

# Make it don't fake it – Sabrina Horne

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

fake, company, people, imposter syndrome, situation, business, book, podcast, integrity, vaccine, stand, hear, starting, preorder, ceo, success, honest, truth, astrazeneca, bit

### **Susan Heaton-Wright** 00:00

Welcome to the superstar communicator podcast. My name is Susan Heaton-Wright, a leading impact speaking and communications expert. My aim is to show you how to make an impact. So you will be heard or listened to and respected for career success. Listen weekly to the podcast, and go to our website, [www.superstarcommunicator.com](http://www.superstarcommunicator.com). Hello, everybody, this is Susan Heaton-Wright. Thank you very much for tuning in today, I'm really, really grateful that you take time to download and listen to the superstar communicator podcast. As you know, we have monthly complimentary Lunch and Learn master classes just for half an hour. And even if you are listening in different parts of the world, if you register, you can get a recording of the content which is really impactful packed in. So remember, if you want to know when we're doing the next one, please register at [www.superstarcommunicator.com/webinar-interest](http://www.superstarcommunicator.com/webinar-interest). And I'll put that link at the bottom of the notes so that you've got them. Do you know it's an interesting time because there is so much change, as you know, people are beginning to go back to work. There are a lot of uncertainty, we are still getting used to using technology far more in work, whether we are working remotely, or actually we've embraced more technology. Certainly that's the case with me. And I know that it is for many of you. Quite often there are workshops or webinars or information rather like I do with my master classes on a particular topic. And I found it very recent, very interesting recently because an organisation that are I'm involved in, are just about to do something on podcasting. And they've got three lovely ladies who are going to be sharing their experiences and expertise. Between them, they have less than a year's podcast experience. And I found it really interesting that they didn't approach me. As you know, I've been podcasting for over seven years, and I've been a guest on lots and lots of different podcasts all over the world as well. I got some experience. But somehow, sometimes people feel that new and doing something that you haven't been doing for very long and perhaps you're faking it till you make it is okay. Now, I think that you will be interested by the interview that I have today. Because the lady that is on the other end of the internet is called Sabrina Horn. And she's an award winning CEO, a communications expert in PR advisor and author. She's currently the CEO of horn strategy, LLC, a consultancy focused on helping entrepreneurs and CEOs navigate the early stages of their business. She founded Horn Group, a public relations firm, with \$500, because she's in the United States and five years job experience, becoming one of a few female CEOs in Silicon Valley in the early 1990s. Over a quarter of a century, her firm advised 1000s of executives and their companies from the hottest startups to the fortune 500. Doing so with special focus on authenticity, which we know is invaluable. However, this is why I'm interested in talking to her so hang on. As a young executive Horne learned about leadership on the job through two lenses one as a CEO growing and running her business and the other a strategic advisor, guiding her clients through their own unique business challenges facing countless difficult situations, crises, even failure She came to understand that leadership is about making the right decisions at the right time, based on the often very harsh realities of the truth. Through her

journey, she learned that there are no shortcuts to achieving long term business success. Still, she confesses to having made many mistakes. And now in her first book, she shares what she learned about how to make it without faking it. And her book is called make it don't fake it, leading with authenticity, for real success is real business success. And the thing is, that, as I was saying about that podcast masterclass, often, we have the idea that we got to be new, and that we're experiencing things for the first time. But there is also value in really knowing what you're doing so that if you are a business owner, you can make the right decisions. So I think that we're in for a really, really good interview with Sabrina. So thank you very much for coming on, Sabrina. You know, I have loved reading your book, make it don't fake it. Oh, wonderful. Thank you. For those people that are listening, who don't know what this is all about? Could you explain about making it not faking it and fake it till you make it beginning to terms that are, you know, widely around?

