WC: So, what's the best advice that you have to be active, whether this is an individual or a big company? What does that social media activity need to look like?

DM: Yeah, we can talk about all of it. For social media in particular, minimally, minimally you must be posting once a week. That's basically the golden rule. You want to be visible. And here's the thing. As clients are coming to your page, what are they going to think? If the last post you have is from four months ago, it probably doesn't show well. Your customer potentially is going to think, *Oh, are they in business? I wonder why they're not posting.* And any time a question comes up, confused minds don't buy. So, if you want to really be at the forefront of your customers, in their minds, you want to be visible. Oftentimes, customers will not buy until they've seen at least seven or eight things from you. And so, I always tell people, "It's not about today. It's about posting regularly so that two months from now, when someone's scrolling through your feed, they see the post that you did today and they're like, 'Oh, I love that. That's brilliant!'" Conversion. So, you want to have all your ducks in a row but you do want to be visible. So, the visibility factor always, always wins. How can I be seen and heard? Minimally once a week so that people know I am here, they know I'm available, they know I'm active, and they know that I can be a solution to their problem.

WC: Is this the same advice that you would give to an individual that's trying to build their brand? Because I know a lot of the listeners that we have here with my MASTERS podcast are individual, young entrepreneurs. You know, we see that.

Or they want to become that. So, is this the same advice that you would give to an individual trying to build their name and their brand that you would also give to an established company?

DM: One hundred percent. Yes. The very first thing. Because here's the thing, this is where I find—when entrepreneurs are either in the infancy stages of being an entrepreneur—I would be honest and say first five years. Okay, whether they're a *wantrepreneur*, they want to be it; they're an *intrapreneur*, they're currently an employee; or they're like, "Okay, I'm startup mode, I'm ready, I'm doing this thing," they have to, have to focus on visibility. And I'll kind of explain this a little bit more. So, I serve a lot—a lot of my clients are entrepreneurs, just full disclosure. And when they come, they're like, "I want to make more money." Same thing and they don't have the pieces in place. Now, everything in this world—and when it comes to scaling—is based on systems and processes. So, for anyone listening to this, systems and processes are going to be the way to scale your business. You have to be able to have a system. SOP: standard operating procedures. You have to have what I like to call an ecosystem on your back end if you're looking to grow and monetize and scale. A lot of pieces have to be in place if you're looking to do that. So—

WC: Oh my gosh, we could do a whole, whole podcast on the value, the importance of having systems.

DM: Yes. Oh my gosh.

WC: So, thanks for bringing that up.

DM: [Laughs] It's like the number-one thing. I cannot tell you how many entrepreneurs have no systems. They're like, "I don't know." I'm like, "Okay, well, who's your avatar?" "I don't know." "Okay—"

WC: Which means if they leave on vacation for two weeks, everything falls apart because there's no system in place. "How do we do things; the boss is gone? How are we supposed to handle this complaining customer right now?"

DM: Yep, yep and the thing is, too, if you want to be able to one day exit your company, (a) you have to do that. Now, that's long-form thinking but in the day-to-day activity what I find is, most entrepreneurs fail because (a) they don't have systems but they're wasting time. If you look at most entrepreneurs in a given day and you say, "Okay, let me just watch you today. Let me just watch what you're doing and then let me watch you tomorrow and then let me watch you the following week," you'll see a lot of repetition of things that could be systemized. So, they're like, "Oh, I got to email this person. Where's that one document? Uh, I think it's in Dropbox. No, no, no, it's in Google Drive. Uh, hm, let me email someone, hm." And there's all this wasted time happening.

WC: Right.

DM: So, when you can slow down—I always say slow down to go fast. Slow down, get everything built out the right way. So, have folders. Have all your emails automated, have everything ready to go so you're not spending copious amounts of time—wasting time, rather, let's be honest—doing things that should be automated. Doing things that should be so simple it should be copy, paste, change name, send. Versus, "Let me create this email from scratch," and da-da-da-da, it's wasted time. So, the right method for an entrepreneur starting out is yes, you have to. First of all, you have to storyboard this out. Think of it like a film and you have to say, "Okay, where am I going first?" Because most people don't identify where they want to go. They're just like in the ocean floating, like, "I don't know. Make some money. I don't know." Where do you want to go? What's the destination, what's the end result? Because if you don't know where you're going, you're not going to go there. So, where are you going? Identify it and physically write it down. I had an opportunity to go to Brian Tracy's home a couple of years ago—

WC: God, I love him so much.

