

The Daily Helping Episode 297:  
Isabelle Mercier

**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:00:00] As we work with people, souls, leaders, and companies, and brands and teams, we implement an architecture for success that, as you said, is flexible, that is inspiring, and that reduces the possibilities for failure or getting out of something so easily.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:00:28] Hello, and welcome to The Daily Helping with Dr. Richard Shuster, food for the brain, knowledge from the experts, tools to win at life. I'm your host, Dr. Richard. Whoever you are, wherever you're from, and whatever you do, this is the show that is going to help you become the best version of yourself.

Each episode, you will hear from some of the most amazing, talented, and successful people on the planet who follow their passions and strive to help others. Join our movement to get a million people each day to commit acts of kindness for others. Together, we're going to make the world a better place. Are you ready? Because it's time for your Daily Helping.

Thanks for tuning in to this episode of The Daily Helping Podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Richard, and we have an amazing guest to share with you today. Her name is Isabelle Mercier, and she is the Cofounder and CEO of LeapZone Strategies. She's one of the most inspirational branding, marketing, and customer experience keynote speakers in the universe. Isabelle is a no nonsense dynamo born to catapult passionate entrepreneurs and thought leaders to build businesses and brands designed to make life better.

As one of North America's top business influencers, bestselling author, and two-time TEDx speaker with over three million views, as well as being a T.V. show host, Isabelle brings 30 years of branding, marketing, and customer experience expertise. She's helped thousands of business owners, thought leaders, and some of the most influential and iconic brands, like A&W, Robeez Footwear, IMAX Corporation and HSBC to name a few.

We're going to have a lot of fun today. There's so many great things we're going to talk about. Isabelle, welcome to The Daily Helping. It is awesome, awesome to have you with us today.

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**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:02:17] Thank you for your amazing energy, Dr. Richard. It is a pleasure for me to be here, truly.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:02:22] Absolutely. We've been talking a little bit before we hit the record button, so there are so many things I'm excited to talk to you about. But before we do, I want to go back in time. Let's jump in the DeLorean and go back to where it all began for you. So, tell us, Isabelle, what puts you on the path you're on today?

**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:02:43] Yeah. You know, I was born in a family of entrepreneurs. My dad was in advertising. My mom was a hairdresser, so we had a hairdresser salon at home. And let me tell you, my mom was gung ho about surprising, and delighting, and making life better for her clients. And I started working with her at her salon. Truly, I started being a witness to her clients in my diapers. I was very young and, literally, spending a lot of time with her at the salon.

But early on, like five, six, seven years old, my mom would say, "After kindergarten, come back home. Come and spend time with my clients. And how are you going to make life better today, Isabelle? Who are you going to make life better for today?" And it was always about better serving, being of assistance, being of help, and how to literally surprise and delight at all times.

So, that put me on the path of really understanding customer service and what it takes to be seen and recognized as an impactful person, but also an impactful business. So, the first, the best or the only. So, I had a lot of amazing times connecting with my mom's clients, and my mom through that, of course.

And as we were talking about just a few minutes ago around the positioning, because I position product services, genius people, brands for a living, my mom started having me understand the power of words, the power of how to position something, how to explain something in order to get a positive outcome for all involved.

You know how, as a kid, sometimes you want something or you don't want to do something anymore? For me, I had to position everything to my parents. I had to come out with my board and my pens, and I had to, literally - if I wanted something - talk about

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the pros and the cons. And then, I had to talk about what are the tradeoffs, what are the tradeoffs for me, for them. And then, I have to talk about what's the cost for them to say yes. Because there's always a cost for saying yes or a risk for saying yes, and there's always a cost for saying no.

So, early on if I heard my parents say, "Hmm. Interesting. We'll think about it or we'll see." I knew that I hadn't done a good job at positioning what I wanted and making it, most importantly, a win-win-win. If it was two heavily weighted winning on my side, right away they were like, "That is not a win, Isabelle. Everybody has to win in this equation." So, this is a little bit of what got me really interested and passionate about how we position something can actually make something fly and do well or actually hurt in the process.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:06:08] Now, how old were you when you were doing these presentations?

**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:06:12] Honestly, I started probably at five.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:06:14] Wow. That's so wild. And they made you, your parents were like, "Nope. You have to give us the presentation."

**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:06:21] And to a point where at some point I wanted to get rid of two sports to just do one. But that one sport - dance - was actually more expensive and more time consuming than the other two put together. So, I have to think about, "So, I know this is going to be more expensive, I've already answered that."

So, answering objections, I knew the objections they would have, and I was able to start addressing those objections before they brought them up. So, I'd say, "I understand that this is more expensive. I'm willing to babysit." This was not at five years old, but this was nine and above. "I want to babysit. I've got three new babysitting clients. I will be able to pay the difference so you won't see the difference money-wise." So, basically, my job - and as a kid - was to position something so that the people that I'm positioning it to, it makes it irresistible. They'd be fools to not say yes to me, for example.