06:49

Right, right? Well, first of all, thanks so much for having me. Fake it till you make it is a mantra that came into our social presence, I'd say starting almost 10 years ago. And back then it was sort of a little quip or a joke, right? Did you prepare everything for the meeting? Oh, fake it till you make it. But now, you know, through social media, right? It's mutated and taken on a life of its own. There was even a TV series in the US called fake it till you make it that went through eight episodes before it was cancelled. You know, but but it's all about this fake fake news, fake everything, culture. And it's the notion that, you know, actually, that it's good business advice, and that faking it will help you be successful. To the Quite to the contrary, I believe that that's just the worst business advice ever. Because the truth always, always comes out, right? It might, might be five minutes, or, you know, five weeks or even five years, but, but ultimately, the truth is always exposed. And so my title of my book is make it don't fake it. And to lead rather with authenticity for real business success.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 08:14

Do you think that people are faking it? Because actually, they don't have the confidence? Or they feel that they've got to embellish things, when they're not very experienced?

08:27

Yes, absolutely. There are lots of ways you can fake it from the innocent, to complete fraud. But, yes, I mean, quite often, you know, particularly among virgin zeros and millennials who are building their careers, they may suffer from imposter syndrome, or they may just not, you know, feel that they've got what it takes and to get the job interview. And so they twist the truth a little or exaggerated. And, and, and that's a bad place to start with.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 09:07

Do you think that that is a generational thing you mentioned about millennials? Or do you think it's actually an age thing, but when we were in our 20s, starting out that we felt that we had to big ourselves up?

09:24

Yeah, I mean, I do think that in that particular example, it's age related, right? And it's not it's not until we've been around the block a few times that we gain the confidence to know that well, we don't need to fake it we we know how to navigate the situation. We've seen it before. You know, got the T shirt, got the

hat got the T key chain, like we know how to, to navigate certain situations, but but I will say, you know, we've seen in companies like Boeing and theranos and more recently with with we work there very experienced executives are also have been known to to turn their cheek to the truth and shove things under the rug. So it's not only an age related thing, it can be anybody and any gender as well,

**Susan Heaton-Wright 10:16**

our height, that's important to know, isn't it Really? Now, you you mentioned about the, you know, recent things like, we work, but I remember the.com Bubble Bubble at 2000 2001, where there was a similar thing wasn't there bigging up a potential? a potential business? Do you think there's any difference between what's going on now? And what happened 20 years ago?

10:46

Yeah, so what happened 20 years ago, I mean, I'm very familiar with it, because I was running my company then. And when the bubble burst, I was actually, I was eight months pregnant with my second daughter. And I've never run a company before I had no leadership training. And, you know, my clients were leaving left and right. And, and I and I had to make this painful decision to do a layoff. What was happening in the market then is a bit different. Then it was all about this irrational exuberance that Alan Greenspan talked about. And any company with anything online, was on the internet, and, you know, thought they could go public and make loads of money. Well, they all got kind of greedy. And they got kind of caught up in this notion that that the internet would make them successful, when in fact, their business models just didn't have what it took to be sustainable. And so that's when it started to unravel and unfold. None of those executives, I would say, with maybe a few exceptions, you know, were evil or, you know, intended to deceive the public, right? I mean, it was it was more greed than it was creating deception. What you see today that maybe is a bit different. In the case of some of the companies I just mentioned, you know, even Bernie Madoff who passed away last week, you know, there's the intent to deceive. And that's really when you cross the line into faking it when you're when you're doing something at the expense of other people intentionally. And that's when you really run into trouble.

**Susan Heaton-Wright 12:36**

Really interesting. Now, I know that you mentioned about faking it, in the least possible scenario. It's fibbing, isn't it? Or winging it over exaggeration? Do you think that if you are recruiting somebody, and you saw their resume a I'm using your term resume resume a rather than CV, which we have in United Kingdom? How are you able to get through that faking bit? Do you ask particular questions? Or do you just let it go?

13:14

Yeah, well, I mean, as an employer, you know, I wouldn't let it go. Because it's not honest. And I wouldn't want to hire someone that's not being truthful, right? In my company. And so if I detected something I would say, Well, tell me more about your experience at Harvard. More about that research paper you had published? Can I get a copy of it? You know, like, of course, I would want to dig deeper and in the hopes, right, giving the person the benefit of the doubt that you know, that they really did do these things. But, you know, of course, you know, I wouldn't let it slide. No way.

**Susan Heaton-Wright 14:02**

It's interesting. You say that, because we have the apprentice over here in the United Kingdom, which you obviously have with a very famous host. Yes. move swiftly on. And famously, on one occasion, Lord Sugar actually chose someone who had who had openly faked it and fibbed, and even on the first day that he was there for his job. He didn't show up because he had a cold, but he'd been found in the pub drinking.