DM: —if you guys are not familiar. Yeah, he's like one of the greatest thought leaders of our time. And he told me something that was so mind blowing to me. He said, "Ninety-one percent of entrepreneurs and individuals never write their goals down." I said, "Ninety-one?" He goes, "Ninety-one." He goes, "Something happens energetically when you put pen to paper and you physically write down your goal." And not from a standpoint of "I really want to, I wish I would" but rather you claim it: "I'm so happy and grateful I have achieved X," and it's very specific. You don't want to earn more money. What does that mean? Earning more money is another dollar in your pocket next year. That, by definition, is earning more money. What is it? What is it specifically? What's the number? How many clients? What's the thing? Specifically identifying it and claiming it when you do it. So, for everyone out there, the first thing, you have to identify where you're going and then you do what we call backlogging from there. "Okay, 12 months from now I'm going to be here." Great! So, what has to happen at month 11, 10, 9, 8, and so on to make that happen? So, you have to storyboard this out. Like, "Okay, month one I am going to achieve all of these things and in order to do that, you know, I need to do this, this, this. I need to sacrifice my time here, here, here. I need to have systems in place so I'm not wasting 18 percent of my day doing things that should be automated," *[laughs]* and that's really what it comes down to. But yeah, I mean there is definitely a right method for entrepreneurs and it's all about getting systems and processes. From there, the exposure. I always go back to visibility. There is something brilliant about getting exposure early on in your journey. So, let's talk PR for a minute. Let's talk television. A lot of my clients love TV more than any of the other PR elements. So, PR appearances can be radio, magazines, newspapers, podcasts, digital. But television always seems to be the one that people come to me for. They're like, "I want to be on TV. I want to do appearances." Okay, no problem. Do it every day. So, when it comes to putting people on television the ROI there is insane for a lot of reasons. Number one, you're now being positioned in front of

hundreds of thousands to millions of people who are your ideal clients, A. B, what happens is people love to see endorsements from media outlets. So, if you're a company and let's say no one's even heard of you—someone's Google searching whatever it is that you do, they find you and they look through your website and they see one or two or three stamps of, "I have been featured on NBC. I have been included in this podcast. I've been here. I've been there," it elevates your brand right from the beginning. We have to have something called "know, like, and trust." If you want to grow a brand, three things you must, must, must have: the know, like, and trust factor. Someone who comes to you will first be like, "Who is this Dhomonique person? Let me see." So, they got to get to know you and the way they get to know you is by watching your content. So, when they see you on social, when they see you visible in any way, they're like, "Hm, okay, I know you." What happens inevitably? They're usually going to like you. If you're providing content of value, they're going to like who you are. And once they like you, they trust you. And when someone trusts you, they will open their wallet to you. They will become a client of yours. So, it's "know, like, and trust." When they see those media stamps it's a quicker way to expedite that process because if you're endorsed by a television station—which essentially is what that is, is having that stamp of approval, means you passed through 10,000 gates to get on TV or to be featured in a magazine or on this newspaper—your brand is elevated right away and people like to buy from people who have influence.

WC: So, when you're talking about "know, like, and trust," what are some of the mistakes that people are making when it comes to the "know, like, and trust"?

DM: Yeah so, we'll talk about both. So, there's a thing called less is more. Measure twice, cut once. Less is always more. Think of it like this. There's a reason why when you go to any drive-through they have, at the most, what, 10, 11 items you can pick from because confused minds don't buy. If you have 47 offerings—let's say you go to your local burger place and they have burgers and seafood and fries and shakes and tacos and spaghetti and—

WC: [Laughs]

DM: —all these different things, all of a sudden you are like, "Oh my gosh, I don't know. Hm what do I want? I don't know."

WC: That's why we go to In-N-Out, right? There's—

DM: Yeah.

WC: —three choices, I think.

