

Amy:

I'm looking at your first year of success as Chief Brand Officer, and you have a successful partnership with Culture City, you've developed the first commercial for TNT, the real different commercial, which showed what All Elite Wrestling was going to be in the lead up to its debut on Dynamite. You were also the first AEW NATPE keynote speaker, and you've developed the Women's Tag Team Cup Tournament, and you've spearheaded AEW Heels. With that said, how does it feel to basically be Wonder Woman?

Brandi Rhodes:

Oh my gosh. Well that is quite an extensive list of my accolades. So of everyone I've spoken to, I think you're going to get the gold star. Well, you're going to get a half a gold star because you missed one really important thing, which is that I'm the first AEW woman to have an action figure, which is in Walmart this week. But I can let that go, because everything else that you said was spot on. So how it feels to be Wonder Woman is a little bit tiring. I don't get a lot of rest, especially the last couple of weeks with everything that's been going on for the tournament and for this developmental push to put Heels on this wonderful platform that people are now clicking today and joining.

Brandi Rhodes:

But I'm also married to Cody, who is an extensive project in itself. So there's a lot always going on for me. I'm not a caffeine drinker, I rely on pure energy basically from the sun. So basically I work 24/7, but it's all for everyone else. I'm a very generous person, I'm a people person. And I'm a philanthropist and a socialite. I'm also an Instagram influencer, as well as Chief Brand Officer. So I have a lot of jobs, I wear a lot of hats, but I always do them with a smile.

Amy:

Well, that's good. And I would imagine so that you must have energy coming from the universe itself to power your super power.

Brandi Rhodes:

I mean, I'm waiting, Amy, to be able to fly one of these days, because everything else I've pretty much been able to do. But I would love it if one day I could just kind of flap my arms and take flight, or if I could have laser vision or something like that, that would really help me do more. But in the meantime, I kind of feel like I'm giving back, I'm putting in the extra hours, I'm working very hard in the ring to help people like Allie, who obviously need help because she's interested in QT Marshall, which is something no one can figure out. So, I'm just devoting all of this time and energy to so many people, it would be helpful to actually have a superpower to assist me in that.

Amy:

Sure. Well, and he is the apple of her eye, or perhaps she's the apple of his eye. Yeah, there's definitely something going on with that. But, speaking of Allie, you guys both just took the Women's Tag Team Cup Tournament by a storm and you're looking for another victory next week.

Brandi Rhodes:

Oh, we're not looking for another victory. I mean, we're going to have another victory, that's for sure. We're just looking to see who it's going to be against. There's been some interesting things, names and things thrown around. There's not really anybody that I'm worried about in this tournament. So we'll

just see what turns up, how it happens and we'll advance, and then we'll be in the finals, and then the next thing I know, Madusa will be handing me that beautiful, shiny trophy, and it's going to go on my mantle. And Allie I'm sure will be fine with that, because what I'll do is I'll just get a little plastic version of it so that she can have hers, but I'm going to take the original.

Amy:

Sure, I think that's fair. She can have the participation trophy and you can have the glory of the win.

Brandi Rhodes:

Exactly. Exactly. You're a visionary. I tell, Amy, you really are.

Amy:

Yeah, I see where you're going with this. So let's talk about AEW Heels real quick, because you just had a huge announcement for it. It just moved to a membership platform, and there's a lot of excitement that's in store for the very first event. So we have a special Q&A with Aubrey Edwards, we have social media strategies with you, Brandi Rhodes, and we have a special session on respect and empowerment in the workplace with Keisha-Ann Gray. How did this come about when you were planning this first AEW Heels event right after announcing this membership?

