

# THE **GRIT 'N' HUSTLE** SHOW

WITH **TODD HERMAN**

*Interview with* **JEN GROOVER**

**EPISODE  
23**



**Jen Groover: On Growing Up In A Challenging Home, Building A Fashion Brand & The New Power Entrepreneurs Need**



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A portrait of Todd Herman, a man with short dark hair and a light beard, wearing a brown leather jacket over a white shirt. He is standing in front of a background of horizontal metal slats.

## ABOUT TODD HERMAN

### Personally I am:

- A husband to a beautiful, smart and financially sharp woman, who really wants a third baby (unfortunately we haven't mastered two),
- A father to two little girls, whom aren't very good sleepers, giggle a lot and are obsessed with 'horsey's' and merry-go-rounds,
- A daily letter writer. I've written over 3600 personal letters to people. (5 a week since I was 23),
- A farmboy from Schuler, Alberta, Canada.
- A New Yorker, living in Chelsea.

### Professionally I:

- Created the 90 Day Year. A program for business owners who are frustrated with their level of performance and want to learn the art & science of execution,
- Failed at several businesses. (One of those I lost my entire life savings.) But, I also won at enough to turn them into seven and eight figure ventures,
- Worked all over the world. 82 countries total,
- Coached thousands upon thousands of athletes on developing their mental game,
- Advised & Mentored hundreds of business owners on high performance and personal leadership.
- Built a software company.
- And, I'm not done yet...

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## Jen Groover - #23

Show notes at: <http://bit.ly/JenGrooverGrit>

### **Jen Groover: On Growing Up In A Challenging Home, Building A Fashion Brand & The New Power Entrepreneurs Need**

**Todd Herman:** Welcome to Episode 23. In Episode 22, you heard from a guy that grew up on a commune, played poker in the seedy under-belly of Manhattan back rooms and somehow turned all of that into the foundation for a seven-figure e-commerce empire. And in today's episode, you'll hear from a woman that didn't have the most ideal family life growing up in Philadelphia, but that didn't stop her from becoming an inventor, being featured in TV, magazines and other media as an inspiring business woman and leader, speaking on stages all around the world, Jen Groover.

Welcome to the Grit 'n' Hustle podcast with your host, entrepreneur, and internationally acclaimed ultra-high performance and leadership advisor, Todd Herman. The place to hear 100% real and raw stories of how high achievers actually made it with no cotton candy fluff, no filler, and no fades, just actionable inspiration to keep you learning, growing, and striving to reach new personal bests.

Without any more delay, here's your host, Todd Herman.

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I have had the great fortune of having some incredible mentors in my life and those mentors easily accelerated my path to achieving new successes by steering me around roadblocks that would've normally slowed me down and also introducing me to better quality people to help me out as well.

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Again, just text "hustle" to 38470. If you're outside the U.S. and Canada just go to <http://toddherman.me> and you can snag it there. Now on to today's show.

Jen Groover has been tagged by [Success Magazine](#) as a one-woman brand and a creativity and innovation guru. [Entrepreneur Magazine](#) called her a leading serial entrepreneur you need to follow. [SAP](#) even ranked her as the number eight of the top 51 influencers of human potential. Jen became synonymous with innovation when she created the [Butler Bag](#), an organization system for the black hole of women's handbags. She's guest hosted spots on [QVC](#), done major licensing deals with some of the biggest fashion heavyweights, and the United Nations even tagged her as a delegate to the [Global Entrepreneur's Council](#). Jen has been a friend for a while and her energy is extremely tough to keep up with, trust me on this one. I know you'll love her story, enjoy.

In today's episode, you're going to hear how Jen started in the fitness industry, transitioned into the fashion world and how she almost lost it all with unscrupulous business partners. They are out there, trust me. And too often you'll hear the glossy story of success but the great thing about Jen is she's happy to be transparent about all the real struggles of being an entrepreneur. She also shares what she feels is the number one skill you have to have, going into the next decade of business.

**Todd:** Jen Groover, thank you so much for joining us on the Grit 'n' Hustle show.

**Jen:** Thanks for having me.



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**Todd:** I always like to find out right away what have I interrupted in your day by putting this interview on your calendar. What's your calendar, what does your day look like for you today?

**Jen:** My day today is actually a catch-up day. That is why I put you into my calendar today. Most of my days I'm running around in meetings and at events. I like to do things like this on days I am sitting in front of my computer. I feel a little bit more calm, focused, and a lot more grounded, that's for sure.

**Todd:** I figured this interview was going to be happening while you were in the back of an Uber car on your way to the airport or something like that. I'm happy that you scheduled me into a time frame where you have a quiet environment around yourself.

**Jen:** It doesn't happen often. But, I'm really focused right now on doing it at least one day a week and, hopefully, Wednesdays so that I can kind of regroup from Monday and Tuesday and get my head back on straight for Thursday and Friday. That seems to be working effectively for me.