DM: Yep. And it creates a problem because people don't know and then, all of a sudden, they thought they wanted a burger and fries but now they don't know if they want noodles or if they want pizza or if they want cake. They have no idea/ And so what happens is you create a situation of confusion. So, oftentimes when

new entrepreneurs are starting their journey, they're like, "I'm going to offer 10,000 things. I'm going to have this and this and this and this," and the reason why that doesn't work is because people have to be able to figure it out in two seconds. "What do you offer?" "I do this. Boom!" "Okay, that makes sense to me." If it takes you five minutes to explain what you do and what you offer and how it can help me as a customer or client, you've already lost me. And so even small things like the bio of your Instagram needs to tell people in a split second who you are and what you do and how you can help them. What do you do? How can you help me? Mm. And people will either go, "Oh, that's cool, not for me but, hm, okay." Or they'll say, "Oh my gosh, that's exactly what I'm looking for. Let me reach out." And either way it's okay, but you're very clear and concise. So, going to the point, Winn, about "know, like and trust," if you want to be known, it's just like anything: you have to be visible. And I know oftentimes for a lot of people, that can be a daunting task and intimidating. Right? Like, "Oh my gosh, visibility. I gotta put myself out there?" Yes, *[laughs]* you do, but it's a lot like buying new shoes. For all my shoe lovers out there, it's kind of like you pick up the new shoes, those fabulous shoes that you've been eyeing, and you finally pick them up. You bring them home, you put the box on your bed, you take the little lid off, and you do your little happy dance. At least that's what I do. And you take the shoe out and you put it on and what happens? It hurts. Inevitably you're like, "Oh, that's really uncomfortable." At first, until you break it in. And the same is true with visibility. So, you have to look at this as a long-form game and say, "What is my goal? Do I really want success? Do I really want to reach people?" Because if you want to reach an audience, if you want to grow and have influence and scale, people want to buy from people they know, like, and trust. And no one's going to know you if you're not putting yourself out there. They won't. And it's not because your product's not good, it's just because they don't know you.

WC: Let me use myself as an example here. So, I'll put myself on the line here. So, I lead a company. We have over 100 schools, 12,000 students that attend these schools. And in my personal social media, I don't have a lot of followers. I think I'm at, I don't know, 45,000 with Facebook, almost 30,000 with Instagram. But I put myself out there on a pretty regular basis, at least once or twice a week. And you talk about storytelling and visibility and transparency and credibility and I love all of those words. I love the meanings of all of those words. How much of my storytelling should be personal? Sometimes I feel like I could post a photo of me and the king of the planet and get five likes. And then I post a photo of me and my daughter at the gym and everybody responds to that.

DM: Yeah. Very, very common and I get this question all the time. "Dhomonique, I'm posting all this content on my niche and I'm getting a couple of likes but when I post myself with my family it goes through the roof. What's up?" Here's the thing. Stories have to be three things. Stories have to be memorable, they have to be relatable, and they have to be authentic. Storytelling—and I agree with what you said earlier, Winn—storytelling is the basis of existence. There's a quote by Steve Jobs who said, "The most powerful person in the world is the storyteller," and it's true because stories transcend languages. Stories transcend everything.

Right? If you look back to the beginning of civilization, everything was based on a story. All of the lessons we learn today are based on stories, when you look at them strategically. And today what do we resonate with the most? The things that are the most memorable are in story form. So, again they have to be memorable, they have to be relatable, and they have to be authentic. So, to your example when it comes to social media, what's more relatable than someone who is not the quote-unquote representative? We all see people all shiny and buttoned up at the event and it's cool, but there's nothing cooler than seeing someone with their hair in a bun, yoga pants, they're at the farm picking apples with their kids, right? Or at the gym with their daughter. There's something relatable about that and we as a culture, as a society, we love seeing that. So, storytelling: memorable, relatable, authentic. When you combine those three things, you always get conversion. I had a mentor of mine, years ago, she said something to me. She goes, "Domonique, nobody likes a shiny diamond unless it's on their finger." She's like, "No one likes or loves a shiny diamond story." So, when people go out there and they're the—again, I call the representative: "Everything's perfect, everything's great, I'm so successful, this is my story," it's not relatable to anybody and you're not going to get conversion. Because everyone knows that's not reality. It's false and people can smell that a mile away in today's world. So, if you want conversion then you have to be a storyteller. You have to tell stories. And I want to put one caveat on there because oftentimes when people hear what I'm saying or when they come to me as a client, they're like, "I'm not comfortable sharing these deep, dark moments of my life." And I look at them and I smile and I said, "When did I ever say we had to talk about deep, dark, tragic moments in your life?" And they go, "Well, that's what storytelling is." I said, "That's not what storytelling is."

WC: Wow, that's so interesting.