14:38

Right? Well, I mean, so there you go. I mean, you know, he, he was exposed and like I said, like, but it may be that you can pull a fast one and that you know, you get you get the job or you get first in line or whatever it is that you want, you know, but ultimately, there's two things you'll Get you'll be exposed for it and then you'll damage your reputation. And if you're a CEO of a company, you damage the reputation of everyone who works for you and that in that organisation, right. But the second point is that, you know, at the end of the day, you have to decide, what do you stand for? And what you want to be remembered for? And do you really want to carry that that fakery? The fibbing with you, and the anxiety that that creates waiting for the possibility that you might be exposed? You know? And so Isn't it just a lot easier to, to just deal with in the realm of the truth? Right, so such a crazy thing? Yes.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 15:44

Yeah. Because it does put a lot of pressure on you that, you know, you mentioned about imposter syndrome. And this is almost the cousin of imposter syndrome, that you will be found out because of your fibs, not because you you don't feel good enough,

16:01

right? Yes, imposter syndrome. I've studied it a bit, because I'm getting a lot of questions about it. And it is the notion that you don't feel deserving of the success you've achieved, and that you'll be somehow exposed for being a fraud, that your success is due to luck, or good timing or other people's work. And, and it does affect both men and women and minorities. And, you know, I felt like that myself, when I sold my company, after 25 years, I was running this practice group within the company that bought my company. And there are all these people in this room, and they, I didn't know any of them. And they all were experts in something and I thought, Oh, my God, like they're gonna think, I don't know anything, and that they have such high expectations of me. So it even affected me, you know, being what I would consider a successful woman having run a business. And so there are a few things you know, that you can do to deal to deal with that. You know, I would say number one, if you want to stop feeling like an imposter, you have to stop thinking like one. And best way to do that is to just really make an honest assessment of everything you've achieved, and write it down, or actually record it, and then play it back to yourself. not comparing yourself to anyone, but just an honest assessment of reality. The second thing is to talk with mentors that hopefully you have aligned with you. Because these are people who've been in your shoes and who've likely felt that way. And can help you sort of get out of that rut and help you suit that particular situation you might be dealing with. I also like to practice something. It's visualisation, but I call it watching myself in my own movie.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 18:06

Yes, yes.

18:08

And what I mean by that is, right, you're the director of your own movie, and you're in it, and you're behind the camera. And you need to just visualise How do you want to appear in this movie? How do you want to come across? And, you know, if that's by acting more confident, or by saying certain things, use sort of pre navigate the situation in your mind before you're in it? And then lastly, I mean, I always conquer fear with information. And so, you know, go find out who's in the meeting, what are they? What's their background? What's the agenda for the meeting? what is expected of you in that context, and prepare a list of questions. So that armed with that, right, it breaks apart that that feeling of

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 18:58

a lack of confidence. Brilliant, really answered well, and I think that this is really, really relevant for the faking it. That goes on with with imposter syndrome. One thing that I find personally might resonate with you, is that when I feel that that little voice is taking over, I say thank you to it. But also, you know, you might know who you are, but also recognise that it's trying to protect me and actually, I'm pushing myself outside my, my comfort zone, and that can only be a good thing. Yeah. really dangerous undoing then, yeah. Right. I

19:51

mean, it's most often it's the little green man right on your shoulder who's telling you, you can't do this or you know, but it is also as you Say, a form of self protection, the risk with imposter syndrome is that it, it can strip away your confidence, it can really reduce you to a place where you are going to start to fake it. Because, you know, because you're because you have so little confidence, you don't know what to say. And so instead of just being yourself, you end up making something up. And it's not authentic, and it's probably not going to work. And so that, you know, that's the ripple effect of of imposter syndrome. If it's not corrected.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 20:39

Yes, yes. But within the context of what we're talking about, about faking it, and basically fibbing or over exaggerating, but let's get back to anybody who is a, you know, is developing their career, or like you and myself, who are business owners, we are going to have fear, we are going to think, oh, my goodness, what can I do? I could, I could over exaggerate my experience and things like that. You mentioned something about in having an inventory of your skills and what you might to bring in need to bring into the company in order to develop? Yeah,