**Todd:** I'm a big theme day person. Wednesdays are all about that exact same thing. It's also typically where I put in meetings with new people because when I take a look at what feeds me (both of us are massive extroverts), people and talking and relationships is a big thing that feeds me so why don't I put that into the middle of the week so that it will recharge me for the rest of the week too!

**Jen:** Absolutely. I actually am somewhat of an introvert too. I do like my alone time and I love these regrouping days.

**Todd:** So, before we kind of get into all of your story and to peel back the lens and the curtain for everyone else, I've known Jen for years. She's always been someone who has very much inspired me, not just on your energy level, because you can go like nobody can go, but just how prolific you are at attacking so many different goals or projects or new industries that really don't scare you. And that is why I kind of want to it...somebody outside looking in says, "I'm not as fearless as that person," but I would like to get into that maybe you are a little fearful about things and what you have used as a coping mechanism to get past the fear of things.



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What are you working on right now and excited about currently with what you are up to?

**Jen:** Before I even answer that question, I do want to address, YES, I have had fear moments in my life that were the moments that kept me from living my potential. Earlier on in my career when I recognized them and could find the root of where they came from was how I transformed my life. I was raised in an environment where my dad was in the military where the "failure is not an option" mindset existed.

I think I understand what that means in a battlefield. But when you teach a child that failure is not an option, that child, if they are good at self-preservation, won't do anything they possibly could fail at. I spent a majority of my younger years doing things I was really good at and staying far, far away from things I could possibly fail at.

In my 20's I started to realize I was doing really cool things in my career. They were very out-of-the-box things. It was very entrepreneurial and back in 1995 being an entrepreneur was nowhere near as cool as it is today. Quite honestly, back then it was thought of as, "oh, I guess they couldn't get hired somewhere or why would they start their own business?"

I really had to base in that belief system early on and uproot it. Although it seemed to the outside world I was doing big things, I was nowhere near living to my potential. I couldn't figure out why other people were living bigger, playing bigger than I was and what was holding me back from doing it.

Once I identified that my belief system of failure was that "failure is not an option," which means failure defines you, I was able to change that belief system. I replaced it with having more fear of regret than of failure. Fear is going to be existent upon us no matter what. It is an innate thing. It is a protective survival mechanism.

If we can see fear as an opportunity to fuel us versus stop us, then we can charge forward when we feel that fear.

**Todd:** You just said something really important when you said you replaced it, instead of having a fear of failure you live with a fear of regret, which then drives a different



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action. We use these words all the time, but how did you actually do that? I know there is some listener right now that has that exact same issue. They are probably extremely competent and capable of going out there and doing great things but what did that look like for you?

**Jen:** That's a great question. What I have learned in all of my studying of human potential, the first phase of changing something is to identify it. When I was able to identify it I literally visually uprooted that belief out of my brain.

**Todd:** You almost turned it into some sort of plant and imagined yourself pulling it out?

**Jen:** Exactly, 1000% percent. Literally visualize uprooting it and planting a new thought, which was that I have more fear of regret than I have of failure followed up with failure is only part of the process on the journey to success.

**Todd:** It's not a definition.

**Jen:** It's a new relationship. I changed my relationship with it. So it's not a definition, it's just part of the process. Planting that new thought, you can plant a new thought but if you don't actually water it and nurturer it then the subconscious thought or the deeper rooted thought that goes back all of your life will constantly resurface.

**Todd:** What do you do to water and nurture it?

**Jen:** For a good year straight, all day, every day, I repeated the mantra, "I have more fear of regret than I have of failure. Failure is just a part of the process of my journey to success." I would say that mantra all day every day. I would visualize my plowing through fear and when I plowed through fear I actually visualized going through a finish line and on the other side of the finish line was success and happiness and growth and all of the things of abundance I wanted on the other side.

I had to, every single day for at least a year straight, say this mantra to reprogram what had subconsciously already been programmed, which was the dominant thought, the default thought, to make it a thought I don't actually have to think about anymore. It's



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just who I am right now. When I feel fear now around something I actually get excited and I feel alive versus scared.

**Todd:** That's great. How old were you when you made that shift?

**Jen:** It was when my daughters were newborns, 11 years ago. I was in my early 30s and I started processing prior to that. For a good year or two I was really questioning why I wasn't taking my ideas to a bigger level. I had an idea journal filled with great ideas. They stayed in the journal.

I started pondering that question in my late 20s of why I wasn't playing it bigger. Why were all these other people bringing their ideas to light and I was sitting with an idea journal? I pondered that thought and then the breakthrough happened at 31.