DM: Yeah, stories come in all kinds of forms.

WC: Right.

DM: There are stories about money. There are stories that are of comedic value. There *are* stories that are tragic. There are stories that we call the wow or attention story. There are multiple stories that can be told. A story simply of how you got from A to B can be so compelling and it doesn't have to be sad. It doesn't have to be gut wrenching at all. Some of the best stories are just factual. Some of the best stories are ones that have comedic value tied to them, where you're smiling along with them because you want to take people on a journey. A storyteller essentially holds the audience hand and takes them through this journey where visually they're there with you. They're like, "Wow, yeah, yeah." And so, I always say the hook of your story, the first paragraph, the first thing you say, must cause people to lean forward and say, "Tell me more."

WC: Oh, sweet.

DM: That's why we call it a hook.

WC: This advice that you're giving us right now, I know that we're talking about social media and PR, but at the end of the day all this advice that you're sharing with us right now relates to good leadership. Meaning if we weren't even talking about marketing or social media and this was completely about how to be a better boss, how to be a better leader, how to have more credibility, how to be more visible with your team, this is exactly the advice that you would give.

DM: Absolutely. And one of the divisions with The Right Method is executive presence.

WC: That was my next question about, that I see it as part of your plan here with The Right Method: executive presence. What do you mean by that?

DM: Executive presence, it's funny because it's a term that a lot of people go, "What is that?" Like what does that mean? Essentially it is being a quote-unquote boss that is respected. It is being that person who knows how to handle every situation. So, you build a team of employees, of staff who wants to follow you and who wants to support you. When you become a leader in any sense of the word and you have a team behind you, you want to be respected. You want your team to look at you and go, "Wow, I trust him or her. Yeah, I'm on board. I see the vision. I feel seen and appreciated." That's what executive presence is but it's broken down into so many subsectors. So, for example executive tone, executive influence. Are you positioned in a way where you're a person of influence? Most executives are not. Ironically, most executives don't even have a head shot, believe it or not. Shocking [laughs] and we're talking like level-one here, right?

WC: Right.

DM So, like they don't know how to speak to their teams effectively. Instead of being able to bring everyone together and at the conclusion of that meeting or of that talk, their team feels fueled up and ready to go and conquer and excel and win, oftentimes people feel unseen. They feel depleted. They feel used. They feel just frustrated. And that's because the executive in that situation was not trained on how to effectively approach their team, how to effectively speak with their team. A lot of executives lack confidence and that's another part of executive presence is having that confidence as a leader because you're under the microscope, you're the spotlight at that point when you're that executive. People are looking to you. And if you don't have confidence, your team will not have confidence. If you don't have confidence, your company is going to suffer. Productivity is going to go down because you—you are the person who creates the tone of energy for your entire division.

WC: As you're talking about this, I'm thinking about this huge stage that you're on. So, you're not just a celebrity on camera, you're also behind the scenes. You're a parent, you're a leader, you're the leader of your own company, of an

organization, and also, you're visible so you are a mentor to young girls, young entrepreneurs. And I just want to ask you, what does that feel like? What responsibility does that weigh on your heart, on your mind, to be that wonderful mentor and hero for that generation?

DM: Oh, it's everything. You know, people always say, "What's your proudest accomplishment?" My proudest accomplishment is never on a piece of paper. Like remotely. Bar none, my kids are everything so I'm a family person. I am madly in love with my husband and we have two amazing boys and they are remarkable. They are so incredible. My husband is, as well, but there's something when you become a parent, right? My sole existence is raising two incredible young men who will never be victims, who think differently, who can achieve anything they want in this world. And there's something that just fuels my heart and my spirit. So, I'm a mother first, I'm a wife first, I love family; that's what drives me. And so in life you have to figure out what is your driving force because a company can come and go. A job can come and go. A paycheck can come and go but what is the thing that drives you? What is that thing? I had another mentor. I surround myself with mentors and I think everyone who can hear me should be doing this. You keep hearing me talk about mentors because you learn so much. But I had a different mentor of mine, years ago, and he said, "Dhomonique, look at your hands." I said, "What?" He goes, "Look at your hands." I said, "My hands?" He goes, "Yeah, look at your hands." I said, "Uh, okay." So, I looked at my hands and he said, "When was the last time you said thank you to your hands?" And I looked at him and I said, "What?" He goes, "When was the last time you said thank you to your hands?"