21:27

yeah, I mean, I wrote about this in my book about disarming fear and organising risk, right. And as an entrepreneur, and as a person running my own business. For a long time, there have been many occasions where you're confronted with situations, and you just think, my God, I have no idea what to do. And it would be easy to just look the other way, or pretend the situation doesn't exist. But the way to fight fear, uncertainty and doubt, to call it Fudd is, is to make an assessment of like, other situations and examples and case studies of how either you or a competitor, or anyone, frankly, dealt with that situation. Right, that's, that's one option. The other is to talk to people and research and find out more about about the situation, right, and develop options. A, you never want to be without path forward, you never want to be without like, you don't even have to have it all mapped out. Sometimes, you just need to get through

the end of the day. And then you know, and then you can get a start over the next day and come up with a new plan, depending upon how volatile The situation is. I do also really believe in, in speaking with mentors, and and I mean, I can't stress it enough to have people that you can talk to, because it can be very lonely at the top and very isolating right? And to come up even with just a straw man have a strategy to to get to the next place. because let me tell you a very viable business strategy can be based on moving parts where you're just moving one part forward at a time, and then sort of the plan unfolds in front of you. And, you know, and I have to say that, you know, at this time right now, where so many of us are unravelling from COVID. But, you know, reality is a moving target. And so you have to develop several contingency plans. And, you know, mix them all together or pick one or the other.

**Susan Heaton-Wright 23:42**

Do you know what you're saying? And what's coming into my mind as you speak? Is that actually, this is all about leadership and self leadership?

23:54

Yes, absolutely. It is. I mean, whether you're a leader in a company, or you're moving up within the organisation, or you're just starting out in your career, it's all about self assessment. And I mean, I, I will tell you, when I was 29 years old, I started my company. And I mean, I, as I said, I had no management training, no leadership training, I, I knew how to do public relations. But I didn't know how to run a business. And you have to start out by asking yourself, what do you stand for? What are your What are your values? What do you want your company to stand for? What do you want your personal brand to be? And then building a web of just around that right, with, with different things that can make that come to life? How does living a life with integrity manifest itself and you start to build a book of experiences around how to navigate those situations and When you know, when the chips are down, I always come back to what do I really want to stand for here, even if it means losing the revenue losing the business, or a partnership, right, I'm better off without it. Because I, I have to live with myself in stand up to as an example for my kids and my employees.

**Susan Heaton-Wright 25:24**

You're so right. I have a music company, which is quite quiet at the moment, surprisingly, as well as my communications business. And a few years ago, I made a stand on a particular situation, which I won't go into with an event company that were basically lying. And after a few weeks, they they asked for a refund, even though everything had gone well. And they'd written that, and I could easily have just written the check and sent it back. But I knew I would be letting down my team. Right. Right. And, and I was absolutely right. And actually, it resolved itself in court to my favourite because they had lied. They faked it, and the judge found it out. But even though there was stress, I knew that it was the right decision to make, because I was seeing within the music industry as someone that was standing up more people basically scamming.

26:35

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, that's for the privilege of being a leader or initiating anything, really, you know, you're the owner of it. And you have to see it through and do right by everybody, and live with yourself at the end of the day. You know, but, you know, I'm also a parent of two young girls. And so they're, you know, it's also like, what would they think of their mom, if, you know if she did this, or that or the other thing,



right? And because that's not how I would want them to be. So. I mean, you really can't argue with integrity, and you know, authenticity. And you have to judge each situation, of course, is is different in there, sometimes legal issues, and, and so forth. But, you know, but but you make a choice, you make a place, right? To be a certain way to conduct yourself a certain way, and to set that standard in your in your company or in your family or, you know, wherever you are in your life.

**Susan Heaton-Wright 27:43**

But do you think that for everybody? integrity is a core value?

