

## 38. Building Your Brand with Dr. Dana Coriel



**FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT**

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**Michael:** Well, hey, everyone, and welcome to another episode of Doctors Living Deliberately. Excited to have everyone here with us again today. And of course, welcome to my co host, Dr. Arpita Gupta DePalma. How are you doing?

**Arpita:** I'm great today. How are you doing, Michael?

**Michael:** Excited to be here, and excited to introduce our guest to everyone. So today we're chatting with Dr. Dana Coriel she is a traditionally trained internist who used all of her clinical medicine knowledge to pivot and has become a digital entrepreneur. She is the founder, editor and CEO of SoMeDocs. And we're so excited to have you here chatting with us today. How are you Dana?

**Dana:** I'm great. And I am likewise so excited to chat with both of you. I've seen, you know, different episodes and different snippets. So it is uber exciting for me to hop on and do this myself as well.

**Michael:** Well, I gave everybody a little bit of an intro, but can you tell us a little bit more? So you started out as a traditionally trained internist. Tell us more. Tell us about what brought you here today.

**Dana:** Yeah. So I was practicing medicine just like every other doctor and maybe a lot of your listeners. I was practicing medicine in an office setting. I was seeing patients day in and day out. And this went on for many years. I practiced for close to 15 years after residency training. And my trajectory is a little complicated because so much went into why I actually ended up leaving clinical medicine, but that's sort of what happened is that I literally left clinical medicine. In between a lot happened. I had a period of self discovery. I founded a business. I built the business while I was working. And then eventually I realized that you cannot fully grow a startup into a success when you are still working a, you know, job as an internist. And then besides that, you know, a lot of healthcare I believe is broken. And so that also sort of pushed me out, but you know, all of those little moving pieces contributed to me being where I am here today.

**Arpita:** It's interesting. I, so immediately I got caught with the comment that you made about like how you had this period of self discovery. So can you tell us a little bit about what was that? What was the point that you recognize that you wanted to do something different and then what was that different path?

**Dana:** Yeah. I love that question. And I love talking about it because it's such a distinct point in my life and I know exactly why it happened. Unlike other things that sort of are nebulous or sort of happened because of a mixture of things. I literally stepped away from medicine. So I basically needed to disconnect to discover that I was talented in and had an interest in and was drawn to all of these other things that now occupy my life and that I actually refuse to let go of for as long as I live. You know, and those are things that a lot of people sort of take for granted, especially when they're not in the medical fields. And I'm talking about simple things like, cooking, like entertaining, like designing your home, like concentrating on what makes you happy and what makes you healthy. And these are things that doctors just many times don't have time for and don't prioritize because we give, we give, give, give. We have a really arduous journey and we are on it for so long and it takes away so much from us that we just don't give to ourselves.

So what happened is that I went on maternity leave with my third son. And this was after having, you know, a child during residency and another child after residency and working with children and this and that. And finally, for my third one, I made a decision that I was going to take that maternity leave that we don't really get, we don't get a long maternity leave. So I thought I'd be away for three months. I took that maternity leave and I

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ended up being away from medicine. So that complete disconnect was what was needed, I believe, for me to truly breathe like the air. I'm being really poetic, but it's truly what happened is like breathing the air of normalcy of like, what is it like when you are no longer a stress doctor? And mind you, I was still a stressed mother because I had two young children and now a baby under my hands and yet that was right. It was doable and it was at least a time where I could tend to them and be a mother but also explore myself. So. That period of time being disconnected from clinical medicine from medicine in general was my period of self discovery because I never realized that, you know, I could cook a meal for my family and have them, you know, lick their fingers because it was so good. I would never dream of doing that until I cleared my schedule and cleared my thoughts of any obligations and committed to just doing those simple things.