WC: Wow.

DM: I said, "Uh, never?" He goes, "In life we focus on the wrong things. Your hands have given everything, pretty much, to you." Right? The things that matter the most we tend to devalue the most: our hands, our sight, our hearing, our children, our spouses, our boyfriends, our girlfriends, our family, our love of country, community, family, friendship, the fresh air that we are so blessed to be able to breathe in every single day, the birds chirping. We lose sight of the things that matter the most but especially focused on the family. But yet we are focused on "let me get that car" or "let me buy that shirt" or "let me get those shoes so people who don't really care about me will like my picture of my shoes on my Instagram page." We're focused on the wrong things and so, for me, my driving force is focused on (a) my family but also inspiring youth because that's the future. I know we've all heard that and seen it on posters but there's a lot of reality to do this and I'll give you guys a story. So, my backstory—one of many, many, many stories that I share—is when I was working in television years ago, I think I was in Cleveland at the time, and I was speaking to a group of young women. And there was a little girl—and when I say young women they were probably, mm, seven to about 13, was the age range.

WC: Okay.

DM: And there was this little girl about nine years old when I walked in and she said, “Hey, can we play a game?” I said, “Yeah let’s play a game.” Now, my natural mindset is thinking they’re going to say, “Let’s play red rover” or “Let’s play hide and seek” or tag or something like that. And she said, “We want to play, ‘What do we see when we look at you.’” I said, “I’m sorry, what?” *[laughs]*

WC: *[Laughs]*

DM: She said, “We want to play ‘What do we see when we look at you.’” Now, this nine-year-old was like going on 25 with her mindset. I said, “Okay, how do you play?” She said, “You’re going to stand there in front of all of us and we’re going to say things we see when we look at you.” Now, it was like the firing squad. I was so nervous and I don’t know why I was nervous—

WC: *[Laughs]*

DM: —but clearly something subconsciously was making me nervous.

WC: Because they’re little kids and they tell the truth, right?

DM: *[Laughs]* Right, right, that’s probably it. So, I stood back and these young women started saying things to me such as, “You’re really nice, you’re really pretty, I love your hair, I love your lipstick.” It started like that. And then it went from that to, “Wow, I could never do what you do. I could never do that. I’m not pretty enough. I’m not smart enough. I don’t have the connections. I don’t, I don’t, I don’t, I don’t, I don’t,” over and over again. And as I stood there, it was like my body was melting into the floor because I thought to myself, *What am I putting out there that’s making little girls think that they cannot do what I have done, or better yet, surpass what I have done?* So, it was one of the greatest wakeup calls of my life because that’s the moment in my life where I became very transparent, which we spoke about on this interview; very transparent, because for years I wasn’t. For years I was fake. For years I was that shiny diamond story we just spoke about. That was me. “Everything’s great, everything’s perfect,” and it’s fake and it’s false and it took a nine-year-old girl to wake me up and I’m like, *What am I doing?* That is a massive disservice to the world to make little girls think that they can’t achieve success. So, for me it was an eye-opening moment of, *Okay, moving forward you’re always going to get transparency with me.*

WC: So, what did you do differently? What did you change?

DM: I started sharing my stories because they’re really relatable. You know, when people say, “Oh, I’m struggling, I failed, this didn’t work,” I’m like, “Oh, same here. Let me tell you what I’ve gone through. Let me share my story with you.” I have a book called *Reset* and the book *Reset* literally talks about many moments in my life from pageantry loses to—and there’s all kinds of stories in there from almost failing at a college to all of these things that in my life I’m like, “I can’t tell anybody that. What would they think if they knew the reality of my story?” and I became transparent because, as we spoke about earlier, there’s nothing more