Brandi Rhodes:

Well, we have a wonderful group of women that work together to kind of throw around ideas and just put together what a prospective schedule would be. So right now we've got a schedule all the way into January of thoughts and ideas and what we would like to do. Now of course, a lot of things are very, very pending on what happens in the world right now. We're all living in this same environment where we're trying to be as safe as possible and keep each other safe. So right now a lot of that calendar is related to the website, excuse me, and Zoom. But when we were putting together this specific Zoom session, of course we have a lot of wonderful women on our AEW roster, and one that I think a lot of people are very intrigued by, but not really sure how to approach or haven't really had the opportunity to communicate with one-on-one, and that's our ref, Aubrey Edwards.

Brandi Rhodes:

And also Aubrey does a lot of question asking herself because she is one of the hosts of the AEW podcasts, so I thought it would be nice to put her on the other side and let her take some questions. And she has a really compelling and interesting story, she's a very smart woman, she's highly accomplished. So I think a lot of people will really enjoy hearing more from her rather than hearing her ask people questions, and count to three really loudly and get in Chris Jericho's face. That's very entertaining, but that's not going to happen on the call, unfortunately. And then when we move forward into talking to empowering women in the workplace, obviously it's a little bit timely, there's a lot of things that have been going on and coming to surface with things like Speaking Out movement. It's an ongoing struggle for women to feel heard in the workplace.

Brandi Rhodes:

I'm not immune to that, I have my successful days and I have my very not successful days on the business end. So, it's something that I think a lot of women would be very comfortable talking about in a forum like Heels. So that's why we opted to have Keisha-Ann Gray come in through our contacts at the

Jaguars, and she's going to give a really phenomenal talk and hopefully empower some women. And then on the social media end, Heels is a new thing and it's also a social thing. And one of the reasons that Heels has come together is because of some of the negative social interactions I've seen, a lot of women have to deal with on both ends, as fans, as people who are actual wrestlers and onscreen characters. And I've been just working in developing some strategies myself that I'd like to share with other people on how to keep everything as positive as we possibly can and keep our experiences good, no matter what else is going on around us on the social media landscape.

Amy:

That can be a very challenging aspect too, especially with social media, is keeping a sense of positivity, not just on social media, but within yourself with so much being thrown at people this year. So I think that's going to be a really wonderful way to approach that mindset in how we interact with each other, how we build each other up, and also how we build ourselves up and kind of interact with our own self with self-care sort of mindset. That's going to be wonderful.

Brandi Rhodes:

I truly believe it's going to be enlightening for a lot of people and they're going to get a lot out of it, so I'm looking forward to Friday.

Amy:

So one of the things that I'm noticing here as a trend with AEW Heels, obviously is the focus on women's empowerment. This isn't the first time that you've had a workshop that was geared towards uplifting women and giving them a real, tangible way to improve their experience. The last AEW Heels' session you had brought in an expert for mental health and stress relief in the midst of coronavirus and everything that was going on, and that was with your Chief Legal Officer, Megha Parekh. And I think that this was really helpful, especially because not only of coronavirus-

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Amy:

This was really helpful, especially because not only a Coronavirus, but after that, the Speaking Out movement exploded onto the scene. And there was a lot of stress in the wrestling world as fans, as wrestlers, as people being courageous, speaking out. And I think that that was something that I know I used personally, reflecting back to that workshop. So it feels like, not only are you talking about empowering women, but it feels like it's something that matters to you as a Chief Brand officer, as a woman, and just as a human being that finding a way to tangibly uplift people around you, your coworkers, your colleagues, the fans of AEW, as human beings, seems to be a primary focus with AEW Heels.

Brandi Rhodes:

Yeah, it definitely is. I'm a firm believer that if you take care of yourself, you can take care of others. But if you don't take care of yourself, you can't take care of others. And I, just like everyone else in the world, have good days and bad days. And on my bad days, I can't handle anyone else, which is not an option for me, because my job is handling other people. So I have to have ways to deal and cope and, I guess, progress myself to a place where I can get through anything, any challenge. And I think that some of these tools that have been available to me, I don't know how I would have gotten through a lot of this

year without them. So it's very important, then, to share that with other people, rather than watch other people struggle. Because like you said, this is an unprecedented year, for one thing. A lot has happened, and it's a lot for people to deal with and that's as an entire world.