**Todd:** What were you doing throughout your 20s then? You were still doing some good things in your 20s.

**Jen:** Sure. In my 20s I started a business right out of college in the fitness industry. In 1995 the fitness industry was at its infancy, believe it or not. A lot of people don't even realize that. It really wasn't an industry the way it is today. I was in that first phase of influencers in the fitness industry as a master trainer and I was a national-level fitness competitor. My business partners and I also did group fitness programs and holistic wellness programs for corporations.

In 1995 that was also unheard of. We were really pioneering that thought process that if you take care of your employees you will increase your productivity. Now, who doesn't know that. It's common sense. But back then we were very much pioneering in this space.

I look back on my career and I obviously am always someone who desires to pioneer. With that pioneering I have learned there is a lot of patience, there is a ton of education process that has to happen, and usually when thought leaders are pioneering a new belief or new trend it takes about seven years for the rest of the world to catch up with it.

**Todd:** It is the laggards that come along. Typically in business, one of the worst things you can do is actually be a pioneer. People think that Apple is a pioneer and they're not.



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Apple has never pioneered anything. What they have done is improve on the innovations of other people and design it in a much more beautiful, elegant way or whatever the case is. They are not pioneers.

It is funny because you had this thing you were doing in your 20's, which was pioneering something. Yet when you were 31 you were looking back on your past and you were asking why you were playing small. Yet, to everyone else who is listening, they might think that doesn't seem right, you were playing big.

So, when you take a look at it, what were you missing out on? When you are looking back at that opportunity what was it about it that you didn't feel like you were playing big enough?

**Jen:** I think when we are truthful with who we are and we can acknowledge our own potential, in my own potential metric I was probably only playing 20% to my potential. In that being, it is important to acknowledge that your potential can continue to grow and expand.

For me, not playing up to my potential was holding me back from really being successful to the level in which I had desired to be successful. I wasn't feeling fulfilled. I was feeling like I was doing really cool things but I wasn't feeling fulfilled. I wasn't feeling like I truly was accelerating or making the level of impact in which I wanted to.

When you realize that about yourself you can truly start to challenge yourself on a bigger level. I think most people think status quo is what's normal so they just stay at status quo. They think they are going to go to school and get a job and then they are going to get "this" title and then a raise and "that" title.

For me, I never believed in that process, by the way. That is why I became an entrepreneur right out of college. But it was just a longing and desire of realizing I was doing cool things but that I could do so much more. If I want to leave a legacy someday, I had better start doing it now.

**Todd:** Going back to your childhood, what was your childhood like, brothers, sisters, in your household?



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**Jen:** Dysfunctional. It is the all-American family now. My dad was an alcoholic when I was younger. My mom was just a really passionate, fiery, hot-headed Italian woman from Brooklyn. My brother was 11 months older than me. There was a lot of fighting.

My dad was a professional yet when he would come home he would become a different person than he was in his professional world. I harbor anger or resentment to him because of it, because knowing what I know now about human potential and people, he was essentially just playing out his cycle. He didn't have the sense of self awareness that we have today to break that cycle.

My childhood environment was somewhat volatile.

**Todd:** Did you know that your dad was an alcoholic at the time?

**Jen:** Yes. Absolutely. There were definitely a lot of explosive moments in my home. There was abuse and there were many nights where my mom and brother and I would sleep in our car. It was very clear. I didn't know exactly what that means, in the big picture of which I know today. But it was a scary environment. It wasn't a settled environment.

I knew it wasn't right. I didn't know what was the right thing. At that moment I knew it wasn't right and I knew it wasn't how I wanted the rest of my life to be.

**Todd:** So how did that affect, or did it affect how you showed up in school at all? Did it turn you into an achiever personality? Did you feel like you were ashamed because of the type of family you had when everybody else had a nuclear family that was better? What was the story in your head like?

**Jen:** Quite honestly, earlier on in school it actually made me aloof. I wasn't as focused or as clear. I guess what really made me "me" today, very creative, because I was always daydreaming. Daydreaming out of my present place to go to a different place. I look at my children now in school and their sense of self-motivation and their sense of self-discipline. I never had that, ever.



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I didn't have the environment to create that safety. I was somewhat aloof in my younger years. I really liked playing. I liked being out and socializing. That was the thing I look back on my childhood that I felt most excited about. I didn't know what I wanted to be. I didn't have clarity in that.

I did know that I wanted to do something really important. I had no idea what it was but I knew I wanted to do something really big and really important to break my cycle of my childhood that existed. I guess it propelled me in a windy road. I did not have a straight path to success by any means. It was a very winding road to self-discovery.

There are moments where I look back and I am shocked I am here today. I could have lost my way quite a few times. I didn't have that guidance. But outwardly to the world, my family seemed normal. They didn't know what was going on at home and my mom had a cool career path and my dad had his career path. I think there was a part of shame within me but I knew the rest of the world didn't see it. So it wasn't the level of shame that became my story, it definitely propelled me to break the cycle though, that is for sure.