**Michael:** You bring up an excellent point and I think this is something that afflicts most physicians is we are so busy that we never give ourselves an opportunity to even wonder about all of our interests and the things that we would like to be doing or could be doing if we gave ourselves the chance. And it really is so important to give yourself the space, the downtime to allow yourself an opportunity to think about what are the things that I really want to be doing? Because when you are so overburdened and overstressed and overwhelmed, there's no space there for you to even imagine, like, could I cook a meal for my family? And so I love that you kind of gave yourself that space. And obviously, there was still a lot of other stuff going on in your life. But as we are all aware medicine can be all consuming, and so if you don't allow yourself just a little bit of, of wiggle room to kind of explore those other interests, then you're never gonna know. And so how did you kind of use that space as you're exploring all these things that you want to be doing, like cooking and, and working on your home, that how did you then kind of decide to lean into these other interests that you've developed, like digital entrepreneurship?

**Dana:** Yeah, it all sort of evolved naturally. I was allowing myself to do things that I would not normally allow myself to do. So blogging, for example became increasingly popular during that period when I took off. I saw that a lot of my non medical peers and my neighbors and such, they were reading blogs and they were soaking up that information and the blogs were fun and that, to me, was such a great way to self express and to get out, like, you know, your stories, your frustrations, your happiness, your thoughts, your photos. It was such a cool way to express yourself that I felt like, hmm, like, why can't I blog? But I had that like inner fear and that inner block where it's like, well, I can't blog because I'm a doctor. And I know that many doctors have felt that way, even though a lot of them wanted to, and even wanted to do it in a non doctor way in even like a silly way or in a joking way or have a blog with photos, you know, there's just this like traditional mentality of what your doctor's supposed to be like. And so you know, I tried at that time to still stay true to having become a doctor in my career and say, well, how can I mesh together the world of this digital space where everyone is suddenly flocking to. And during that time I saw that a lot of people were also listening to medical advice through blogs and such, and so I was like, how can more doctors be involved in a way that's still true to their profession and that's still professional, but still make contact with society and the people around them in a positive way.

And so that drew me into the online world and drew me to being a part of social media more. A space that I had shied away from for so long because I was so private, was suddenly a space that like was allowing me to express myself in such a cool way and connect with people in new ways. So yeah, I think that that's sort of how I evolved to become part of the digital world. And specifically I did it also because I always wanted to write, and before the blogs came, just the traditional books, and I wanted to write a book, and I attended a conference at Harvard in Boston the Healthcare Writers Conference for Healthcare Professionals. I was actually asked to be on faculty there because of my social media skills and my photo skills and I went there, and that's where I met a lot of people in writing and publishers and such, and I learned that it's not enough to

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just want to write a book and be a doctor. You need to have a following. And so a lot of the publishing companies, they wanted to see that you had very high numbers on social media. And I understand from a business perspective, they want a line out the door when you release your book, because it means more sales for them. But that was another big point that made me go out on social media and say, okay, I really need to embrace this and I need to do this. And doing it, you know, led to all of the things that happened in between, which was, you know, again, building the community of physicians and then building my business and the website that's known as SoMe Docs.

**Arpita:** That's amazing. First of all, just having that, I want to go back to actually what you were talking about, like that, you know, realization and, you know, taking the maternity break and then deciding that you're not going back and like, just honestly commend you for having the courage to do that, right? It's not easy, especially as a female who is raising a family, doing all the things, trying to prove herself in terms of what we are able to accomplish. So that right there is amazing. If you're willing to talk about it, I would love to ask you what you had to go through in terms of being able to be vulnerable, to recognize that that's what you wanted to shift to doing and leaving the medicine part behind. How did you kind of work through that and overcome that?