powerful than storytelling. Stories can change people's lives and when I started becoming transparent, I can't even tell you how many people were like, "Wow, thank you. Wow, that's so helpful. Wow, you failed?" I'm like, "Failed? My face is next to that in the dictionary." But I don't look at failure as, failure I look at failure as opportunities to get better. Failing is a badge of honor because that means you put yourself out there. When people see my accolades, they're like, "Wow, you're so lucky." I'm like, "No, you don't realize how many times I failed to get those but I just kept standing up over and over and over and over and over again." That's the difference and that's what it comes down to. You have to be real. I mean, there's no other way to put it. Like realness is what makes—first of all, it feels better. When you're not this false person, it just feels good to be like yep, this is what it is. It just feels better. It does for anybody. But on top of it, it's kind of like I feel to whom much is given, much is expected. And I feel it's a massive disservice if someone looks at what you or anyone has achieved and they're like, "Wow, how did they do it?" And you're like, "Oh, I'm just so lucky and I'm so great and it just happened," because that person's going to think, *Well, that's never going to happen for me*. But when you can be real and say, "Listen, I have failed so many times, so many things. I can share some stories with you that would make your mouth fall on the floor, whether it's from getting fired from a television station, whether—" I have so many stories, so many stories that would make people go, "What?!" I look at that as it's part of your story but it also makes the journey that more exciting.

WC: Hm.

DM: And it also gives people hope to say, "You know what? Yeah, I'm down in the dumps right now but, you know what? Just like you, I can get up, too, and I can be great and I can be excellent and I can be successful, no matter what circumstance I'm in right now." No matter what you're going through, you can come out of it.

WC: The word you just used—*hope*. I just think that we need to be marketers of hope because when we can sell hope to people, they could be down and out in every way—down and out in their career, in their personal life, in their marriage, struggling with an addiction or all kinds of struggles, but if there's a small glimmer of hope then there's a chance. And if that's what we sell to people, hope, I think that that's the best gift.

DM: Yeah. There's a saying that the one thing if you take away from a person that will destroy them is hope. We have to be hopeful. We have to know that there is an end result. We have to know that whatever we're going through, it's short term. Every storm goes away at some point. It's like a basketball. You might hit rock bottom but you're always going to spring back up every single time. So often, when people have things that don't go their way in any sense of the word, they catch themselves looking down. They're always looking down. "Oh my gosh, I can't believe it, ohhh," and I always say, "Look up, look up, look up." That's my

line: look up. Because the reality is opportunities are always passing you by when you are looking down.

WC: That's awesome.

DM: And sometimes some of the worst things, like my first Emmy, the story behind that. I can share it if you'd like, it's um—

WC: Oh please, please, please.

DM: Okay, yeah, yes. Because people, again, they look at awards and they go, "Oh my gosh, you're so lucky." And I always laugh and smile because I'm like, "Ooh," [laughs] "there's a lot more than luck involved." It's just the ability to stand back up. I was working as a TV host in Cleveland, Ohio, at the time and I finished my show like I did every day. It was a one-hour show, live, and I said, "Thanks so much for watching. I'm Dhomonique, I'll see you back here tomorrow." The lights went off, I grabbed my purse the way I did every single day, and I was exiting the studio and I looked down at my phone and there was a message from my producer and it said, "Meet me upstairs now!" Not hello, no emoji.

WC: Oh my gosh!

DM: Just meet me upstairs now. Period. I'm like, *Whoa, what did I do wrong?* That's where my mind went naturally. So, I make my way upstairs. And in the building that worked in, upstairs is where all the managers would work. So, human resources and all of the managers were on the second floor. So, I walked to the second floor, I turned the corner, and there was a big conference room and my team was in the conference room and they were all smiling and laughing and I was the last one in because I had just finished my show. So, I thought, *Oh, okay, someone is retiring, perfect.* So, I sat down and I start like smiling to the person next to me and then I looked up and my boss, my news director, was sitting directly in front of me and he was not smiling. And he looked at me and I'll never forget what he said. He said, "Dhomonique, that was your last show. You are no longer the host of the show," and I sat there frozen. My mouth was on the floor. I was like, "*What, what?*" and I was so humiliated because my entire team was in the room and all of us heard for the first time together. So, I stared at him for a good 15 seconds and he said, "Do you want to say anything?" and I said, "Yeah, um, can I talk to you in private?" and I was holding back the tears. I could not, my brain couldn't conceptualize what I'd just heard. So, I walked into his office and it was just me and him. So, he looked at me he goes, "Do you have any questions?" and I asked the million-dollar question, I said, "Yeah, do I still have a job?" and he looked at me and he said, "Yes." I said, "Okay, what is my job?" and he said, "What do you want it to be?" And I looked at him, super confused. I said, "What I was hired for but my assumption is that's off the table so I don't know." He goes, "You have two options. You can come back here tomorrow and be a reporter," which was a huge demotion for me. He said, "Or you can walk out that door and never come back. Either way it's up to you." And I remember feeling