Brandi Rhodes:

But then when you look at the specifics of each individual member's life, that compounds on it majorly. Not to be a downer, but I lost my dog who was very dear to me, 16 years old, he's been almost my entire life. And I have had terrible time dealing with that on a regular basis. So it's very good to practice different things, to learn different things from different people on how to be, and how to cope, and also to learn that you're normal to not feel okay all the time. And just take that time out for you, when you need it. And I think that the more that women are able to learn that it's okay to take care of myself before I try to take care of everybody else, the better off we are going to be, the healthier we're going to be, the more we're going to enjoy our experiences and our lives.

Amy:

Absolutely. And I think also with that message, that it's important that women feel like they're heard, both obviously in the wrestling community or in the workforce, or as fans at shows, but on a very human level, that it feels like they are being heard, that their struggles are being heard, that their triumphs are being heard and that every person who has this, their own world of successes and overcoming obstacles, whether they're personal or professional, that that's heard. And I think that this is a way for everybody to feel that they are heard.

Brandi Rhodes:

Absolutely. And then you will have people that you can communicate with on these issues. And, isn't it so nice to say something that you think is a singular issue for you, and then have somebody say, "Oh my goodness, same here. Oh yeah, that happened to me too. Oh yeah, I've dealt with this before, and here's how I got past it."

Brandi Rhodes:

That's what this community is about. And it's about helping each other. It's about making these connections first, and then helping each other, and then enriching each other's lives and sharing this love for wrestling.

Amy:

Yeah. Well, and it's also about fun, because every AEW Heels Zoom event starts off with a dance party. Everybody's listening to music, you've got a great playlist, everyone's dancing, and it's so great, because you go through the windows and you can see friends from wrestling, Twitter, or social media, but then you also see people like Allie or Awesome Kong or Nyla dancing and having fun. And so it really feels like we're all just hanging out and dancing together. And then you've had makeup tutorials from the AEW Glam Squad. And I know you've talked about wanting to have gear hack tutorials, some fashion events with Sandra Gray.

Amy:

And I think it's a wonderful mix to have this serious, uplifting empowerment mixed with, "Hey, let's just hang out. We'll have a girl's night out. It's going to be really fun."

Brandi Rhodes:

Yeah. I think it's really important to, at the forefront of everything, have fun. As serious as I am with everything related to wrestling, and earlier in our call, I think I threatened Allie if she didn't perform properly in our upcoming matches. But at the end of it all, the one thing that always, it gives me joy when, when I'm in the ring or at work, is I notice I'm having fun immediately. All apprehensions have gone out the window. Whatever I was worried about or fussing about literally seconds before I went out the curtain, because sometimes I am, I literally, when the light turns on, I get to be who I want to be, and who I worked so hard to be all this time, which for me is so much fun.

Brandi Rhodes:

So of course we want everybody to have fun and have a great time when they get on these calls. This is why we're warming up to a lot of this, and letting people just come in and sit back and watch that way. We have you raise your hand if you want to be spotlighted, because we don't want to just throw anybody in the spotlight that wasn't prepared, or wasn't ready, or might be embarrassed. So it's really just a chill, low-key, but super fun and informational place to be, every time we interact on Heels.

Amy:

So what been a couple of your favorite experiences so far with Heels, leading up to the membership that you've released today?

Brandi Rhodes:

Honestly, my favorite thing was the first time we did the Zoom together. First of all, no one had any idea what that was going to look like, how many people were going to show up. I actually was hopeful for a much smaller number than actually showed up, so that's always a great thing. But it was really, really cool to scroll the screen, because as you know, everybody is visible, if they want to be. If you don't want to be, you just stop your video, and you can be present, but not visible. But as I was scrolling through and seeing all of these various women, one of the key moments was about 50% were crying, because they were so happy that this was happening, and had waited so long for something like this to happen. So the emotional response is something that I will never forget. And honestly, that was what I took forward, and said, "We have to keep doing this. We have to do it now. We can't wait, because this is something that's absolutely needed for these people right now."