**Dana:** Yeah. Yeah. There was a lot of vulnerability in doing that, also because part of it was my choosing, right? So I was already sort of leading a community and I was already leading SoMeDocs and there were a lot of people that were following and I knew that people were looking to me to see, you know, amongst other people but looking to see like, what's my next move. And so I knew that my path was being followed. And so on one hand, I wanted to do things right. And on the other hand, I wanted to stay true to myself. And I think that's a struggle that we all feel as we, you know, get older and get into our careers and become more independent and autonomous and separate ourselves, but still want to be great doctors with good relationships with the hospital systems. But being vulnerable is hard. And I made a decision when I left to publish my story. And when I published my story you know, WebMD Medscape picked it up and said, well, can you write an article for us that is a continuation and tell us about X, Y and Z so that further sort of made me vulnerable. I wasn't prepared at that time for the reaction. And so I chose to be even more vulnerable than I could have been. I could have just quit and just kind of self explored and done all this myself, but I decided to sort of put myself out there and be able to be torn to shreds and et cetera, et cetera, by people's reactions and judgments.

Am I thankful for it in hindsight? Absolutely. Even though it was really hard at the time because I did get a lot of judgmental reactions. Some people were very supportive, but there were a lot of people that weren't and at the time it was very difficult for me to swallow. And I think that that's part of being doctors and like having to always conform and have everybody like be okay with us. And I think that that was almost like the first medicine of me kind of realizing that I'm not going to be a traditional like person and that people need to understand that I'm, I'm me. And if you don't like me, then there's the door. And it's helped me to become more of that way. Now I'm not like, you know, I'm not a bitch. I'm not a mean person, but I've learned to really be comfortable with myself and be very confident and truly believe in my story. Like I truly believe that everything I've done until now has been with good intentions. And I'm proud of everything that I've done. So I think that that vulnerability is oftentimes necessary for us to grow. And everybody sort of needs the support that they need to move on from that vulnerable state. So, you know, I can't tell you what it is for you or what it is for the person listening right now, what help they can get to get past their vulnerability, but I can tell you that it does require vulnerability to sort of get to the next stage of something if you want to either be innovative or to explore and tap into a part of life that you haven't yet given yourself permission to tap into.

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**Arpita:** But I mean, it's that point of it just being uncomfortable, right? We have this discomfort of having to put out there that, hey, I know I spent all this time training and doing this and I practiced for a while. And now I've decided that I want to do something else. And that's okay. I know that my inner knowing is telling me that this is what's going to be fruitful and positive and beneficial for me and for what I want to create. And that's all that really matters. And it's hard to do that. It's really hard to just step out on a limb and say, you know what, if you don't like me, yes, like you said, the door's over there, right?

**Dana:** Totally. And the other thing I want to say is exactly what you just said. And the establishment of boundaries is so important in that, you know, you want to be vulnerable, but you also want to make sure that you're still protected, right? So I always kind of talk about curation, curation of a brand, curation of online presence and curation of all these things that will help you to move forward in your career. But curation still requires like definitions, planning, the architecture of your next business move. And so you do need to kind of think through how vulnerable you're going to be right? And so I think that's really important is that you allow yourself to be vulnerable, but you don't like just unleash everything, like people don't have to know every piece of your life and your inner thinking. I mean because we're professionals and we're so intelligent, right? Most people that become doctors are intelligent people. You can't make it to be a doctor unless you're intelligent. Apply that intelligence to planning ahead into saying, well, I want to be vulnerable and it's okay. And I give myself permission, but let me make sure that I still define that vulnerability and define the boundaries that will allow me to still feel comfortable walking away from a situation where others may judge, but where they don't necessarily know, like every single detail of my life, there's something really special about still, you know, keeping some things private.

**Michael:** Yeah. You know, I love this discussion because vulnerability is not one thing, right? So people have this idea that I, you know, I just don't want to be vulnerable, but you get to decide what you're putting out in front of people. And this is, you know, I think when social media first came about, and some people would use it just to kind of air all their dirty laundry, they would just put everything out there. And as professionals and as physicians, we get to decide how much we want to reveal, how much we want to, you know, tell people about our journey and our experiences. And I think for me, this has been such a big part of my own personal journey because I, like you, it sounds like, really had a very difficult time sharing anything about my personal life. And I think when I learned to lean into some of the discomfort of letting people in, all it did was allow me to be more authentic, show up more of who I already was, and I've really enjoyed that and have then leaned into it and been able to be more vulnerable with what I'm able to share.

