



Selling Disruption™ Show

With Mark S. A. Smith

*How Humility Builds Trust,
Creates Sustainable Profits,
and Disrupts Your Market*

Mary Remon

Mark S A Smith: My guest today on the Selling Disruption Show is Mary Remon. Now, I met Mary in an interesting way, through a friend of a friend who said, "This woman has a post on LinkedIn that has gone viral." What do you mean by viral? Seven and a half million views, 38,000 plus likes, almost 4,000 comments on this post, and what is it about? Humility. How do you use humility to be successful in business? Welcome, Mary Remon, to the Selling Disruption Show.

Mary Remon: Thank you so much for having me on the show.

Mark S A Smith: I'm absolutely delighted. Mary is a private practice counselor. She is a life coach, a certified employee assistance professional and a licensed psychotherapist which means she helps people with a lot of different interesting challenges find a better and more resourceful way of playing the game. And, I can't think of a better conversation to have with Mary than how can we use humility to disrupt sales and marketing? Now, as a sales professional, you might be thinking, "Mark, there's no way. You can't use humility to sell well. You've got to be in their face. You've got to be aggressive. You've got to be assertive. What do you mean be humble?" Well, that's not what we're talking about.

Mary Remon: Thank you, Mark. Yes, I never put the words "humility" and "disruption" together in a sentence before. It's interesting.

Mark S A Smith: That's what we do. We put together things we didn't expect. That's how we disrupt.

Mary Remon: I love it. I love it.

Mark S A Smith: Let's talk for a moment about that post that surprised you. It happened just recently.

Mary Remon: Very recently, in January of this year, January 1st to be exact.

Mark S A Smith: Of 2017.

Mary Remon: 2017. I was visiting my parents. It was New Year's Day. They're retired. They're in their 70s. I noticed that they hung up their diplomas for the first time in their life.

Mark S A Smith: These aren't just ordinary diplomas though.

Mary Remon: Well, they don't wear it on their sleeve. That's part of the issue but, yeah, they both went to Harvard. That's where they met. But, I noticed that they never hung them up their whole careers, and then they waited until they were retired and in their 70s, and they've put them in these simple frames in a small corner of the study where nobody sees them. And so, I asked them about that, and I wrote down their answers. It's a very short post. I quoted them and I post the question. I asked my parents why and my dad's response was, "I don't know." And, my mom's response was, "I always thought if you have to tell people you're smart, then you're not."

Mark S A Smith: I love that.

Mary Remon: So, my question was, in 2017, I'm trying to balance the lessons they taught me in humility with the need to search for a meaningful work, and how do you think we can stay humble and still promote our value? Is it possible to do both?

Mark S A Smith: Yeah. It's such a great question.

Mary Remon: I loved it.

Mark S A Smith: It's such a great question and such an important insight, and I figured that if I have to tell people that you're smart, then you're not. There is an issue there. And it's especially true, Mary, with executives. You try to sell how smart you are to executives and they run away. The higher the consideration product that you're selling to executives, the less you have to be telling them about how smart and how good you are. Humility plays a really important role the higher up the food chain we go, so I think your conversation here is really spot on and really important for us to consider.

Now, you've gotten so many answers, almost 4,000 answers back. Tell me a little bit about the insights that you've gotten. This is LinkedIn, folks. This is not Facebook or Twitter. This is the business social media platform that we're talking about here. What kind of responses did you get?

Mary Remon: Amazing responses from all over the world. Just rich, deep responses. I'm learning so much from people. There's a quote that someone shared with me that says, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less."

Mark S A Smith: Yes. That's such a brilliant insight.

Mary Remon: Yes. People are sharing articles with me. I was invited to be on another radio show which I did, The Concierge Coaches Show. People contacting me, sharing their insights. Some people sharing simple opinions like hang up the diplomas. Be proud or don't hang them up, just kind of voting. Some people going into really deep, meaningful, philosophical discussions on humility in the workplace and pointing out articles from Harvard Business Review. So, I'm learning. I'm learning from so many different people, and it's also getting some referrals for my coaching business so that's kind of nice, too.