27:50

No, no? Sadly, I don't, I don't think it is. I mean, we all know that. It's good. To be honest, we all know that it's bad to be dishonest. But in our society today, I think the examples of dishonesty we see are the most egregious, you know, prison sentence fraud. We don't think about the every day, little examples of it. And that's, that's where most of us live, right. That's what most of us do. And, you know, I also think that I was talking with someone the other day during COVID, which was such a bizarre experience, in and of itself, that maybe we need to be reminded about integrity, right? And that you can't hide at home, you can't pretend this or that, you know, you need to re engage with humanity and, and seek justice as we did yesterday for George Floyd in the US. Right. And you know, and so that's my suggestion with this book that we need to make a hard U turn back to him integrity.

**Susan Heaton-Wright 29:11**

Do you think that because of social media, and people can hide behind a persona, that integrity is getting lost?

29:19

Yeah, I think I think it's I think that's definitely the case. And I think social media as I said is is what sort of promoted fake it till you make it as being good business advice. In no in a way it's kind of ironic, right? Because in the beginning social media exposed companies right for not delivering on a good product or what have you, and then people would post about it, and they would keep that company honest. But But now it's it's gone off the rails and you know, you can create something that seems appealing but it's fake, and millions of people will grab on to it and all of a sudden, it it's a new reality. But it's based on a total fakery. So, so social media is really at the crux of that.

**Susan Heaton-Wright 30:10**

And of course, it's younger people that that are more influenced by it.

30:15

Yeah. Oh, yes, I mean, young and old, but in particular, I think the younger generations, because it's, it's so addictive, and it's so enticing, and it draws you in, and then you become emotionally engaged and, and in, and then you're part of it. So, you know, there's a lesson in all that. And the lesson is that, unfortunately, you can't believe everything you see and hear. And you have to be your own best judge of what's going on out there. But the best way to start is by leading by example, and doing it yourself.

**Susan Heaton-Wright 30:54**

Now, I don't know if you have come across this in the United States. But certainly, in the United Kingdom, of course, we've got the COVID vaccines, and Oxford AstraZeneca produced one vaccine, which has been vilified in the press, there have been things and even a couple of presidents in the EU have said that it was dangerous, when in fact, the research is that it is no more dangerous. And it's a miniscule amount of danger, no more dangerous than any of the other vaccines. And yet there has been this sort of false narrative that has been created

31:39

by you know, we so we have the same thing with Johnson and Johnson vaccine. Yes, yeah. And there was an issue with a very, very small sample of women with blood clots. And so they Johnson and Johnson was absolutely vilified, you know, but now they're talking about bringing it back to the market and for certain people and a smaller, not doses, but a smaller production run. And, you know, so that's really unfortunate, right? Because what affected a handful or two handfuls of people, it shouldn't affect its success overall, and how it can help millions of others. And so the challenge there is proper communication from the company itself, right. And statements from and something that is so critically important at this moment, right, a vaccine for this virus, to hear from the CEO of AstraZeneca. Or Johnson and Johnson are, you know, in to make a statement, here is what happened. Here's the plan. Here's why it's still safe. Right. And I, I can honestly say, I don't know if I've heard those messages, right? I haven't heard that kind of reassurance. Maybe it's there. And I didn't, you know, I didn't hear it. But I do think that a statement from the company, and multiple statements, because frequency of communication really, really matters in moments of fear and crisis. You know, that I think would have gone a long way towards curtailing that a bit.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 33:25

My understanding is that Johnson and Johnson are doing it at low cost like AstraZeneca. Yeah. Wait, what? Yeah, we know where this is going. So the fakery has been because other companies will miss out on Yeah, yeah. Yes. Very interesting, isn't it? Yeah. What? Do you have any tips for new entrepreneurs or people starting a new jobs early on in their career for trying to avoid fakery? And over embellishment, in any particular situation? or just in general, just in general?