**Todd:** So you are saying there were a couple of moments on a winding path where you could have definitely lost your way. What were some of those moments of poor decisions? What were the things that happened that could have caused you to be a completely different place than you are now?

**Jen:** There were moments in high school and college where I was constantly choosing, and forks in roads. I always had great friends who came from great families. But there was still the question of whether I should do homework or go out to a party with my friends. Should I study for this test or should I make sure I go to an event all my friends in college were going to?

I was constantly at a fork and I would always know I was at that fork. I was constantly fortunate enough that great people would come into my life to ground me during those moments of the decision-making process. When I was in college I dated someone who was a pre-med student. That really helped me be grounded during those moments of choice where I could have just skirted my way through college and not follow a good path or be as committed.



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Instead, I was committed to my grades; therefore, I graduated with a good invested education that I could leverage as I got older. Because I didn't have a clear focus as to who I wanted to be it was easier to get caught into the forks and say, "which way should I go?"

**Todd:** Were there any other kind of really pivotal moments that you think shaped who Jen Groover is today from when you were in your teen years at all?

**Jen:** Oh yeah, for sure. When I was going into high school my dad had cheated on my mom. I had known this and had to be the one to tell my mom. It was one of the hardest things I have ever done. But I knew I had to do it. I wanted to tell her to give her a sense of freedom.

I knew my mom wasn't happy where she was in her life. I knew she wasn't in a marriage she was happy in or getting the love that she deserved. So I thought that telling her would give her a newfound freedom. When I told her she said, "You know Jen, I have known this all along but it's harder to leave than to stay."

When I tell this story I can't tell you how many women start to cry and fall apart. Quite honestly, they understand that. My mom, although she had a cool career, women weren't making money back then. She was probably making \$13,000 a year at max so she didn't have the financial resources to support a family. She knew my dad was in a position, he was an attorney and he wrote the laws of divorce, ironically, in the State of Pennsylvania.

She knew he would be able to manipulate the system and she knew that no one would want to represent her. That's pretty much what happened. The divorce became extremely volatile. My mom was, unfortunately, correct in how my dad handled the situation and it put us in a very financially scary situation.

I remember, during my sophomore dance I couldn't go because my dad didn't pay my tuition and it was just a manipulation tactic against my mother. There were a lot of moments where my mom was scared going to the grocery store because she didn't know which food to buy, which one would sustain us the longest.



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At that time period, very much is what shaped who I am. During that time period, watching my mom fall apart completely to a point that she had a massive stroke a year and a half into this process and lived in a wheelchair for the rest of her life, made me realize I never, ever was going to allow someone to define or control my happiness or my finances. I wanted and needed to take control of that for the rest of my life.

It's so much of what I do around empowering women because I believe women still give up their power a lot, especially around finances. Even if you are going to choose to pick a time to stay at home with your children and raise them before they go to preschool or whatever time period that is, you still need to be aware of your finances and in control of your finances to some degree. You also need to be in control of your fate and continuing to polish yourself so that when you are ready to go back into the work force you haven't lost all of your leverage or your experience in that competition so that all of the sudden you find yourself completely financially dependent and unable to make decisions based on what you really want versus the position you are put into.

**Todd:** Through that experience, did you have much of a relationship with your dad after that?

**Jen:** I did. My mom and I are very alpha personalities. I know that's shocking to you. {laughter} When I was in high school my mom and I actually had a lot of conflict even though she was going through this process. It actually escalated the conflict. She was raised as an old-school Italian mom who very much wanted to control everything. I am such an independent, free-spirited person and I didn't like micromanaging or control.

Even though I didn't have a close relationship with my father at that time, he actually understood me better and could make decisions to help foster my independence and my decision-making process during those really formative years. When kids are in high school and you haven't, as a parent, laid a foundation for them to make choices and you try to control their choices you literally squash their ability to grow as a human being at that point.

My dad and I still had a relationship. My brother and he didn't. It was awful. But we still had a relationship. It wasn't what I had envisioned for a father and a daughter. I watched



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all of my girlfriends have very loving, nurturing, caring kind of fathers. My dad wasn't that man. He was not capable because he wasn't raised that way.

My disappointment was in that he wasn't that person. But I can always see multiple perspectives to every situation. It's a blessing and a curse. As much as my dad was doing things I didn't agree with, I could still understand some of his perspectives so I always tried to keep an open mind and keep peace with everyone in the family.

There was a time period where my dad and I did completely lose all of our relationship and it took me to realize that he is only the person he is capable of being based on the childhood experiences he had. I shifted from anger to forgiveness, empathy, compassion, and sadness that he actually doesn't get the chance to love his children in a capacity that I love my children. I'm not saying he doesn't love. You can love 100% but his 100% is very different than my 100%.

