



THE HENRY FORD

COLLECTING INNOVATION TODAY

TRANSCRIPT OF A VIDEO ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH

MARTHA STEWART

CONDUCTED FEBRUARY 12, 2009

MARTHA STEWART TELEVISION STUDIOS

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

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01 Stewart The Martha Stewart Magic

QUESTION:

00:00:31;13

What is the Martha Stewart Magic?

00:00:35;12

We've been going around the country, talking to people, innovative people like you, about the process of innovation. And where they come up with their ideas, how they manage it within their organizations. Tell us a little bit about the Martha Stewart magic. is it innovation? Is it creative ideas? Is it luck? Is it a process? how does it all work?

MARTHA STEWART:

00:00:50;07

Well, I think it's a combination of really

good research, really talented people, very, very, very creative people, great ideas, and a tremendous amount of innovation, at least in the development of our products, of the written word. Even our magazine, Martha Stewart Living, was innovative. There was no magazine quite like it. No category, really of lifestyle, when I started the magazine in 1990. Since that time, since we first published the magazine, others have come along and not imitated exactly, but built other businesses on the same kind of idea. Oprah Magazine, for example. And Rosie had a magazine for awhile. Based on a celebrity, but involving

the lifestyle of the American public.

QUESTION:

00:01:50;13

I read somewhere they said you have a talent for innovation. Do you think innovation's a talent? Like a singing ability or something?

MARTHA STEWART:

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I think you're born with a talent for developing ideas creating new ways of doing things. I'm also, you know, an inventor. I consider myself an inventor. I'm working on a project now. I've actually applied for a patent. My first patent. And not that I'm anything like Henry Ford or people who work in automotive or in

science. But it's actually a technology patent. I hope it works, I hope I get it.

02Stewart The Subject of *Living*

QUESTION:

00:02:29;21

Where do you come up with this sort of thing of putting all these different home arts together? And serve this market that was sort of an underserved market? Was it an ah-ha moment? Did it develop slowly? Or did you wake up one day and there it was?

MARTHA STEWART:

00:02:37;09

No, it was the title of the magazine, the first magazine developed in 1990 was *Living*. And I envisioned that subject matter as

limitless. Involving everything to do with the home, inside and outside the home. And really involving everything that a homemaker has to know, has to deal with on a daily basis. So, it's a vast subject. And it is limitless. And you can do it and do it and do it and do it. And work on that subject matter forever. And pretty much not repeat yourself.

03Stewart Hiring the Right People

QUESTION:

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And how, in the organization, do you keep everybody kind of motivated to stay passionate about the subject matter?

MARTHA STEWART:

00:03:22;14

Well, we've always looked for people who have the same passion for living that I have. And it's not easy to find those people. And some of them, you would expect, "Oh, everybody lives just like Martha." But they don't. I mean, some people have that passion, but don't even live it. They just think it, dream it, do it. But not live it. And that happens in New York City, because a lot of people and creatives, by the way, traditionally, especially in the magazine business were paid less than the business people. I tried to even all that out, when I started the

company. I said to everybody working with me, the creatives have to be paid on an equal basis to the business people. And working with a company like Time, Inc., for example, that was not true. And I had to fight for it. But I persevered, and really developed a relationship with all the creatives that kept them happy, kept them producing, kept them being creative. And many of them still work with me. More of the creatives are with me now than the original business people, for example.

04Stewart *Entertaining* Filled a Void

QUESTION:

00:04:34;09

Now, you were talking about the magazine,

but let's go back even before the magazine.

We have here one of your-- this is the first

[book—Entertaining]

MARTHA STEWART:

00:04:40;04

Oh, it is.

QUESTION:

00:04:40;10

If I hand this to you, can you sort of tell us a little bit of history? I mean, most of the...

MARTHA STEWART:

00:04:43;06

Okay.

QUESTION:

00:04:43;03

...history's written down, but it's always nice to get it...