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**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:07:25] I love this. And so, this obviously was ingrained in you at a very young age and guided you, and so, now, you're one of the most respected people in the world who are helping people position and shine a light on their awesomeness.

So, if you're listening to this, whether you're an entrepreneur, whether you're in a job you love, you don't love, there's a lot of wisdom that Isabelle has for you.

And so, I know one of the things you're passionate about is helping people live their most impactful, meaningful lives. And so, you've worked with a lot of very high level people with this. What are some of the kind of key things that you would push people towards, towards moving to live their most authentic and successful lives?

**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:08:16] Well, you know, first and foremost, it's about really understanding uncovering what people really stand for and what they're really on this beautiful planet of ours for. And so, really be understanding of what you stand for, how you're making life better, how differently you want to approach a subject that might be similar to 1,000 other people, how you want to approach this differently. And really, once you've uncovered that and you know what that is - and there's a process to get to that - then it's about owning it. Because, as you know, knowing something and owning it truly and living it are two different things.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:09:03] Talk to us about those distinctions.

**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:09:05] Yeah. For example, knowing that I'm a catalyst for change and a catalyst for growth is one thing. Owning it means that I have to be audacious to say the things that are unpopular in order to create the transformation or the results that is wanting to be created, wanting to come out. I have to be owning it in the sense that I have to treat myself as I would an ideal client.

See, we're very good in life at helping others. And there are times where owning your genius also means owning what you need to be and stay at your best, what you need to be able to actually deliver the way you want to deliver. So, knowing it is one thing, then adjusting, elevating, and transforming - transforming? - transforming yourself - I'm inventing words here --

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**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:10:08] Yes, you are. Yes, you are.

**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:10:09] ... to really be able to deliver on that and to actually walk your talk is a completely different thing. So, you've got to know it. You've got to own it. And then, you have to have parameters, guidelines, rituals to live it every single day.

And the same is true, Dr. Richard, for brands. When we create brand culture and we create brand ingredients, a team has to know what they are. They have to understand what they are. And then, they have to take every single one of them and live them every day. If your mission is to leave people feeling on fire and unstoppable, then the way you write emails matters, the way you answer the phone matters, the way you communicate with people matters, the way you deliver your genius actually has to align with that.

So, it's about knowing, owning, and then crafting an architecture to allow you to actually deliver that, and to live that by design, not necessarily by default. It's fairly easy to live by default. You just do, do, do. But when you're truly in connection and in alignment with who you are and what you do and what your badassery is, nurturing that by making difficult decisions, brave decisions, brave conversations to actually be by design with all of that, oh, that's another Oprah show, you know.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:11:48] Well, we're having fun with words for sure today, Isabelle. And there's a couple that I picked up on. One, badassery. So, I love this. But you said something earlier that I want to take a deeper dive into. You talked about having the audaciousness to say things that are unpopular. So, I want to talk about the importance, as you see it, about audacity.

**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:12:15] You know, it takes guts to say what needs to be said versus what wants to be heard. It takes guts. It takes audacity to walk that line. And in my line of work, I'm hired to say it like it is, and I'm a no bullshit, no filter kind of person, so I do say it like it is. And I've been compared to Simon Cowell, which a lot of people would not take as a compliment. But I do, because he certainly knows how to spot and catapult talent forward. I'm just more fashionable and friendlier than he is.

But audacity, I have a lesson fairly on around audacity. And I'm dyslexic or I

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experienced dyslexia in my life. And when I was younger, probably in high school, late high school, we had a 30- page paper to write about audacity. And as a dyslexic human being, I thought, "Well, first of all, who wants to talk about that for 30 pages? I don't want to have to write 30 pages for audacity." Anyway, we had a couple of weeks to deliver that, and I decided that this is what I was going to do, I was going to demonstrate audacity as opposed to talk about it.

So, I took 30 pages of paper. I numbered them all. I wrote a cover that says, "Audacity is ...", I handed off 30 blank pages with a cover page at the end that says, "... this. This is what audacity is to me." And so, I thought I might fail this whole semester. I'm handing out a document that has no writing in it. I did not know that this was worth the entire semester. So, when I learned that the day before, I thought, "Oh. Oh, no. I'm about to fail my semester."