Mark S A Smith: Sure, of course, and rightly so. Well, I think it's interesting that you've been driven to this path about what is the impact of humility on business, on life in a very interesting and meaningful way just by asking a question: why didn't you hang up those diplomas? You're being called to curate this content.

Mary Remon: Yeah. If I had to curate something, what a great topic to curate, right?

Mark S A Smith: Indeed.

Mary Remon: I can only thank my parents for that.

Mark S A Smith: Beautiful. In this interesting discussion about humility and the impact of it on sales, a lot of sales people might be thinking, "Well, why does humility work in the world of sales? What makes this so powerful?" What is your insights into that?

Mary Remon: Well, I have a few insights. There are different types of sales and you're selling different types of things. But, just to clarify, I'm selling a service.

Mark S A Smith: Yes, you are.

Mary Remon: First of all, with the LinkedIn post, it was about triggering a relevant conversation.

Mark S A Smith: Absolutely.

Mary Remon: And being genuine and then also I noticed that people really appreciate hearing that their opinion matters. And, although I didn't post it for the purpose of selling, it did result in 7.5 million views and a lot of activity and all sorts of potential clients and business partnerships.

Mark S A Smith: Yes, indeed.

Mary Remon: So, I've learned from that, and it does bring some sales challenges to light and some lessons that I'm still curating for the business world.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah, a lot more to come. Now, the interesting thing about humility is a lot of times people confuse that with an adjacent word, "humiliated."

Mary Remon: Yeah. No. Opposite. Not opposite but a humble person would not humiliate someone.

Mark S A Smith: Never, never.

Mary Remon: Never. No.

Mark S A Smith: That's not the way it works. It's really about where's your focus. In an emotional intelligence type of scenario, humility becomes a desirable capability for a business partner.

Mary Remon: Exactly. The challenge is to stay humble and stay respectful of the other person and really focus all your attention on what matters to them.

Mark S A Smith: Yes. That's the only way we can sell disruptive products because the moment you put the spotlight on your product, you lose people in the world of disruption.

So, it's really interesting how humility, when it's time to go to market, is really the basis, the cornerstone of selling disruption.

Mary Remon: Yeah, and I didn't even realize that because it's part of what we naturally do as counselors. The focus should be on the other.

Mark S A Smith: Always.

Mary Remon: And so I never realized how much it's also a business skill, but I'm learning more and more from this. I also realized just like in counseling when doing this type of transaction, complex service, there's always an assessment in the conversation first.

Mark S A Smith: Always.

Mary Remon: It's not like buy me. Just buy my coaching. Buy my EAP services. It doesn't really work that way.

Mark S A Smith: Yes. In the world of selling disruption, assessment always is the first thing we do. And so, I think there's an interesting parallel between your practice and what we're talking about here. Excellent.

Mary Remon: Yeah, I just discovered that talking to you now. It's like the natural skills are now seen in a different light in the business world as sales so I guess there is some psychology to sales.

Mark S A Smith: There better be. There's an awful lot of psychology in sales. It's not about brute force. That doesn't work, especially when we're selling something that's new and unique. The brute force method does not work.

Mary Remon: Exactly.

Mark S A Smith: A lot of the old school sales techniques which were very much in your face and very aggressive and very assertive and people will compare that to, well, this more humble approach which is let's focus on the customer's needs and what they're talking about. But, in reality, it's highly enlightened to go that direction, and this manipulative approach to sales of let me jam this down your throat and manipulate you, that only works for a single transaction one time, but most of us are looking for long-term highly profitable relationships, and that technology no longer works.

Mary Remon: It's true because I think it's more about building a relationship so you have to not just listen to the other person or one transaction. It's not just a transaction. It's listening, and learning, and focusing, and building a relationship so the person looks forward to the next encounter.

Mark S A Smith: That's right. [The person of 00:09:09] interest.

Mary Remon: And the next encounter.

Mark S A Smith: That's it. That only happens when there's a balance of attention.

Mary Remon: Yes, genuine attention.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah, genuine attention and that's the root of humility. Interesting. So what's the opposite of humility then?

Mary Remon: Some words come to mind, a popular word, it's not exactly the opposite but everybody is talking about narcissism these days. Arrogance might be the opposite.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah. Well, you know the reason why we don't call it a "narcisissie" Because it's a whole lot easier to say "selfie."