Amy:

Absolutely. Well, women are often underrepresented in the wrestling community as fans. Obviously, it's getting better in wrestling itself. But in wrestling, and in general, it's nice, again, we go back to being heard, to being valued, to being respected, and to be around each other and have fun. I know that during the Speaking Out movement, when all of that was coming to a head, a common question was we want to have some help with dealing with this. And we were, again, looking to the Stress Management Workshop that you had had, and now again, that you have with Respect and Empowerment in the Workplace, and having that comradery, and that advice is something that's really unheard of.

Amy:

I can't think of anything else that has ever existed like this, in wrestling, or in entertainment in general. I think this is really a unique project to be pioneering as a Chief Brand Officer.

Brandi Rhodes:

Yeah. And another thing that's really noteworthy is that, in AEW, there seems to be this real wanting to learn more from a lot of people. Behind the scenes here at AEW, we do a lot, as a larger group to include everybody, as far as situations that have happened, that are affecting members of our AEW community. And in particular, I can point ...

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Brandi Rhodes:

... community. And, in particular, I can point out because this is my story. But I was asked to share on a call that we did during the Black Lives Matter movement or the height of everything that had happened with George Floyd. And I shared my whole story of what I feel like as a black person in the world today. And I shared that I stopped running outside because I'm scared to. And that hit people like a rock. It hit my husband like a rock because he realized I haven't been running outside. And I tried it once and I was scared the whole time. So, I've stopped doing it. That's what it's like to be black.

Brandi Rhodes:

Sometimes what it's like to be women, we're scared all the time too. There's never a time at night that I walk to my car, I don't care what neighborhood I'm in, as long as it's dark, if I'm walking to my car and I don't think anyone else is around, I'm on full alert because at any moment, somebody could try to take my purse or worse. So, these are the everyday challenges of people.

Brandi Rhodes:

And, when you talk to other people and you learn what their challenges are and the things that they have to face on a daily basis that are very, very real to them, it opens your eyes. And so, at AEW, everybody has been so respectful and so wanting to learn these things. And also, because so many of us are willing to be open and share moments and things that have been extremely painful to help people learn, they are very, very comfortable coming to you.

Brandi Rhodes:

So, since a lot of this has happened, I could name, and I would not single anybody out because I don't want them to feel like, oh, no, I shouldn't have done that or whatever. But I can name at least three times that three different people have come up to me and said, hey, can I ask you a question because I don't know the answer to this. And I've said, absolutely. Yeah. And then, they ask a really hard question. And I say, you know what? Thank you for asking that because I would have never approached you with that. But I'll tell you why that's offensive. And I'll tell you what you could say instead or, yeah, I'll tell you exactly what that was like and why I felt this way.

Brandi Rhodes:

And it's such a great thing to kind of see like the light bulb go off for some people where they're like, okay. I understand that now. And I understand how I could change someone else's experience just by thinking about this, which is incredible. And it can just really change relationships and lives and the way that people do business together. It's really a movement that's happening. So, I'm really proud of everybody at AEW, as far as how a lot of situations in the current world have been handled.

Amy:

So, it feels like, with AEW, with you as CBO and spearheading Heels, that really there's an opportunity for people, especially in a year where everything is so visible and so direct, that there's an opportunity for people to really hear each other and sort of bring the barriers down between each other, understand each other's differences, and bond through that.

Brandi Rhodes:

Oh, yes. I mean, it's a huge opportunity that everyone has really. And I've heard a lot because we work so closely with the Jaguars and their organization. I've heard a lot of positivity coming from their direction with a lot of similar meetings that they've had and exercises that they've done. And it just goes to show that people in general, not just AEW, not just the sports world, but people in general really do want to see some kind of change. And they really do want to work together towards it. Even if it's hard or an uncomfortable experience at first, it's important to people. And I think that that's huge strides in a short period of time.