Because of my childhood, it has taught me so much in what I apply in business today as a leader and as a motivational speaker, which is my #1 passion of all I do in teaching emotional intelligence and human potential. I can actually teach about compassion and empathy from a place of understanding because I have lived it. I have shifted from the anger and resentment to that place of being.

**Todd:** The one thing I have always appreciated about you is when you are in a social environment, because you are so highly empathic, I can almost sit back and see you noticing the other people that are also maybe not included in a conversation that are on the fringes. You have a great ability to bring them into conversation. Your tuning fork is at such a higher frequency than other people that it has allowed you...that is what has made you such a great leader and why so many people gravitate toward you.

I kind of want to pull this forward to the point in time about ten years ago when you had basically made that shift in yourself to really start playing "life" at a bigger game or really just living up to what your possibilities for performance could be and that moment you were hovering over the top of your dishwasher and you had your major epiphany that helped launch a major brand and new consumer product.



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**Jen:** That was my overwhelmed, new mother, completely sleep deprived moment of my life where my twins were barely sleeping through the night. I needed to get a sense of organization of my life. When I created the [Butler Bag](#) company I was feeling really overwhelmed. I was feeling out of control and feeling as though I had lost identity. I am sure every new parent listening could actually identify with that whether it's a mother or a father.

When we are feeling out of control internally/emotionally, we seek external ways to control our environment. That's what I was seeking. I like to travel lightly and all of the sudden I was traveling with two kids, two car seats, and all of these bags with me everywhere. I was feeling even more like the Peanuts character with all of the stuff coming behind him everywhere he is going.

One night I was in the grocery store and had my girls with me in an express lane during rush hour. I was trying to get something quickly for dinner and I couldn't find my credit card. And, I'm panicked, because I was holding up a line of people. Both of my girls started screaming and crying at the same exact time from their car seats and I thought to myself, "Seriously, as far as innovation has come in our society, women are accepting a bucket for a bag."

It is literally a bucket. I could stick lining in there, water, and a mop and it would be a bucket. I am thinking this as I am digging through my bag trying to find my credit card. I dump it out in front of the cashier and was walking out after I regrouped from the situation and my mom had a mantra that was one of the best things that any parent could teach a child and I do it with my girls, "You're not allowed to complain about something unless you're going to back it up with a solution."

You lose all rights to complain unless you are going to back it up with, "Here's potentially a solution." That teaches a child to be an innovator. It teaches a child to invent solutions. I was leaving that day complaining in my mind and then the second I went to complain in my mind I thought, "Okay, what's the solution?"

I didn't have one. I'm not good at drawing, not even a stick figure. I wasn't good at math and science. While I was thinking there had to be a better way I was also asking, "Why



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me?" Why would I be able to do this, who did I think I was? It was the same place of self-doubt that everyone goes.

I really kept thinking about this because there had to be a better way. I was sure I wasn't the only woman feeling that way. I planted that seed but then I kind of left it on a shelf and went back to my life and my chaos, my new mom-hood. It wasn't until six or seven months later that I was unloading my dishwasher when I had a bird's eye view of the knives, forks, and spoons.

As I was taking the utensils out I thought it was amazing. Everything was standing up straight. I had a bird's eye view. I didn't have to look and dig for forks or spoons. That was the moment I thought, "This is exactly what I want my handbag to look like when I open it up." I took the dishwasher tray out of the dishwasher, like anyone would, and stuck it in my bag and that became my first prototype.

As I mentioned earlier about the mantra, "I have more fear of regret than I have of failure," I had just incorporated that into my life and I honestly believe that had I not changed that belief system prior to this moment, that moment wouldn't have become what it did. I would have still been holding onto these belief systems around fear of failure. I don't think I would have seen the opportunity the same way and I certainly don't think I would have pursued the opportunity the same way.

**Todd:** You took that idea and then where did you go? What happened next? Did you call someone up? It is daunting, there's no doubt about it. Your background was never in...it's not like you worked for a consumer package goods company. You were fashionable but that didn't mean you were in the fashion industry. So, what did Groover do next to take that idea onto the next step?

**Jen:** That night, after I took the dishwasher tray out of the dishwasher and stuck it into my handbag that essentially became my first prototype. I was up all night Googling all of the configurations possible about compartments in handbags. I realized that what I envisioned to create did not yet exist.

The next day I went to one of my girlfriends who had worked at [QVC](#) and had exposed all of these solution-driven concepts and I showed it to her. At first she said, "Come on,



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no one's thought of that?" And second, she said, "Seriously, that's huge. I wish I had thought of that." That is a post-it note theory.

A post-it note theory is that without even speaking if you could show somebody something that provides a solution and people either say, "Come on, someone has had to have thought of that," or "I wish I had thought of that," then you have yourself a winning product. So because of Jen's reaction I knew I was onto something.