So, I went to my mom and I said, "Mom, I think I screwed up. I want you to know that I might have screwed up my whole year as a result of this move here." And I've explained to my mom what I did, and she said to me, "Is there anything else you can do about that right now?" I said, "I don't think so. It's not like I can write a 30-page paper in an evening. I can't even do it in two weeks." Now, I can. But then, I couldn't. Anyway, she says, "You've got to commit. What do you got to do? You've got to commit." She said, "If you were diving 30 feet from the ground right now, you made a decision to dive this way. You can't uncommit to that and fall flat. So, you've got to commit and you've got to come up with reasons, good positioning reasons, as to why you did this."

So, I did pass my semester. He did have me sweat, though. I have to say, he had me sweat like crazy. I had to actually pitch my idea to the whole class. But it taught me that when you wholeheartedly believe in something and you fully commit, even if it's unpopular, often, what is unpopular is what creates most change. But a lot of people have great ideas and they're afraid to commit and to fully go through the ups and downs, and the unpopular and brave conversations that it will require in order to move through.

So, I do think that entrepreneurship or not, it takes being audacious to be fully yourself, to own your badassery, and to be unapologetic about what you believe. Again, I prefer

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to help people in myself and communities that are helpful and that want to make life better versus utilizing this badassery not for good, obviously.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:16:21] So, I love this because I think audacity is something we don't really talk about in terms of a growth area. So, if somebody is listening to this and said, "Well, that's easy for you to say, Isabelle, you're a ball of energy." What if somebody considers themselves to be pretty introverted, quiet, doesn't rock the boat, how does somebody who's less boisterous, less vocal express themselves in that way?

**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:16:55] You know, I'm so happy that you had the intuition to move forward with this here. Because my partner, Margarita - I've been in a relationship both business and personal with Margarita, my wife, for 31 years now - she is very introverted. She is quiet, yet extremely potent and powerful through being audacious. Her way of communicating isn't like mine. Her way of leading isn't like mine. She's highly intuitive.

And let me tell you, the audacity that she's had to grow to actually be able to just say what she means in a very simple manner, for her to actually open her mouth, when I met her the difference between the two of us, it was tremendous. And, of course, we've been 31 years together, so we've met in the middle - this is my middle.

But let me tell you, when Margarita says something, she's got guts. She's got courage. And by the way, courage isn't the absence of fear. It's the the ability to move through it. Out of the two of us - we did a TED Talk together, and I had done a TED Talk before - Margarita was the cool, calm, and collected. I was the, "Oh, my goodness. I'm dying."

But, truly, it's about tapping into who you are, what you believe in, and finding your own way of being audacious. For some people, being audacious is going through a massive roller coaster while doing cartwheels. For other people, it's simply finding the courage to say what they want to say in this particular moment and say it in a way that's in alignment with them.

And a lot of people think that I've got a lot of balls and audacious, yes, and I work at this every day. There are plenty of times that I'm sitting in a meeting going, "I really need and want to say this. I don't know how. This might get me fired. This might get me." And

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even if I am extrovert and even if I am gutsy, there's still moments that I fail at aligning my actions with what I really want in the gutsiness or audacity way.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:19:33] Isabelle, thank you for describing that in that way, because I think it's analogous to meditation. Many people think meditation is just sitting on a pillow for 40 minutes and saying a mantra. Whereas, for some people, meditating can be gardening, meditating can be running, meditating can be different things. So, I love the way that you took a key concept of audacity, but you really translate it to a representation of one's values and personality characteristics.

**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:20:02] Yeah. Absolutely.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:20:03] Fantastic. So, I want to shift gears a little bit. So, you had talked about in the spirit of doing this, being bold, enhancing your badassery, putting things in your life that allow that badassery to grow, like getting rid of things you don't like. But then, you said it, and I purposefully left it there, you talked about architecting this. So, if we're still here with you and we're nodding in agreement, how do we go about building this life? How do we go about taking our values of things in alignment, becoming audacious, and building this into a life upon which we can help people generate revenue? And it's like you said, win-win-win all around.

**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:20:53] Yeah. Yeah. You know, personally, as I said earlier, I think I mentioned you need to do things on a regular basis, add those things in your architecture that helps you be and stay at your best. Daily rituals, very important. I know for a fact that for me to be at my best and do the things we just said, I do need to first spend time with myself in the morning. So, that's part of my architecture. So, I'm going to give a few examples here and then it's about figuring out what your architecture would be in order to help you be and stay at your best.

So, my architecture in order for me to be at my best, I need to spend time with myself in the morning in quietude. I need to journal. I need to learn. The more I learn, the more I want to implement, the more I want to share, the more I feel like I'm making a difference. So, for me, learning is not just a wish. It's part of my architecture. So, when I go to the gym and I do - what do you call that? Rowing? - when I do rowing, then I will listen to an eBook. I will learn as I do certain things. I've created time for learning.