MARTHA STEWART:

00:04:44;13

Well...

QUESTION:

00:04:44;17

...from the innovators.

MARTHA STEWART:

00:04:45;14

Okay, this was innovative also. A book called *Entertaining*. I wrote this book in 1982. Published in the autumn of '82. I took the idea to a publisher, Clarks and Potter, they're still my publisher by the way. After 65 books. And this book really to me was a book that was missing from the marketplace. I like to call it filling a void. And many of the things I do fill a void. Something...it's creating something that isn't there. That's needed and wanted. So,

I always call it something that you need, something that you want, you know, produce it.

00:05:28;20

So, and I'm the customer, just like everybody who bought this book. And more than a million copies of this book have been published and sold. But over the years. And so, it was a book, when I described it to the publisher, they asked me if they, if I wanted to do a book, by the way. And I said, "Oh, yeah, I'd be thrilled." And then I gave them an outline. And they said, "We would like a book that's black and white pictures. You know, not too many recipes."

Not too complicated." And I said, "No, no, no, no, no. There are plenty of books like that. I want to do a book that's really three books. And this book is a recipe book. It is a story book. And it is also visually a beautiful photography book." So, it encompasses three things. And in color. Had to be all color. And they hadn't done that before. Not like this. So, when we published it, it again struck a cord with the public. And so many people discovered it, loved it, read it, believed in it. And that's really the beginning of my career as someone in media.

05Stewart I am the Market

QUESTION:

00:06:38;24

Were you surprised that it went over so well, or did you...

MARTHA STEWART:

00:06:40;19

No, no, no.

QUESTION:

00:06:41;07

...sort of ... that market--

MARTHA STEWART:

00:06:40;22

I wasn't at all surprised.

QUESTION:

00:06:42;05

How did you know that market was there? I mean, that's the...

MARTHA STEWART:

00:06:45;01

I was that market. And I am a book reader.

I am a user of recipes. I am the housewife. I'm the homemaker. I'm just that. And I've always tried to stay true to that. And I think that that's how my relationship with my customer base, my readership has grown and grown and grown. ... Because they know that I am one of them. You know, I still clean out the chicken coop. You know, I still walk the dogs. I still feed the cats. You know, I clean out the birdcage. They know I'm real. They know that I really do deal with the everyday problems and the everyday challenges. And the everyday artistry of running a home

06Stewart The Martha Stewart Brand

QUESTION:

00:07:28;04

And then the book comes out, then you start the magazine. This long thing that you... year after year, it seems like there's new products coming out. Eventually, you became a brand. You woke up one morning and said, "I'm a brand"?

MARTHA STEWART:

00:07:39;02

That happened early on, though. The branding happened really early on. I wrote this book in 1982. Every year from 1982 to 1990, I published another really important book. I did *Martha Stewart's Gardening Month By Month*. A big volume, really

based on my garden and my experiences in the garden. I published *Martha Stewart Weddings*, the first weddings book of its kind. Dealing with real weddings.

Weddings that I had catered. Weddings that I actually cooked for. A beautiful book. And really again, the prototype for all other wedding books that followed. I published three quick cookbooks and a Christmas book. All before the magazine started. And the subject matter, I was discovering the subject matter was just gigantic. So, I wanted to do the magazine.

07Stewart A Contract with Kmart

00:08:25;16

But I figured that, and oh, and in 1987, I signed a contract, a very important contract for me, with Kmart. Kmart, the largest retailer of its kind, at that time, in the world. It was, you know, \$44 billion. It was gigantic. I had no idea a company could be that big. And I had always been thinking, you know, with catering, and writing books, you think in thousands of dollars, and maybe a million. Oh, gosh, a million was a gigantic number. But then I had to start thinking in billions, because Kmart was \$44 billion. And Walmart, at that time, 1987, you can check, Walmart

was about \$15 billion in sales. Target wasn't even on the radar screen. You know, they were just starting. So, Kmart was really the place to be.