Prior to that, in between the fitness experience I had, I had also helped other women start their companies and many of them went on to QVC. I reached out to some people I met at that part of my journey thinking it would be easy to get help and easy to figure this out. Ironically, no one really wanted to help me. I found it really frustrating and one of my friend's fathers, who had nothing to do with the fashion industry and nothing to do with this space at all, was the only person that actually helped me get this whole thing started.

He actually had been in the health care space and had been part of a distribution company that brought products for walkers or little seats for people that use walkers to sit on. It was a totally different manufacturing space.

**Todd:** Before you go on, it's such a huge distinction what you just said. Many people think they are going to go to the straight-lined obvious place to get help and more often than not you end up getting help from these complete periphery areas that make no sense whether it is people or resources that end up helping you launch the thing. That gets to the point of whatever your idea is, talk about it to everybody.

**Jen:** Absolutely. It was such a random place how this came to be for this man to help me. Quite honestly, he introduced me to a sourcing agent in that space who took this on. He has no idea what he was doing either. He knew how to source products in that space and what a lot of people don't understand is that even if I had found a belt manufacturer, a belt manufacturer is very different than a handbag manufacturer, which is very different than a shawl manufacturer.

Manufacturing, especially if you are doing it overseas, is a very template type of experience. They are not creative people so you have to give them exactly what you want



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done or they can't figure it out. We have to figure it out and prepare it to take it to the factories. It was really challenging. I call it my scavenger hunt period of finding the next step to do.

Because I couldn't draw well, I had to find an industrial designer to show what the internal part was going to look like. Then I basically took all of these handbags and cut pieces apart from them and stapled them all together to have the handle I want, the body shape I want, the zipper I want, the pockets I want. It was literally like all of these purses picked apart and put together in a way that created my first sample or prototype to go to the factories.

**Todd:** You ended up getting your prototype. Did you put in a big order to get a whole bunch of these? Did you already have orders coming in? What was your distribution and your retail strategy?

**Jen:** I learned a lot about branding from a mentor of mine. It was a very innate thing to me. My degree is in psychology and education. Branding was just innate for me. Instead of spending my money on a lot of things most companies do when they start a business, I actually invested most of the money in myself and my own mastery of PR and communications, marketing, branding. I hired mentors and learned everything possible about how to penetrate the media when you are launching a company, about perfecting storytelling skill sets.

When I first launched, before I actually launched, I started seeding to the media what I was launching with my prototype. I didn't even have products here yet. I hired a publicist. But back up because this is very important, I mastered, or at least was in the process of mastering how to understand to work with the media from my mentor. I don't think hiring a publicist right out of the gate when you start a company is a wise investment unless you understand how to work with that publicist to master your own PR.

**Todd:** That's a good point, great point.

**Jen:** Thank you. So, I hired a publicist and I came up with a strategy with her. The first big break I had was literally 24 hours after I gave her a bunch of samples. She went out



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that night and gave it to a woman, Carolina, who was on Z100 in New York City at the time. She would do this thing every morning at 7 a.m. called the Rage Page.

She loved the bag so much that the next day she talked about it on the Rage Page. I never knew my publicist even gave her a bag or that she was going to do this. So all of the sudden I get a call from my business partner at 7:30 a.m. He was like, "What did you do? What's happening?"

All of the sudden we had all of these females and he wanted to know where they were coming from. We had sales. But the back end of our eCommerce wasn't even set up yet. So we went into excited mode to panic mode. How were we going to process all of the orders...and the bags weren't even here yet.

I had made my first purchase order of 5,000 units so I was very optimistic.

**Todd:** That's very optimistic, for sure.

**Jen:** Especially with leather handbags. They were on their way here. They weren't even here yet though. They were being shipped so there was still a lot of lag time. We had to quickly learn from a customer service standpoint how to keep people happy about their purchase without having a product coming for weeks. That was a huge learning curve. I think a lot of people start a company and don't even think about their customer service process because they don't even know what to expect really.

I think if people put effort into their customer service process, look at Zappos. Zappos wasn't doing much differently in terms of a distribution channel. What they did differently was their customer service strategy. Customer service is a huge part of any strategy that I think a lot of new businesses don't even think of. We were forced to think of it pretty quickly.

Then, when the bags came here a large portion of them were incorrect. They made the bags with cow neck versus the side of the cow so they were all wrinkly and they looked nothing at all like they were supposed to look. I panicked. I cried. My investors were family and friends and I called my attorney.



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My attorney signed a very basic contract not even projecting that this could happen. I was essentially liable for these bags that came. My agent tried to fight it but I wound up having to eat these bags, so to speak, and get new ones. It created a process of understanding all of the things that could go wrong when you are manufacturing products.

I did end up taking a lot of those bags and using them as samples that I would send to the stores to show to demonstrate the inside of the bag. I made something good out of the bad scenario.

**Todd:** You basically kind of gave them the lens that this was not what they would look like on the outside but it was what they would look like on the inside so you could get away from the, "Oh, this doesn't look all that great."