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We were talking to a client the other day. He knows that in order for him to reduce stress and be at his best, he needs to spend an hour in the morning and an hour at night on his own doing a beautiful walk in nature. He stopped, because what happens is we get busy. And then, when we get busy, what happens is we stop doing the very things that help us be and stay at our best. So, eventually he went to the dentist and the dentist recommended a guard for sleeping at night because he's grinding.

Meanwhile, none of these things are necessary if he had kept in his architecture walking in the morning and walking at night. So, sometimes you just need to really realize what are those things that light up your soul, that actually give you the energy that you need to be badass.

And so, we talk about architecture at LeapZone because, whether it's marketing, positioning, or personal growth rituals and personal habits, we don't want those things to just be on a whim. And I'm not talking that we're not flexible. Flexibility is definitely a part of it. But if I had to wonder everyday, "Do I go to the gym today? Do I do this today?" No. It's too easy for a human being to get out of that architecture. So, creating an architecture, a ritual that includes flexibility, but that gets you to just do the things and keep on doing the things that get you at your best.

An example of that is every eighth week at LeapZone, it's a week where there is no appointment, no client stuff. Just us creatively working and innovatively working on our own business. That's part of an architecture. It's pre-booked in our calendar. It's organized forever and ever. Does it mean that we can't change that? No. We can. If that week no longer works because I have speaking engagements in Ottawa that week, well, I'm going to change it. But it's there and I don't have to worry about forgetting about it or possibly not doing it. So, creating an architecture for success is absolutely key in every part of one's life, in my opinion.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:24:52] So, I'm hearing a couple of key things. I'm hearing intentionality. I'm hearing flexibility. But I'm also hearing - and I think this is a really big one - limiting opportunities to fail. It's like if you're trying to lose weight and you have bags of potato chips in the house right next to fruit, you might grab the chips. If the chips

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aren't there to begin with, you have no choice but to eat the fruit. So, I love that. I think that's critical.

**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:25:24] Yeah. And you're very good at getting the essence of something, because it is, and that's what I call by design. Do you know how many people do things because others have always done it? They've always done it that way. It's always been this way. They don't like it. I call it mechanical arm. Like if I go at a party and there's a table full of food, I cannot be near it because I have a mechanical arm.

So, a lot of things can be mechanical arm in a life. And, eventually, that dims a bulb. That dims bulb, instead of lighting you up and leaving you on fire. So, reduce organizing and reducing the ways with which it can be just by automation. Just asking, "Is this something that I want? Is this really effective? Do we really need this? Is this working?" As opposed to "It's always how it's been."

And when I work with brands, I've never met a brand that doesn't want to differentiate themselves. They want to differentiate themselves, they want to be different and unique. The phrase that I hear more often is, "Yeah, but in our industry it's not how it works." And I'm like, "Well, yeah, but you can't do the same as everybody and differentiate yourself at the same time." So, to me, living by design, the design that is suiting for you in this moment, you in a year, is a different you. You in a year will have to be redesigning a new or an elevated architecture.

But as we work with people, souls, leaders, and companies, and brands, and teams, we implement an architecture for success that, as you said, is flexible, that is inspiring, and that reduces the possibilities for failure or getting out of something so easily.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:27:24] I love it. Isabelle, this has been such a delight talking to you today. As you know, I wrap up every episode by asking my guests, what is your biggest helping? Isabelle, that one most important takeaway you'd like somebody to walk away with after hearing our conversation today.

**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:27:40] You know, I think it might be to treat yourself like you would a really important million dollar client, for example. To really look at all the things

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that you are and you do for others, and even if you took 10 percent of that and did that for yourself, I'm sure it would be an improvement. So, one of the principles at LeapZone Strategies is be and stay your own very best client. And I think that that would wrap this up quite well.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:28:20] Isabelle, tell us where people can learn more about you online.

**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:28:24] leapzonestrategies.com. And within that website, there is LeapTV, there is LeapTools, there is a lot of free tutorials and tools for entrepreneurs and business owners. I also have on that site two TED Talks that are under the TED Talk menu on the website. And, of course, I'm on all major social media platforms.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:28:47] Perfect. And we'll have everything Isabelle Mercier in the show notes at thedailyhelping.com. Well, Isabelle, thank you so much for spending your time with us today. This was awesome.

**Isabelle Mercier:** [00:28:57] It was great. And I would welcome the opportunity to converse with you and your community again.

**Dr. Richard Shuster:** [00:29:02] I think we'll have to set that up. So, this was to be continued for sure. Thank you again, Isabelle. And thank you to each and every one of you who took time out of your day to listen to our conversation. If you like what you heard, go give us a follow on Apple Podcasts and leave us a five star review, because that is what helps other people find the show. But most importantly, go out there today and do something nice for somebody else, even if you don't know who they are, and post it in your social media feeds using the hashtag #mydailyhelping, because the happiest people are those that help others.