And the other thing that you were talking about is kind of the duality of social media, right? So it allows you to be vulnerable, it allows you to get followers, it allows you to be more of who you are. And there's this flip side of trolls and the people out there that are going to try to tear you down, say negative things about you. And as we all know, you know, you can either have trolls and people saying negative things about you, or you can just not be noticed at all. So the truth of the matter is, if you're putting yourself out there, people are going to be saying negative things about you. It is just the nature of social media. And then you went one step further to create a whole platform to help doctors promote themselves on social media. So can you tell us a little bit more about SoMeDocs and, and kind of what your goal was there?

**Dana:** Yeah. I mean, also yet another entity that really evolved over time because I wasn't even fully sure how I was going to build it out. I did have a vision when I first began it and the vision was somewhat close to what it is today. I just wasn't sure how I was going to build it because I really didn't know the things I know now about, you know, website building and growing on social media and the different tactics, et cetera, et cetera.



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It's been quite an adventure and the goal originally was just to build this community where we could share the things that we're doing, mainly outside of clinical practice. So it was a lot like side venture geared knowing that social media was going to help us to exchange our ideas and to promote what we're doing. So originally it was a Facebook group, it was called SoMeDocs, and I built a website then to sort of show these doctors off, so to speak. It was a lot like, I described it a lot like a modeling agency. except instead of the models, it would be doctors. If a project, if a business, if a magazine needs a model, they go to the agency and they flip through the pages to look at the models. My thought was, why can't I create a really cool site where businesses and reporters and podcasts and anyone else that needs an expert and someone who's intelligent. Why can't I do that in order to really facilitate relationships and to facilitate, like, even the sources that are being quoted in magazines, and it's always, like, the same person. Why couldn't I do that, especially as doctors were building their brands? And so that's what I did.

And so SoMeDocs gradually became a directory of doctors and then gradually we added on a magazine, an online magazine, where doctors could express themselves and kind of publish and syndicate their existing work. And then SoMeDocs, you know, added on lectures and we had you know, a few conferences until now. And so that's what SoMeDocs has evolved to is almost like a movement, but really a space that's located on the website at [doctorsonsocialmedia.com](http://doctorsonsocialmedia.com) but where we can then branch off from there, depending on what the users need is, right? It's a public website. And so depending on who you are, you can use the site in the way that you need it. If you're a doctor, you can, you know, join for free, for example, with a free membership and just get into the directory. If you want to join a network of doctors that are really motivated and want to grow online, right? Then you can certainly do that as well. If you just want to write an article and have it circulated and be seen by a lot of people, then you can do that as well. It sort of gives you options. And if you're not a doctor, you can, you know, similarly just go to [doctorsonsocialmedia.com](http://doctorsonsocialmedia.com) and choose the topic of health and then just read some of the things that, you know, the doctors are writing about and then follow the doctor from there. So again, we're, we're living in such an innovative new world where connecting is not the same as it was when we were connecting, even just a decade or two ago, connecting with your doctor can be that you're following him or her online and you're maybe just really loving what they do, and you can even connect with them in tele-visits. So you don't have to physically see them behind the closed door of their exam room. So I know that was a mouthful, but at the crux of it, I am hoping to empower the individual healthcare experts, right? The doctor by promoting them on [doctorsonsocialmedia.com](http://doctorsonsocialmedia.com). And so, you know, I know that it's growing and it's really spreading in terms of the word. And I hope a lot of your listeners will either check it out, if they're not a doctor, if they're a doctor, join us at least for free if not be in the network.