34:09

Yeah. I mean, I think it all again, it comes down to making an assessment of your values, and what you stand for, and how do you want to be perceived, right and, and, and leading with that every day, I mean, literally, it's, it's about writing, writing it down. The second thing is, to to be grounded in reality, and with because reality is constantly changing, there's the reality of who you are and your product or what your career and then the world around you that's always evolving. And, you know, to always to say within the confines of the truth, what is most compelling about yourself, or your product, right? And it comes down to language and you're a communications expert too right. And, to be honest, it's almost a sad to say, but people who are really authentic and speak with great candour is so unusual these days, it's so refreshing that it stands out, and it cuts through the noise. So what a concept, right? To be honest, as a marketing strategy for yourself. But I would also say that a few other things empathy, speaking with empathy is, is a big trend right now, at least in the United States, empathy and humility are words that are used quite a bit. And what that means is being understanding of other people's situations, and using reflective communication as a method. So if I hear a complaint, it's not Oh, you're wrong, getting all



defensive. Right? It's, it's, it's viewing a complaint as a gift. It because it's information, and to acknowledge the situation like, wow, that must have really been terrible for you. I'm really sorry that you have that experience. How can we make it better? How can I do better? How can I make that not happen again, for you? And there's three words I love, which is just tell me more, it opens the door for further conversation, right? You may not get the deal, you may not get the the money from the venture capitalist, you may not get the job. But if you say, tell me more, what could I have done? You open the door for a future? If you just say, Oh, well, you know, off with your head, or, you know, you're wrong, forget it, then the door shut. And I think being humble, right, and asking for feedback, being open to ideas, and taking complaints as gifts, and sort of saying, you know, wow, that was a that's a terrible situation. How can we make this better? And then getting back to those people and saying, you know, here's, here's how we fix this. You know, it creates a lot of goodwill, and leaves the door open for future discussion.

**Susan Heaton-Wright 37:35**

Oh, that that is so beautiful. Actually, it's the art of possibility that, as you said, the door is still open. You never know, in the future, whether somebody might think, Oh, I was I was, we interviewed Sabrina, she was lovely. wasn't quite right for this role, but

37:55

right, exactly right. And so it's all about what you stand for, and how you want to be remembered and created creating that goodwill. And that is part of building a personal brand. Whether it's for yourself as just starting out, or as a founder of a company, or even a more experienced executive its reputation is everything.

**Susan Heaton-Wright 38:24**

So before we finish the podcast, how can people get hold of your book? Oh, well, thank you for asking. You know, one of the reasons why we're here everybody, isn't it?

38:39

Yeah, well, there's, there's a few ways you can go to my website, to my book page, which is [www.sabrinahorne.com/book](http://www.sabrinahorne.com/book) , and all the information about all the places where you can buy it and preorder it or there and sign up for email updates. And you can of course, also go to Amazon, the book is available for preorder there. And there's also a place you can text apparently, I feel like I'm on you know, American Idol with this thing. You can text and I can't find it. I don't want to give the wrong information. But um, yeah, that's those are the basic two ways to get a hold of my book, and it's available on June 22, but you can pre order it. Now. The Kindle version is also available. And the audible version will be available for purchase in a few weeks

**Susan Heaton-Wright 39:49**

old. Fantastic. And what I'll do listeners is that I'll make sure that I put these links in the notes so that you can preorder Really, really easily. Wonderful. Thank you. Is there anything else you'd like to add before we finish?

40:07

Well, no, I think it's suffice it to say that, that we should all think about when we go off into the world, how we can be successful with integrity and being authentic to ourselves, and to enjoy the journey of achieving success by being honest. And don't fake it, because you won't make it.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 40:34

fantastic way to finish. Thank you so much for coming on, Sabrina.

40:40

Thank you, Susan. I had a great time. It was great talking with you.

**Susan Heaton-Wright** 40:43

And you take care. Yeah, bye bye. So as you can hear, this was a most fantastic interview. And I wish the Brener all the best for the launch of her excellent book, which obviously I've read, remember that there is a link to purchase the book in the notes. And also, if you're still interested in doing one of our monthly complimentary Lunch and Learn masterclasses, do remember to register on the [www.superstarcommunicator.com/webinar-interest](http://www.superstarcommunicator.com/webinar-interest) . So until next time, and remember to subscribe, and please leave a lovely recommendation for us. Because the more we have, the better it is for people finding this content. So until next time, this is Susan from superstar communicator. Bye bye. You have been listening to the superstar communicator podcast. Don't forget to subscribe and review the podcast on iTunes and all that. Please contact us if you want to discuss any topic would suggest a topic for us to include or a guest who could come on to the podcast go to [www.superstarcommunicator.com](http://www.superstarcommunicator.com)