00:09:17;28

And I joined them, as a creative designer in lifestyle. I didn't go to work in Detroit, but I started working in the lifestyle product development for Kmart. And I started with sheets and towels. And I actually met a lot of resistance. The junior league in Connecticut cancelled my appearances as a speaker. And I said, "Why are you cancelling?" And they said, "Well, we don't want anybody that's affiliated with mass

market, with Kmart, speaking to our audience. We don't shop at Kmart." And I said, "Oh, well, someday you will." Guess what? They're not only shopping at Kmart, they're shopping at Target, and at Walmart, and at Costco, and at every place like that.

00:10:03;11

So, I just waited. They all came back. They're all my friends. But I was shocked that they felt that way. Because, whereas, Ralph Lauren would have never been cancelled, because Ralph didn't sell to mass market, although now he does. He started up here, and has moved down. I started down here, and have moved up. 'Cause

we're now at Macy's. My books and magazines, of course, are upscale. You could never say that they were down market, in any way. But I don't even consider the Kmart customer down market. I just consider the Kmart customer an audience that should never be talked down to, should be provided with as nice merchandise as if you were a shopper at Saks or Bergdorf's or Bloomingdale's.

00:10:47;12

Why shouldn't they have 100 percent cotton sheets. I was the first designer to sell 100 percent cotton sheets at mass market. And light colored sheets. When I joined Kmart,

they were selling navy, burgundy, dark green, and black sheets. And I said, "Well, I'd like to do yellow, and pale green, and pink." And they said, "Oh, no, no, no, no. Mass market, they don't, they won't buy those colors." I said, "Let's try it." And they at least were smart enough to let us try. Guess what the best sellers were? All the white colors. They were waiting for them. They were just the audience that had to have light colors. And it was kind of an intimation to me that really the big bosses were thinking that people that couldn't afford 100 percent cotton sheets before, also couldn't afford to wash their

sheets enough. So that's why they went for dark colors. Totally wrong. Totally wrong way of thinking.

08Stewart Who Inspired You?

QUESTION:

00:11:44;06

Let me ask you this. I mean, did you have some inspirations, when you were younger, starting out? Did you look up to some of the people that were doing similar things? Although you innovated on their ideas? Or was, how did that happen?

MARTHA STEWART:

00:11:54;25

I don't think I ever really copied anybody. I

think we had so much to do that our eye was really on what we were doing, not on what others were doing, at the time. I knew what I didn't want to be. And, but I still had so much opportunity to development what we wanted to be. So, that's what we did. We were just paying attention to where we could go, and what voids we could fill. And what areas we could be productive in, rather than thinking of copying. Not to say that I didn't have mentors, 'cause I did. There was a wonderful man at Time-- called Don Logan. And he became chairman of Time. He was a terrific mentor. And he actually taught

me a lot about the business of publishing.

00:12:41;06

He served on my board, when I finally went public. And had a public board. And he was a very, very good teacher. And a very kind gentleman. I also looked to other people in business as I grew my business. I looked to Bill Gates, younger than I. Totally a genius. But I loved what he was doing. I loved that he was a youngster. As important to the 20th and 21st century as Henry Ford, for example. Probably, dare I say it, even more important, because it was, although I can't say that really. It's equal.

09Stewart Technology Has changed the World

00:13:27;12

But technology has turned the world upside down. And communications will never be the same. And the way we talk to our friends, and the way we spend our time, will never be the same. Because of Bill Gates, and what happened, and Steve Jobs..., What's happened in the last... it's only about 25 years. It's not very long. And the computer. I was always an early adopter of the computer. I bought my first IBM in 1982, which is an early adopter. The PCs had just come onto the marketplace, when I

went, by myself, to Madison Avenue, not really understanding everything about personal computers. But I bought one. And I learned how to use it. And I put it in my office. And every upgrade we got. I have my original IBM down in the basement right now. I will never throw that one away.