Brandi Rhodes:

Because I can remember not long ago in wrestling where I would feel like, gosh, if I say something about this I'm probably going to lose my job. Or, if I correct this person with what they just said that hurt me, I may be not looked at the same. So, I'm not there anymore, which is great. There's still a really long way to go. Don't get me wrong. There's still a really long way to go.

Brandi Rhodes:

I mean, there was an article that went out today for me for Sports Illustrated where the first question that I was asked was, how do you, as a woman in an empowering position in wrestling, how do you try to, I guess, raise other women up to feel as confident and comfortable as you do? And I said, I'm not comfortable at all. I'm still that one woman in the room. And it's very uncomfortable. But we're trying and we're moving forward. And I still have apprehension every single day. I still second guess decisions that I've made because of the way somebody looked at me. It's not gone yet. And I don't know that it ever will be, but I do know that my voice is lifted, which is good. I know that my voice is lifted, and I'm able to speak, and I'm able to expect the respect back that I've been given. That doesn't mean everybody's going to agree with me, but at least we've made that step forward.

Amy:

Absolutely. Well, and it also feels that, because there's so much inclusivity with AEW, that a lot of ideas and how you treat other people from different backgrounds can be presented to come together to put the best foot forward in interactions with your colleagues, with building the company itself, with how you treat your fans, which is absolutely apparent in the partnerships that you have created as chief brand officer. And also, with this experience with Heels, it's really coming together to really put that best foot forward in how you interact with people and how you elevate people and empower people while having fun at the same time.

Amy:

So, when we look at what you have in store for AEW Heels, you had mentioned in person events. And obviously, we have no idea what the rest of this year is going to look like. But what are some of these in person events that people can look forward to when they start traveling to shows? Because I know, if

there's one thing that's common among fans all across the board, is that we miss you guys so much. We miss cheering for you. We miss going to the shows. We miss that energy, that electricity in the air. So, I feel like, when you do have fans back, that there's going to be a very celebratory event, probably from you guys as well. So, what sort of events are you looking forward to hosting when you're able to have fans back with AEW Heels?

Brandi Rhodes:

When we're able to get back to business as usual, which I'm so hopeful happens sooner than later, I'm very excited to get together and do obviously a very big first Heels everybody get together type a party, which is something that would obviously revolve around something like a pay per view that happens on a weekend, so that hopefully as many people could make it as possible. But, not unlike a lot of things that we've done with star cast events in the past, I would like to do a lot of Heels specific. So, Heels specific meet and greets, VIP events, like I said, big gatherings and parties where we can have all kinds of different themes and just various fun aspects to that.

Brandi Rhodes:

I also would really love to do a Heels episode shot of Brandi that we can shoot and all be a part of and have key individuals work with me on making things. So, the opportunities are endless. A lot of stuff that we will be doing virtually will translate even better in person. So, we're just hoping and waiting. And, in the meantime, I think everything that we have planned through the rest of the year to do virtually and via the website is going to be extremely fulfilling, and a whole lot of fun, and only just amp people up for the future.

Amy:

Absolutely. I cannot wait for it. Okay. I've got one final question for you. Since we're with Wrestle Joy, I have to ask you a joyful question. What is something that you find the most joy in with what you do? Legitimately, as the person Brandi Rhodes, what is something that you find a lot of joy in with working with All Elite Wrestling?

Brandi Rhodes:

Oh, wow. Honestly, I would have to say that the most joy that I have in working here-

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Brandi Rhodes:

I have to say the most joy that I have in working here is anything that I see, that I've had a hand in, that made a major difference for someone else. So in the very beginning, when we announced our partnership with KultureCity, and I saw there was an onslaught of emails and text messages, not text messages. Sorry, Tweets and Instagram messages of people who were just abundantly thankful and all different kinds of stories, people who have personal connections to having sensory issues, or people that they love having sensory issues. That was overwhelming enough. But then when I went to work that week, one of our crew members, his name is Burt, he came up to me and he started crying. And he said, "I've been waiting for this to happen forever." He has a family member who has sensory issues.