**Arpita:** That is impressive. I will say. I've been I'm part of the SoMeDocs little network world and it's been very interesting to see all the different people that are in in the community and how it is an excellent place to meet and learn from others and grow from others. So

**Dana:** Thank you so much. And I'll just add to that that the cool part being the person who's running it and what people don't see are the incredible like companies and the incredible media sites and people that reach out to me and use SoMeDocs and use our directory, and we may not even know it. So, you know, when a Wall Street Journal reporter the other day reached out using the directory like that was gold for me, right? Because the Wall Street Journal journalist is using the directory that I built to sort of search for contacts that he could quote. I mean, that was so incredible. And again, that was just one example of many that are now reaching out and saying, well, thanks to your directory, we're hiring, we're bringing in advisors, we're, you know, finding and it doesn't cost them anything. So for me, it's a no brainer, because you know, it's just a really quick way to facilitate, here's the expert use the filters to find whatever it is your company needs or whatever your needs are.

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And then just like write, you know, contact them or find them on Instagram and send them a message. So it doesn't have to be more complicated than that.

**Arpita:** That's that is amazing. So, and I know before we, I mean, you said it was a mouthful. It wasn't a mouthful. I thought it was great because that very clearly explains what all some of the components of SoMeDocs you know, and so some people who are not familiar with it. I think that was an excellent explanation of it. Before we go too far into that. I do want to ask you, like, with regards to your expertise and your knowledge with social media and putting yourself out there, what are some tips that you would recommend to people that are trying to maybe boost their, you know, visibility online if they're, you know, dabbling in one or two or three platforms? Like, what is your basic toolkit that you would say, Hey, this is what I would recommend.

**Dana:** So there's different levels and stages of everybody. So first of all, it's so important, I mean, what I recommend is kind of getting, I know it sounds obvious, but getting more help in the form of joining a community like SoMeDocs. And again, there's free options. You don't have to pay, but joining a community where you can ask your questions to people like me, where you can get answers and not just have to listen to a podcast with like three quick tips, because it may not apply to you. So I think that really arming yourself with help with a community where people can answer and people that actually know and have authentically grown online in a way that you want to emulate. I think that that's really important and people that you really do feel know what they're doing. So I think that number one is just surrounding yourself with people who are doing it. And that's by the way, why I built the network, because I figured I would build a group of docs that actually are ready to take it to the next step and aren't just dabbling, like have already built a brand and know their end point goal and actually can build towards that end point goal.

So my number two tip is have an end point goal, meaning you have to clearly define, why? Okay, it's okay to look at social media. But why am I here? Like, what am I going to be using it for? And it's okay to say, well, I'm going to use it to network right? To just kind of put my thoughts out there and see what kind of connections I can make and what kind of new things I can discover. Great. That could be your endpoint goal. And your endpoint goal can also evolve. But you've got to define it because once for example, you do split up from your hospital and say, well, I'm going to open a you know, direct primary care practice or a practice of my own, then your goal now may shift to, well, my goal is to increase my patient load, right? Or to whatever it is, but you need that goal defined because you can then really, it helps you to post knowing what you're goal is. So that's number two.

And number three is, I guess, just keeping an open mind and giving people the benefit of the doubt. I see a lot of judgment online and people are very quick to judge. So keep an open mind. Don't take things too personally, even when someone is judgy but also don't necessarily be quick to judge others. It's okay to have an opinion, but be willing to sort of hear other people out on social media and understand that they can only explain it to you in the medium in which they're explaining it. So if you're on Twitter, they only had 280 characters and maybe you didn't necessarily get to see their full dimensions to really know what they meant. I see a lot of like, you know, online wars breaking out from people that had good intentions, but just maybe said something wrong, etc.

**Arpita:** Right, and there's no tone.

**Dana:** And there's no facial, you know, expressions and things like that.

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**Michael:** And what do you say to the physicians who say, well, I'm, I'm an employed doc, and I don't need to be on social media. I don't, I don't have, you know, a brand. I just, you know, I work for this hospital system. And so I don't, I don't even need to be on social media. What would you say to that physician?