10Stewart What Are You Most Proud Of?

QUESTION:

00:14:40;11

Of all these things you've done, what are some things you're most proud of? Are there a couple that really pop out? Things you did, you say, "Boy, I really got that that

time"?

MARTHA STEWART:

00:14:47;08

Again, I don't really think that way. I look at the whole body of what we've done. And I'm very proud that I have really elevated the art of homemaking to an art form, rather than a drudgery. To my mom, she actually considered it kind of an art form, but nobody else did. They considered it hard work, drudgery, things that had to be done. Not things that wanted to be done. And she was the mother of six. She was a breadwinner, along with my dad. She was also a teacher at the public school system. And she was a good example to me that

hard work and perseverance would pay off in the long run. And both my mother and father said to me that no matter how much effort you put into your daily life, that you should expect and want to be rewarded, in some way.

00:15:45;21

I've been rewarded with, you know, plenty of money. I've been rewarded with a fabulous company. I've been rewarded with a visibility around the world. People recognize me no matter what I'm wearing, no matter what I look like, they recognize me. Either my voice or my looks. But all of that's not so important as the body of work

that I've created. It makes me very proud to know that people can find enjoyment in it. Can sleep in sheets that I've worked on. That can cook in pots that I've designed. And can garden, you know, in their vegetable garden following designs that we have created for them. All of that makes me really happy.

11Stewart Advice to Young Entrepreneurs

QUESTION:

00:16:32;00

What are some of the lessons you've learned through this process of innovation that we could give to other people, who are

gonna watch this? Of people starting businesses, or somebody who's looking for the next big trend. Who says, "I'm just like this. If I could..." what would you say to them?

MARTHA STEWART:

00:16:43;13

Well, I wrote a book called *The Martha Rules*. And that book everybody should actually read who is a budding entrepreneur. It's for young people, or people at a certain time in their life--that think they have a great idea, and want to maximize that idea, and build a business around it. That's something that I did, actually when I was on hiatus from my real

work for about a year. And I loved writing that book. It sort of got all my ideas together. I think that it's really important to teach while you go along. And try to mentor, while you go along. And I think that the people who really enjoy their jobs at Martha Stewart realize that they're learning a lot while they're actually being productive.

QUESTION:

00:17:33;20

Do you think that that learning is part of this process, though? That they're learning to be innovative? Is that what you're saying?

MARTHA STEWART:

00:17:39;13

They're definitely learning to be innovative. They're definitely learning how to do things in a better way, a more creative way, a more efficient way. All of that's important to me and my processes. I don't like wasting time. I don't like not being productive. I really want to maximize my time. Do as many things in a day as I can possibly do. That's how I live. I just live like that.

12Stewart Assembling the Right Team

QUESTION:

00:18:05;23

Now, do you hire a lot of your own creative people? Or is there a certain kind you look for that will fit this vision you have?

MARTHA STEWART:

00:18:12;01

Oh, yeah, I interview people quite often for jobs. Of course, I have a chief creative director now. I have merchants who are looking for specific kinds of designers. We have editorial people, who know what they're looking for. We have art directors, stylists. All of whom have worked with me very, very closely. Know what I like. Know what they like. And we look for people to fill those positions that will be not cookie cutters, we don't want cookie cutters. We don't want anybody that's gonna be the "The Next Martha." We're not looking for the next Martha. We're looking for

innovators in our whole genre.

12B Stewart Stick-up For Your Own Ideas

QUESTION:

00:18:49;00

What do you do when you have an idea that you think is right for this market, which you understand, 'cause you are the market. Yet the people in between, they're not buying it? Do you make a sales presentation?

MARTHA STEWART:

00:19:02;14

That happens more than you can imagine. It happens every single day. "No, no, no. We don't like that color. We want this color." And we have to fight. You have to stick up for your own ideas. You have to stick up for your beliefs. It's like any kind

of business. If you really have strong feelings, and really strong design sensibilities, you have to persevere in those sensibilities. Otherwise, you will be run over, you know, like some giant trailer truck coming and just flattening you. And eliminating your creativity. And that happens. I mean, it does happen.