Brandi Rhodes:

He's never been to a wrestling show and he's been working in wrestling for years and years and years. And now, he could bring that family member. And that was just one of those moments that just... Most people don't think I have a heart, but I do. I promise it's beating and it's in my chest. That was one of those ones that just wrapped its hands around my heart and just squeezed it because it was just almost too much. And to be able to see, I mean, as long as I can remember, all I've ever wanted to do was be able to help people. And I wanted to be able to help people in my own unique way. And to see yourself actually just reach out and touch somebody and their life changed, there's nothing like that. Nothing like that.

Brandi Rhodes:

I mean, I imagine being a doctor, or being a surgeon or something where you literally save someone's life. That must be what that feels like because it's just incredible for someone to literally be able to tell you their circumstance has completely changed because you thought of them. And that's something that I'm fortunate to be able to do whenever a unique opportunity like that presents itself, like Heels, like KultureCity, like working with Special Olympics or Make-A-Wish, Dreams Come True, places like that where literally you can give extra time and dedication to something and change somebody's absolute experience in life. There's nothing like that.

Amy:

Well, if there's one thing that you can tell that's absolutely clear from your partnerships, from the communities that you are elevating with AEW Heels, with Special Olympics, et cetera, is that the heart of all elite wrestling beats strong. And you are doing an incredible job showcasing that and inviting people into AEW, not even just as fans, as people who are going to build up All Elite Wrestling as the company, but as human beings. And I think that's extremely apparent in everything you do. So thank you so much for your time. Thank you so much for building a wrestling company that cares about people. I think that's the most apparent thing that I could probably express is that you have created, with the team around you, a wrestling company that cares about people and people see that. So thank you so much for doing that.

Brandi Rhodes:

Well, thank you to everybody who supports us and everybody who comes out to these shows and continues to watch during this pandemic and supports by getting the figures. And just we wouldn't be where we are without such an impressive and supportive and loyal fan base. So thank you to you guys and everybody who's just been along with us for the ride in the movement. And of course, thank you to me, because I do put in a lot of extra effort and hours. Like I said, I'm a philanthropist and I'm a socialite. All of my Instagram influencing is geared towards AEW and its success. And thankfully, Jazwares was smart enough to put me as the first female figure because they know all these things about me.

Brandi Rhodes:

So make sure to go out and get the figure, it's hitting shelves any day. I'm seeing people with it today. I've seen people saying, "All the pegs are up, they're just waiting." So get yourself out to Walmart and get that. Actually, I'm thinking about going. Listen to this thing. I'm thinking about going to Walmart, as me, and getting my figure. And what do you think, people? People are going to go crazy, right? I mean, can you imagine me in the cashier when Brandi Rhodes cashes out with little Brand-Brand? Unbelievable. I may document it and it's going to be a [crosstalk 00:31:52]-

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Amy:

You absolutely should. You will change the life of that cashier who just saw the greatest superhero, powered by the universe, the most legendary Wonder Woman in history, right in front of her.

Brandi Rhodes:

That warms my heart. That makes me even more motivated to do it. I think I'm going to get out there. I think I'm going to do it.

Amy:

Absolutely. Well, thank you for your time to the greatest superhero in the universe ever to have existed ever. I appreciate you taking time to talk with little old me about the wonderful things that you are doing. Thank you so much.

Brandi Rhodes:

Thank you very much, Amy. We'll see you Friday on the Heels call.

Amy:

Absolutely. We will be there. And on Dynamite and next Monday for the Women's Tag Team Cup Tournament to watch you win.

Brandi Rhodes:

Oh, man. I mean, you might as well just fast forward to the final because that's all me.

Amy:

Well, have a wonderful time. We will catch you on Friday. Thank you so much for your time, Brandi.

Brandi Rhodes:

Thank you, Amy. Take care.

Amy:

You, too.

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