Mary Remon: Oh. Yeah, I haven't heard that.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah. Narcissism and arrogance and [inaudible 00:09:45] it's all about me. But, to be successful selling, we have to put the spotlight back on the customer.

Mary Remon: Right. I'm noticing on LinkedIn a lot of people give themselves a big title and maybe it works for them, I don't know, like subject matter czar or something.

Mark S A Smith: Well, they also say president and CEO of a two-person company.

Mary Remon: Right. People maybe need to dial that down just a little bit unless it's working for them. I don't know. What do I know? The Harvard study that someone showed to me, it was actually ... You've probably heard of Good to Great.

Mark S A Smith: Jim Collins. Good to Great.

Mary Remon: Yeah, Jim Collins.

Mark S A Smith: Yes.

Mary Remon: It's called Level 5 Leadership: The Triumph of Humility and Fierce Resolve. And, this is a relatively old article. It's when he performed research on Fortune 500 companies. There were 1,435 Fortune 500 companies, and only 11 of them experienced the Good to Great transformation. And, what he found were very similar characteristics in the leaders of those Good to Great companies. And, one common denominator was personal humility combined with their professional will. That study was done a while ago.

Mark S A Smith: It's so accurate though because leadership is still leadership.

Mary Remon: Yes. Yes. But, maybe it's been a void in our society. People are just ... I don't know. Maybe you can help me figure out why it resonated with so many people when I made that post.

Mark S A Smith: Well, I think because there's a hunger for humility, and I think there's a hunger for people to be okay with humility.

Mary Remon: Yes.

Mark S A Smith: There's a hunger for people to be okay to be listened to and to listen. Boy, what a powerful interrupter and disrupter in today's environment. I think, Mary, that's spot on. Jim's ideas are spot on. The reason why is because in the executive skill stack, which we talked about in the Executive Strategy Summit, there's seven fundamental executive elements that we've researched and teased out. Number one on the list, if you don't have this, you don't get to lead, and that's presence. Executive presence. And, I think it's interesting that humility is a component of presence. Without that humility, without ability to have people looking to go, "Oh, I want to connect to this person. There's something there." And, it's not rockstar-like. It's leadership-like.

Mary Remon: Right. Exactly. It's different. It's not flashy.

Mark S A Smith: It's a charisma element.

Mary Remon: It's quiet presence. It can be charismatic but it's the same quiet presence that is very important in a counseling or coaching relationship.

Mark S A Smith: Well, you do a lot of work with executives, and physicians, and CEOs, and even pastors of churches, and all of those roles, it's critical that people have that presence, that command so people respect them and listen to what they have to say.

Mary Remon: Absolutely and just be down to earth, and come from a place of wanting to help, and respect their role that they're in, and whatever it is they're going through or what their hopes and dreams are. Really being fully present to help the other person. It's really about humility and respect and presence. The skills really transfer over quite well.

Mark S A Smith: Let's talk a little bit about how can a person identify if they're being humble and perhaps even some methods to develop a new level of humility.

Mary Remon: That's a very interesting question. People who are humble don't normally call themselves humble.

Mark S A Smith: Oh, no. You can't do that. It's an attribute.

Mary Remon: Right.

Mark S A Smith: As Dr. David Gruder says, "Kings and queens don't crown themselves."

Mary Remon: Exactly. I love that quote. Yeah. Then trying to analyze the elements of it is like am I staring into my navel too much? But, I think it's an important analysis. Practice focusing fully being present in the moment and focusing on the other person's goals, and on their needs, and combining that with substance, and character, and strength, but really just practice not thinking about what you're going to say next.

Mark S A Smith: How can you do that? That seems to be really difficult.

Mary Remon: You got to get comfortable with silence.

Mark S A Smith: Beautiful. Yeah. People really feel like silence is a bad thing. As a background in radio, dead air was a bad thing. You have to have that quiet, that space. Nice.

Mary Remon: And, I noticed that in conversation with you that you're very good at that because sometimes when people are quiet, they're thinking a really important answer and they have to dig deep. You don't always have to come up with a response or fill in the silence. To lose that sense of needing to say something and to really focus on listening and allowing silence is an important skill to try to develop.