**Dana:** Well, it, first of all, it's different for us. It's important for everybody to keep in mind that it's different to say you shouldn't be on social media versus you shouldn't have a brand. Being on social media means that you are literally in the know. So for me, if you're not in social media, then you are not taking advantage of a networking opportunity that is literally the future. Like you are not where conversations are happening. You are not where opportunities are happening. And that could be detrimental to your growth. And so if you're happy where you are, fine. And that may serve you well until you retire, but it may not. You don't know what that opportunity is going to be unless that opportunity knocks on the door. But if you don't have a door, then they can't knock. So for me I think that it's different to say you should be on social media. I do think everyone should be on it, whether or not incognito, with anonymous name, however you want to be. To build a brand is different. To build a brand for me is when you start to have an end point goal and you start to recognize the power of social media, the benefit, the good parts of social media. And you say, I'm going to leverage this. Like I am going to take advantage of this space in order to grow. And then that's where you can sort of build your stepping stones and say, okay, this is how I build it. And I'm going to now do that through branding, and I'm going to reach that first milestone, the second milestone, etc, etc.

**Michael:** And I'll just piggyback on that, and you and I have had some discussions offline about this, that every physician has a brand, and it's just a matter of whether or not you are interested in embracing it. When patients come to see you in the office, they are coming to you because of your brand, of who you are, of the messages that you provide to patients when you see them in the office. It's not about whether or not you have a brand, it's just what you want to do with it. And it's okay if you want to just use your brand to attract patients locally, to see you in the office. And it's also okay if you want to use your brand to kind of promote it more outwardly. And I know that you are a big proponent of that. I think it is so important for doctors in today's, you know, healthcare environment to embrace who you are and the brand that we all possess.

**Dana:** Yeah, and I think that it's important to just throw out a definition out there, at least to clarify to those listening that saying brand, the word brand when, when we refer to it here, we don't mean it like a product. We don't mean it like you are a product. We also don't mean that you need to sell necessarily right? We mean that you are an entity that means something. An entity that if you package yourself up really cleverly, then you can again encounter those opportunities you wouldn't have if you hadn't packaged yourself. You can really grow in new ways and you can do so, so many things that actually doctors haven't done in so long. And you can even see examples of that. So many doctors are now writing books and so many doctors are building podcasts and right, like getting speaking gigs like never before. And I'm so happy to see doctors, basically, it's almost like our suits were like becoming even more of Superman because we're not only superheroes behind the closed door. Now we can actually take our intelligence and what we've learned and we can create new resources for patients that just haven't been there before. And I think that there's so much positive that can come out of that.

**Arpita:** Amazing. Well, Dr. Dana Corriel, it's been amazing speaking with you and getting some of these tidbits of knowledge. Tell our listeners a little bit about how they can learn more or where they can find you and any offers or opportunities that you have coming up that they may want to learn more about.

**Dana:** Sure, sure. So SoMeDocs' website is that [doctorsonsocialmedia.com](http://doctorsonsocialmedia.com). You can, you know, find the directory there in the magazine. You can become a member there, especially if you're a doctor, dentist or



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podiatrist. You can become a free member for those perks. You could become a network member for a lot more perks. It's all very exciting. You can email us, [somedocs@somedocs.com](mailto:somedocs@somedocs.com). You can find some of my writings at [drcorriel.com](http://drcorriel.com). I have really I'm trying to push myself to do more of what I love outside of the business. I love SomiDocs, but I also really love, like I said, cooking and design and sharing my life as I explore it. So that's going to be more personal stuff on my portfolio, [drcorriel.com](http://drcorriel.com). So check that out. And again, join the network, join SoMeDocs, whether free or if you want to join our network, and then join some of the Facebook groups that are forming. And so we have Dr. Side Ventures is the newest open free for doctors only for talking about our side ventures. So I, I really appreciate you letting me be here and letting everybody know about my resources that I'm building.

**Michael:** Perfect. And yes, we will have a link to all of this in the show notes. Dr. Dana Corriel, we so appreciate you joining with us today. This was a fantastic episode. Loved chatting with you. And thank you to all of our listeners. And we will see everybody next time on the next episode of Doctors Living Deliberately. Take care. Bye bye.

**Dana:** Thank you so much. Bye

**Arpita:** Bye.