**Jen:** Exactly. Every boutique store that I opened an account with at the time was given a sample bag that came from the bags I wasn't going to be able to sell. I expressed to them that the inside of the bag was what needs to be seen. I gave them a stand and gave them a bag and told them to fill it up and put it at their counter or somewhere visible when people walk in. It became a conversation starter to all of the boutique owners.

People would walk in and say, "Oh my gosh, someone forgot their bag here!" The boutique owner would say, "Oh no, that's one of our new bags. We are just demonstrating the inside of it." It became one of our most powerful marketing sales strategies ever.

**Todd:** What a great shift, taking something that was obviously a painful lesson but then finding a different purpose for it.

I want to respect your time because I know we have to actually cut it off shortly here. But that bag has gone on to become one of the #1 sellers for Avon. You have been on QVC or is it HSN?

**Jen:** QVC.



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**Todd:** QVC, multiple times. You are involved in many other businesses and we don't have time to get into all of them. But you are an outstanding leader in the female entrepreneur space. You are featured on - I can't even count how many media outlets always have Jen Groover on them. But I do want to get to my final five questions that I like to ask everybody.

**Jen:** Sure.

**Todd:** One is, and you probably don't even have an answer for this one, but what TV show are you watching now that you are obsessed with? I know you're not really much of a TV show person.

**Jen:** Yeah, I'm not much of a TV person. But I do love [Empire](#). It is brilliant. I am probably looking at it from a different lens than most people, but it is the most brilliant show. Their product placement, brand integration, longevity, songs, how they demonstrate the songs, how the commercials are all the personalities doing a commercial that seem seamlessly integrated. It is a machine of branding, just genius, literally genius.

**Todd:** That's cool. That's good to hear because I haven't seen the show. I will have to check it out now. I don't have time for it, but whatever. Who is someone you have met recently that inspired you?

**Jen:** Wow, that is a tough one. I genuinely find inspiration in everybody I meet. That's one of my goals, every single person I meet, regardless of where they are in their life or what they are doing or any event I am at, my goal is to find a nugget of inspiration from them. But if I have to name one person, you and I were talking about this before we hopped on here, but the other day I met Sir Alex Ferguson and he is a legendary leader in the sports world.

I loved listening to him and speaking with him because I teach emotional intelligence and I feel that he is a coach who has coached with emotional intelligence for a really long time without there being a terminology around that. I asked him what he thought his biggest secret to success was in managing all of these personalities, and egos, quite honestly.



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He said, "I know that a one-size leadership style doesn't work ever." Your goal as a leader is to identify who is on your team, what their background is, where they come from, and what motivates them. Some people can only be motivated with tough love. Others will shut down with tough love and can only be motivated through nurturing. Really identifying all of these personalities and all of these triggers is the key to great leadership.

[Coach Carroll](#) of the [Seattle Seahawks](#) is somebody I really look up to as well because he has led his team in the same way and really fostered a collective group of emotionally intelligent players. Any leader that's leading in this new leadership style that's being recognized now, my TED Talk was about enlightened leadership was about this; any leader that's leading in a way that's truly approaching emotional intelligence and investing in their own personal growth first is somebody I look up to.

**Todd:** To kind of touch on Pete Carroll, I know Pete Carroll's background and I know the people he has brought in whether he was at USC or Seattle, and he has a very, very large focus with all of his athletes on constant personal development and not just their skills on the field. He is a great leader, whether you love him or hate him, you have to respect the fact that he gets results where he goes.

**Jen:** And his players love him. That's a sign of a good leader. His players love him.

**Todd:** They know he's out for their best interests beyond what's just happening on the field of play, which is huge.

**Jen:** Absolutely.

**Todd:** What do you wish you were better at saying "no" to? It has to be events or something.

**Jen:** Just last night I was at an event and I love it, it was [Big Brothers and Big Sisters](#), which is such a great organization. But, one of my girlfriends who knows how much I go to different events asked if I ever get burned out. I said, "I just want to be home in my pajamas right now." So yes, it's events.

**Todd:** What do you love about where you live?



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**Jen:** My home is Philadelphia. I have an apartment in New York that I have had for a long time, eight or nine years now. I love where Philadelphia is in its growth. Philadelphia is a booming city right now. It's attracting a lot of millennials and is booming in its start-up scene right now, which I am really excited about because it is a vibrant energy where it's creating a culture that hasn't existed in my time that I know of in Philadelphia.

I love that Philadelphia is so close to New York. I love that it is close to Washington, D.C. I feel like I am really in the middle of everything. The difference between New York and Philly is that Philly is a more manageable city and is easier to get around. It's easier to have a car there. It is more cost effective for families as well as companies.

**Todd:** We're not going to go there Jen. We're not going to discuss the cost effectiveness of what it's like to live in New York City with families.