so—it was like 10,000 knives in my chest. I was like, *Wow, really?* So, I thanked him for his time and I walked down to my car, this long stairwell, and I remember thinking, *Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, oh my gosh*, and at this point it's a media station so everyone's talking; there's the beauty of phones. So, the whole station already knows that I was demoted by now because everyone's texting each other and everyone's like, "Are you okay? Is everything okay?" And I couldn't even speak. I literally just had my head on the floor and I just walked to my car. And I got in my car and I folded over the steering wheel and I physically could not turn the ignition on and I called my husband and I said, "Oh my gosh." I said, "What did I do?" and he said, "Babe, come home." I said, "No, no, no, no, no!" I said, "You don't understand." I said, "What did I do? I didn't do anything. What did I do?" and I was bawling. I physically could not turn the car on and he said, "Babe, come home!" So, I got home and my husband, who is amazing, he's my rock, he was like, "Listen, you now have a choice." He's like, "You can do what everybody expects you to do and never show your face in that office again or you can rise above it. But I can't make that decision for you. You have to make that choice." So, that night I was up and down all night. I didn't sleep. I was like, *Should I go, should I do it?* The morning came. I decided, *Hey, you know what? Maybe this will be part of my story.* So, I decided to go in. And reporters always come up with story pitches for the morning editorial meeting. So, I got up two hours early and I said, "Let me figure out my story." I ended up by, I don't know, just sheer luck, landing this incredible story. And so, as I walked into the morning meeting, I felt like a rare panda out of the zoo. Everyone was like, "Oh, she's here" [*laughs*]. Sat down and my assistant news director said, "Does anyone have a story idea today?" I raised my hand first, I said, "I do." And the whole room got whiplash looking back at me and they thought, *What? She's going to actually provide a story?* So, I pitched an idea. Long story short, that story ended up being the lead or the number-one story that night. And so, as I went home that night I said, "Okay, this is not what I want to do but what is the lesson in this?" And I couldn't figure it out. I said, "I have no idea. I have no idea what the lesson is," but in life AIE is everything and I have the acronym on the cover of my book. I have the acronym all over my office, and AIE stands for attitude is everything. The one thing in life that we have control over that no one can take away is our attitude. For anyone out there who is not familiar with Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, I highly recommend you pick up that book.

WC: Oh, I love that book.

DM: He would always say, "People can take away anything from you but the one thing in life they cannot take away from you is what you choose to think." They can't take away your mindset. And so, I always, after I read that book years ago, I always held onto that and I'm like, *Okay, attitude really is everything. I can choose to be a victim, I can choose to feel bad, I can choose to point my finger and say, "Oh, he did this to me," or I can choose to rise above it and figure out what is the lesson in this for me.* Because there is a lesson. I truly believe that whatever you're going through, there's always a lesson in it. Now, at the time, it felt like one of the worst things that could happen to me from a career standpoint.

I'm like, *What the heck did I do?* Never found out an answer, by the way. It had something to do with ratings, they said, but the ratings went down when I left, so it was kind of weird, but no one ever knew. There was no rhyme or reason to the decision but it was one of the best things that ever happened to me. So, going back to the story, I started being a reporter. And I remember people would say to me, "Oh, you're a reporter" and I would always correct them. I said, "No, I'm not a reporter. I'm an anchor who happens to be reporting." And it's a big difference when you own certain things because I never wanted that title. I never, ever went into journalism to be a reporter. Nothing wrong with being a reporter, no shade by any means, but it's not what I wanted. It wasn't my makeup. I didn't want to do that. So I said, "I'm an anchor who happens to be reporting, and you know what? I'm going to be the best in my role that I can be during this time." So, a month went by, two months went by, three months went by. The Republican National Convention came into town and it was my job to be on the front lines covering the story. So, a week—no, two weeks before the actual RNC, we had to go through military SWAT training. Very alarming things that no one really ever wants to learn, you know? Kind of scary stuff there.

WC: Wow.

DM: And then, yeah. And then the day before, I was given a bulletproof helmet, a bulletproof vest—

WC: Oh my gosh!!

DM: —and I was, yeah, and then I was told I would be required, at all times, to be with an armed bodyguard. The guy's name was Gunny. Cannot make this stuff up. And this guy had an assault rifle on him 24/7.

WC: Wow.

DM: And they said, "Good luck, have fun."