Mark S A Smith: That's wonderful. I think a lot of sales people feel like they need to keep the conversation rolling. That they're not going anywhere if the conversation isn't continuing. If you listen to talk radio, most sales people listen to talk radio as they drive around, the hosts are always keeping the air filled with the exception of some of the really big ones who use silence to their massive impact. First of all, let's not use those examples as how you want to behave as a sales professional.

Mary Remon: Interesting. Well, silence can be very powerful.

Mark S A Smith: Yes, it certainly can. And, on the other side, a lot of sales people were taught by their sales instructor, "Make a closing statement and then shut up and the next person who speaks loses," as a way to trick people into being quiet. And, I have a slightly different approach to that. That is say something to which you need the answer and then be quiet until they answer and the next person who speaks has something to say, just better not be part of your pitch. We have to reframe for sales people some of that broken technology that we were taught that no longer works and actually destroys relationships.

Mary Remon: Yeah, combining the skills of a sales person with the background of a psychotherapist, those would be awesome superpowers to have.

Mark S A Smith: It's true. Oh, my goodness. She's analyzing me. I'm going to make the purchase just to make her think that I'm okay.

Mary Remon: A lot of people have these skills. Not everybody has both but they both can be learned and honed, and they complement each other quite well. The question is how to apply it, right?

Mark S A Smith: Yeah, that's right. To improve your humility, first, you can't say you're humble. Second is be okay with silence and dead air and lose the need to be formulating your answer.

Mary Remon: Correct. And, then be your real authentic self. There's no need for fancy labels to get attention. Start by engaging the other person.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah, you ask the questions first versus pitching first. That is another old school sales tactic that has got to be destroyed which is the first thing you have to do is sell yourself.

Mary Remon: Oh, yeah. I wouldn't be good at that.

Mark S A Smith: You sold yourself to seven and a half million people on LinkedIn, Mary. Obviously, your disruptive approach is more powerful than you gave yourself credit for.

Mary Remon: I surprise myself every once in a while. It really blew me away. It's been a wild ride. It really has.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah. And really the reason why we're doing all this is to build trust with people. As Zig Ziglar said, "There's five reasons why people won't do business with you. No need, no hurry, no money, no want and no trust. And of those five, the only thing we have any impact on is the trust." And so, by being humble in our approach, you can probably be substantially more powerful in generating that trust.

Mary Remon: Yes. Some people mistake humility and kindness for weakness or for low self-esteem and things like that. I was actually told early on in my career a long time ago that, Mary, you're never going to get anywhere in your career by being nice. And, I was just out of graduate school. This is my first supervisor. Something felt wrong about that statement and so I decided I was going to try to prove her wrong.

Mark S A Smith: Nice.

Mary Remon: So I pretty much tried to stay nice, meaning respectful, and it hasn't held me back.

Mark S A Smith: No. No. Being nice works, especially the higher up the food chain you go. One of the things that I learned a long time ago is that an executive will never introduce you to their inner circle if they think you are going to embarrass them.

Mary Remon: Oh, yeah.

Mark S A Smith: Being nice becomes an asset when you're working with important people who can make decisions that have massive impacts on your future.

Mary Remon: Right. It's being polite, respectful, kind, I mean the basic things that we're taught in life that are sometimes missing in our crazy society. It's rough out there but I know that a lot of people have these attributes and sometimes they get lost in the shuffle, but there are some wonderful, kind people out there.

Mark S A Smith: Yes. And, they are the ones when they make a request get a yes.

Mary Remon: Yes. Because they're not always making request and saying, "Me, me, me, me, me. Look at me."

Mark S A Smith: I think you're right about that. They have some equity in the favor bank and the emotional bank. Yes.

Mary Remon: Yes, the emotional bank account. Exactly. Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: Let's not mistake humility for something that it's not. Let's recognize it for what it really is, and that is a power tool to connect with people in an unexpected way that allows you to be disruptive in the marketplace.

Mary Remon: Yes, it is extremely powerful. And so, these leaders that went from Good to Great, they were powerful, humble leaders, and they allowed their teams to step up, and they gave credit so they motivated hard work, and they led by example. It can be very, very powerful and ironically, surprisingly, it can be profitable.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah, it can be extremely profitable.