13Stewart Evolve and Keep Evolving

00:19:41;11

I have a lot of words on a wall at our big corporate offices. The one very long hallway has all my words on the wall. And it was just actually installed, and I'm very

happy with the installation. But, one of the little, and they're little sayings, too. And one of them is-- "Evolve, and keep evolving. When you're through changing, you're through." Okay? So, that's one thing I say all the time. And "If you don't want it, why are you designing it?" That's another little saying. It's very important to me that everything we make, every product we develop and create-- we should want. Because that's our business. Our business is to make things that we all need and all want. And, of course, you know, I might not want the pink sheet, I want the blue sheet, but I want the sheet. And it's very

important.

14 Stewart Advice to Kids Today

QUESTION:

00:20:41;15

We talked about somebody who might want to start a business, but let's go younger. School kids. If we had a bunch of school kids in here, and they're looking up, "Oh, there's Martha, what would be some advice to them in today's world, that you'd give them?"

MARTHA STEWART:

00:20:52;03

Oh, they would be asking me about recipes. They would be asking me about the craft

programs that we have developed. Because that's what they're interested in at a young age. They're really interested in what they eat. What they make. How they spend their time after school. So, I would spend a lot of time. And because I do the crafts, I do the cooking, I know exactly what to tell them, and how to guide them. And I could run all kinds of after-school programs for children. In fact, I've actually worked on a program, a television program that we still, hopefully will produce someday, called "Everyday After School." To be Mom. Where Mom is at work. I can be Mom. Our program will be Mom to those kids.

Teaching them something valuable every single day.

15Stewart Message to the Future

QUESTION:

00:21:40;24

Here's the other thing. This is an oral history that hopefully will be preserved forever. You know, forever's a long time. So, we're telling everybody, "Assume a hundred years down, or as far down the road as you want." Somebody has to pull this up, and be able to get a message. Is there some message you'd like to send to all those people?

MARTHA STEWART:

00:21:56;08

Well, it's, the world changes, technology

changes the way we do things, every single minute of every single day. Embrace technology. Embrace change. Try to stay curious. I think that's the biggest message "Retain your curiosity, no matter what."

Always, there's something to read, something to look at, something to learn all the time. And if you stop any of those processes you are no longer really a valuable member for future societies. If you stop, that's why I mean, I'm not on a proverbial treadmill. I don't consider myself that. I don't think I'm just going around and around a track. I really think that I'm going more in a straight line up. And never

feel like you're on that track that goes around and around, 'cause that's when you're finished.

QUESTION:

00:23:04;29

What or where's that line going? That's going up?

MARTHA STEWART:

00:23:06;18

Who knows? Who knows? The high jump gets higher every single year. The broad jump gets broader. I mean, why? You know? Why? So..

QUESTION:

00:23:16;07

Part of the challenge drives you?

MARTHA STEWART:

00:23:17;16

Oh, yeah, the challenge is always there.

And it's so exciting. I'm constantly looking for the new, the different, the valuable, and always, the practical, the environmentally sound. And the creative.

16Stewart How Do You Want to be Remembered?

QUESTION:

00:23:33;12

Now, let's say people, when they look back on you, how would you like to be remembered? If you could control that?

Not that you can. But what would you want them to think about you?

MARTHA STEWART:

00:23:42;19

Oh, I just want them to think, "Oh, she was

great. I learned so much from her. I learned more from her than I ever learned from anybody else."

QUESTION:

00:23:47;28

So, you want to be remembered more as a teacher?

MARTHA STEWART:

00:23:50;01

Sure. I am a teacher. I am a teacher. I think that my real value in this world is to be a really good teacher, on a vast subject matter of living.

END