WC: [Laughs]

DM: I remember going home the night before going, *They just said good luck, have fun. What?* And I have a bullet proof suit, pretty much—a helmet and a vest and an armed bodyguard and I was horrified. I thought, *Oh my gosh do they have some intel that something's going to go down? Why do I need all this stuff?* So, four days went by, nothing crazy happened, just a lot of coverage. I was on the front lines covering the protests. And then the final day, there was a big fight that broke out and I was the reporter that was literally inches away from where the whole thing happened. And so, there was a lot of wall-to-wall coverage of the incident and things like that but it was my coverage from the five days at the RNC that landed me my first Emmy award.

WC: Oh my gosh! Wow!

DM: So what I perceived, Winn, to be one of the worst things that could have happened to me from a career standpoint actually was one of the best things that could have happened to me because it launched my career. It landed me an accolade that I would not have had otherwise; the first of three. It was the thing that gave me the confidence to say, "Oh my gosh, there is more out there," because I was complacent. I was going through the motions and I needed that push and for years I still was in a victim mentality. "I can't believe that news director did this to me." Took me three years to realize that that news director gave me the greatest gift, one of my greatest gifts of my career. And so, I sent him a letter three years later, handwritten, and I said, "So and so, thank you so much for what you did. Although I could not see it at the time and I thought you were the worst person on the planet, I want to say thank you because if it wasn't for you, I wouldn't be where I am today. So, thank you for that push." And so, these are the stories, Winn, that people have to realize. That doors are never closed unless you choose to believe that they're closed.

WC: What a story! What a story! That you can tie one event to another event to another event and, gosh, it all happens for a reason and the reason is always to make us better, to make us stronger, to bring us accolades and opportunities like that. Thank you for sharing that, it was great.

DM: Oh, thank you, Winn.

WC: Of course, I'm still thinking that I want to track that guy down. I want to beat him up for you.

DM: *[Laughs]*

WC: I'm sorry, I'm still a little stuck on that one, right? It probably also made you a better boss. You're like, "I would never do that to somebody. I would never do that."

DM: Yeah, although I didn't agree in the way it was done, I also came to recognize that it was, in its own way, a gift for sure.

WC: Wow! Well, Dhomonique, at the beginning of this interview I had the sense that all I had to do was say "go" and then I could just sit back and be the audience participant and enjoy your messages and that's how this has turned out. I'm just so, so grateful. You speak so well and just the tone of your confidence and what a wonderful leader and mentoring hero you are. Thanks for that.

DM: Winn, thank you for being a super human yourself, and thank you for this incredible opportunity. This hour or so has just been phenomenal and I have enjoyed every single second of it.

WC: Well, before we say goodbye, Dhomonique, do you have a final message for our listeners?

DM: Whoa, so many. Hmm. I'll leave everyone with a quote from a mentor of mine, Jeff Hoffman, because now that I'm hearing the story of the entrepreneur audience member, there is something that he told me years ago that changed the way I thought. Because when I first became an entrepreneur, like 99.99 percent of entrepreneurs, I was focused on money. *Okay, money, money, money. How to get money, money, money. I want money, money, money.* That was my mindset. Not impact, not story, it was money. And we had a meeting years ago and he looked at me and he said, "Dhomonique, don't chase money, chase excellence." And that message literally is painted on my office wall because it is so profound to me and I hope to everyone who hears that. Stop focusing on the wrong thing. It's like the hand example I gave earlier. We have to focus on the right thing. Focus on excellence. Figure out what it is that sets your soul on fire, that thing that gives you that Kool-Aid smile when you talk about it, that thing that makes you talk 10,000 miles an hour because you're so excited. That. Focus on that and focus being excellent at that because when you're excellent in whatever you do, (a) you're going to be happy and there's no greater gift in this world than happiness, okay. And that's peace of mind right there. When you're happy, you're going to attract more people to you. When you attract more people to you, you are going to grow your profitability. So, focus on excellence, focus on visibility and, really, that's the magical formula for success.

WC: Beautiful. I can add nothing to that.

DM: Ohh.

WC: Sweetheart, thank you. I am just so, so grateful for this time. Again, I just felt like I was this listener and this learner and I love being able to have that opportunity in my life. To be a learner at 63 years old is such a privilege.

DM: The honor is all mine. Winn, thank you.

WC: Thanks, sweetheart.