Mary Remon: Yeah. That can't be the goal. It's a nice benefit, right?

Mark S A Smith: We have to have profit to run our business. Profit is a reward for accruing value.

Mary Remon: We have to have profit.

Mark S A Smith: The profit is a result of a valuable relationship.

Mary Remon: Exactly. Having the valuable relationship, stimulating the conversation that's meaningful to the other person, being genuine, building trust, all those things are very, very, very important and they can result in increased profit. It's just when you start with an intent, like with my LinkedIn post, the intent was not to sell, but it sold.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah. Right. The intent is to engage conversation. You said it right at the very beginning of our conversation. It triggered a relevant conversation, which is the first step to a successful sale.

Mary Remon: Yes. I'm learning from all these responses. Imagine 4,000 responses and personal messages. Someone pointed out that I already answered my own question. In other words, how can we remain humble and still show our value? And someone said, "You just did, Mary."

Mark S A Smith: Beautiful. By engaging and asking people questions. That's so beautiful.

Mary Remon: If I may say, it was a humbling experience.

Mark S A Smith: And, what does a humbling experience mean?

Mary Remon: I don't know. I think the word is overused sometimes.

Mark S A Smith: I think what a humbling experience means to me is an experience that takes away my self-centeredness and replaces it with an awe for something bigger, something greater, something smarter than me.

Mary Remon: Yes, yes. It's definitely an experience that you would never expect.

Mark S A Smith: Oh, that happens to me on a regular basis. That's why I do this show. I get to hang out with people who are smarter than me on a regular basis.

Mary Remon: And, I'm humbled to be on the show so we're going to have a humility society here.

Mark S A Smith: We're going to make lots of money from it. Oh, one of the things I wanted to point out is that you talked about profit. Sustainable profit is going to come from a humble organization. That's what Good to Great illustrated and sustainability. You can make profits by manipulating people, by stealing from people. There's lots of ways to make profit but the point is sustainable profit. That's really the element we're talking about. That's what creates disruption and that's where humility plays in that role of sustainable profit.

Mary Remon: Exactly. Whether you're selling a service or a product, it's got the same guiding principle.

Mark S A Smith: It is. From a sales standpoint, product and service result in the same thing which is an outcome that the customer desires and is willing to exchange cash for or some other service, some barter for it. Some people think there is a difference. There's fundamentally no difference in how the want cycle, the psychological cycle of that purchase remains identical whether it's a product or a service.

Mary Remon: Very interesting.

Mark S A Smith: How can our listener get a hold of you if they'd like to have a conversation about your life coaching skills, or if they'd like to work with some of your insights from an employee assistance professional for coping with change in the workplace, or

getting teams to work a little bit better, or anything of that nature? I know that you're licensed in just the state of Florida.

Mary Remon: I'm licensed to practice psychotherapy in the state of Florida. I can do executive and life coaching anywhere in the world, and I can practice as an employee assistance professional for organizations, so I help individuals and teams anywhere in the world. If people are really interested in harnessing the power of humility or if they're looking for a life coach with those characteristics, I'm available for speaking. I'm writing articles and coming out with a book on this subject.

Mark S A Smith: Yay. Yeah. That will be great.

Mary Remon: And so, if people want regular tips and articles or if they just want to find out more and maybe they're considering life coaching or just wanting to figure out what's the key to harnessing that power and how can I practice it, I would be delighted to speak with them. They can reach me by email if they can spell my last name right.

Mark S A Smith: It'll be on the show page and there's also your website Mary Remon, R-E-M-O-N, M-A-R-Y R-E-M-O-N, dot com. We'll have that and they can contact you through the website as well.

Mary Remon: Yes, absolutely.

Mark S A Smith: I look forward to having another conversation with you when your book is ready. That'll be awesome.

Mary Remon: Oh, absolutely. You'll be quoted in that book for sure. You helped inspire it for real. Thank you so much.

Mark S A Smith: Oh, you're very kind. It's been an absolute joy to get to know you through this conversation. Thanks so much, Mary, for being a guest on the Selling Disruption Show.

Mary Remon: Thank you, Mark. It's been very, very interesting. You've been wonderful.