**Jen:** Yes, I know. You're definitely one who can talk about that. I love New York, I really do. I love my friends there and the vibrancy. But I'm really loving Philly right now at a whole different level because of this new vibrancy around the millennials. The mayor basically made a statement recently that Philly has become the #1 destination city in the United States for millennials. I am really feeling that energy around that.

**Todd:** That's great. Final one...If you could have personally witnessed anything, what would you want to have seen?

**Jen:** Wow! This is a good one.

**Todd:** This is typically, now that I have done this a bunch of times, where I need to fill up the dead air space by just talking because I need to give you time to think about it.

**Jen:** I mean, I really feel very fulfilled in so many things I have done and seen in my life. So, I don't know if there is anything off the top of my head that I am longing to see. I love sports so I probably wish I was at a few more Super Bowls, which sounds really superficial in the scheme of all of the cool things I could have seen in life. I'm really stumped on this one.



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**Todd:** Wow, I can't believe I've stumped Jen Groover on a question.

**Jen:** My mind is going through political type events, World Cup scenarios that I might have wanted to be at. I definitely haven't been to a World Cup yet so that is on my bucket list. I really don't know the answer to that.

**Todd:** That's fine. In the infographic we'll put Super Bowl or something like that.

**Jen:** Well right. Or I'll think about it when we are done with the interview and I'll let you know afterward.

**Todd:** You'll send me like ten and you will say, "Well, I would have loved to have seen man landing on the moon," or whatever the thing could be. But, that's the problem. There are so many things I would have loved to have seen. Even I have a tough time with that question and I'm the one who came up with it.

**Jen:** What was yours?

**Todd:** What was mine?

**Jen:** Yeah, what would your answer be? Let me ask you about it?

**Todd:** Mine would go back to ancient times. I would love to be standing on a hillside and see a battle between Alexander the Great and the Persians. We have so many accounts that are sometimes third-party accounts of things and I would like to sit on the hillside and go, "Oh, that's what actually happened," everyone talks about it being an epic event but it really was just a rightly placed arrow that went through the head of the leader of the opposition, or something like that and then the fight was over.

**Jen:** I have always had an obsession with Native American Indians.

**Todd:** Me too.

**Jen:** Their rituals. So maybe I would have wanted to be around for that. And the Egyptians and the Pyramids.



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**Todd:** Yeah. There is an endless amount. But that's why I like asking that questions. To wrap up, where can people go to connect with Jen Groover and find out more about what you are up to, what you are doing, and all that good stuff?

**Jen:** I am extremely active on social media so I would say Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Periscope very much in an interactive way. I feel like websites anymore are like business cards were back in the day where it is just dead air. So to really engage with me social media – it's my name for all of them.

**Todd:** So [@JenGroover](#) on Twitter and [@JenGroover](#) on Instagram and everywhere else, right?

**Jen:** Correct. I post a lot of inspirational, thought-provoking things and highlight a lot of cool events that your listeners, I think, would want to be involved in or at.

**Todd:** You are always at great events too. You do a great job of making sure you curate the right ones. Thanks. Jen, thank you so much for taking the time to spend it with myself and the listeners.

To those listening, you can also get all of the links and things that Jen shared on the website at <http://toddherman.me>. Thank you so much.

**Jen:** Thank you.

**Todd:** Absolutely, have a great day.

**Jen:** Thanks, you to.

**Todd:** Bye bye.

If there's one thing you can pull out of that conversation with Jen, it's that your big breakthrough can often be found in your normal, every-day life. Just like Jen created an innovative product and brand from a frustration at a grocery store and found the solution



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while emptying the dishwasher. She's an inspiring woman and I'm lucky to call her a friend.

And, if you haven't already, don't forget to subscribe to the podcast on iTunes. Just type in Grit 'n' Hustle in the search and click the subscribe button. All the show notes, tips, links shared, and the transcript are over at the blog at <http://toddherman.me/episode23>.

We have great social media stuff already and prepped for you to share over there. When you do, just tag me [@Todd Herman](#) and [@JenGroover](#) as well. There is a private community on Facebook where more discussion happens behind the scenes, access to myself, and requests for show guests occurs. Just type in [toddherman.me/group](http://toddherman.me/group) in your browser and you'll be directed straight over to the community.

Alright my friend, let's wrap this up and get you back into your day. Remember, there's no easy road, there's no elevator to the top and there's always a back story of Grit 'n' Hustle to any great achiever. Go out there and live a story worth being talked about. This is Todd Herman and I am signing off!

Show notes at: <http://bit.ly/JenGrooverGrit>

## Links mentioned in this episode:

[The Grit 'n' Hustle Blog](#)

[JenGroover.com](#)

[Butler Bag](#)

Todd on [Twitter](#)

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## Also mentioned:

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[Empire](#)

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[Success Magazine](#)

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