Episode 41 - Sabine Rizvi

📅 Tue, 10/27 5:45AM   🕐 45:25

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

students, college, people, app, campuses, sabine, nyu, felt, launch, scoops, business, dorm, friends, learned, marketplace, web based platform, college students, podcast, graphic design, run

SPEAKERS

Sabine Rizvi, Moira McCullough

M **Moira McCullough** 00:00

Welcome to the College Scoops podcast. I'm your host, Moira McCullough and today we are talking with Sabine Rizvi, Co-founder and CEO of Dormzi as we connect with student entrepreneurs who share their stories

S **Sabine Rizvi** 00:11

Follow your gut into what seems like the right move for your company because no one necessarily know or your business because no one knows that better than you.

M **Moira McCullough** 00:28

This is the College Scoops podcast and I'm your host Moira McCullough. We focus on everything college related from the admissions process to where to eat, stay and explore on and round campuses. Our guests include founders, educators, authors and experts in the college space. Join us as these experts share their knowledge, experiences and lessons learned to help you have stress free, informative and tasty college journeys. Whether it's your first or last child going to college, or you're just interested in going to a college town for a game or meal, we've got you covered. If you haven't already, please subscribe to the College Scoops podcast to get the inside scoop on everything college related and leave us a review. Thanks to all of our sponsors partners in the entire College Scoops

Ambassador team for helping us bring valuable content to our community. If you would like to support college scoops as a sponsor, please head over to patreon@patreon.com/collegescoops and sign up as a sustaining listener, insider or Deluxe sponsor. We have exclusive benefits for our members free ebooks and even a College Scoops care package. Sabine is a fourth year psychology and business student at New York University and the co-founder of Dromzi. Dormzi is an online marketplace designed specifically for college students to monetize their unique skills, connect with fellow students and entrepreneurs and build relationships with outside businesses and individuals. Sabine co-founded Dormzi during her freshman year of college, and has been involved with everything from product development and business strategy to marketing and everything in between. Outside of her passion for entrepreneurship, Sabine is a self-proclaimed foodie and runs an NYC based food blog with a close friend. Welcome to the College Scoops podcast, Sabine, thank you so much for joining us today.

S   Sabine Rizvi   02:20

Thank you for having me, I'm super excited.

M   Moira McCullough   02:23

Well, we found each other as most people are doing nowadays on social media. And we were highlighting and have been highlighting students who are innovative, creative and coming up with these new companies and ideas that they are sharing with their communities and starting businesses. And that's really how I found Dormzi. So I would love you to introduce yourself, share a little bit about you. And then we are going to learn all about Dormzi and how we can help spread the word and get more students and Dormzis as we call them, or you call them to join your community.

S   Sabine Rizvi   03:02

Yeah, so thanks again for having me. My name is Sabine. I grew up in the Bay Area about 30 minutes outside of San Francisco, you know, lived here my whole life. And when I was applying to colleges, I know a lot of your you know, your community is all students who are applying to colleges. So I remember being in those shoes. That was a really grueling time, in some ways, but also really exciting and being able to do different college tours. I remember those days, you know, now because of COVID. Obviously, everything's virtual, but visiting campuses I remember at that time, I was so intimidated. There were introductions where you know, when you have the tour guide, and everyone has to give introductions, and I was so nervous to just introduce myself at that time, because there's

like these college students. It's really intimidating. It's like this transition period. But yes, I remember being in those shoes. I applied to a lot of West Coast schools and East Coast schools. And I ended up choosing NYU, which wasn't actually my first choice. So it's really interesting because a lot of times people have their first choice and they get in. I didn't get into my first choice, but I'm so happy where I ended up. So I think that's something I always tell people as well as kind of trust the process and you never know where the place you go will take you because every college campus is so great and in a different way. So yes, so I moved to New York a couple of about three-four years ago now when I was a freshman and I'm a senior now. I absolutely loved it and I feel like I really transformed as a person through moving to New York and being on my own in a city I grew up in you know in the suburbs, my whole life. So it was a really different experience for me but really enjoyed it and when I was a freshman in college is when I started Dormzi with my best friend from high school. We were just kind of talking one day and you know, both of us growing up in silicon valley we kind of had that entrepreneurial mindset growing up. And we were just kind of brainstorming and talking about our experience, it was our second semester freshman year. And so we were just kind of reflecting on the experience. And we really wanted to do something to kind of improve the lives of college students and make the student experience better than it was it was interesting, because we had very different experiences. I was at NYU, a very large city college, I wouldn't even say it has a campus at all. And he was in Colorado Springs at Colorado College, which is much smaller, it's in a small town. So we kind of had these very differing experiences. But we still felt like there was a need for something where we could improve the lives of college students and also meet new people, I think, because we were freshmen, you don't know who you're going to meet. And we wanted to connect students with different needs and backgrounds. And so that's kind of where Dormzi started. And it started off as a completely different product to what it is now. So it started off as this task-based service exchange app. And it was peer-to-peer. So it was locked into the college campus that you you know, went to and the idea behind it was connecting students with different needs. So for example, I could be running to the dining hall and someone two floors down from me is buried in work or in a club meeting, or even socializing, whatever it may be. And I could easily pick up food for them, because we live in the same dorm, that was kind of the idea behind it. And then on the flip side, you know, there could be a situation in which I'm really struggling in a class and there's a student who took that exact course two years prior, and there could be a way for us to connect on that. And they could tutor me and helped me through the process. So that was kind of the idea behind it. That's kind of where the name Dormzi stemmed from was our experience living in dorms. It's such a quintessential part of the college experience, that dorm life, which I really enjoyed. I spent my first two years in dorms and then moved off campus. But the dorm experience is just so so exciting because you're surrounded by friends, you're surrounded by peers all the time. And we felt like despite living in a dorm, there were so many ways that we could connect with the people in our

building, because sometimes, there is no one college. Everyone's kind of doing their own thing. And after the first couple of weeks, people become less likely to say hi in the elevator. I know when I started in college, I wanted to make so many friends that I would say hi to everyone walking into the building at the same time, like in the first couple weeks, how do I answer becasue I was that eager freshman in college. So we really wanted there to be this network of students in an app that you could easily connect with. And so that's what we started with. And we kind of had four different services on the app that you could choose from it was like tutoring general errands and stuff like that. And then we launched that and since then, we've completely pivoted to what Dormzi is now, which is it's no longer locked onto college campuses, it's no longer just peer-to-peer. It's an open marketplace for students to monetize their unique skill set, whether that be graphic design, web development, illustrations, financial planning, there's you know, really no limit on what you can do on dorm z. But it's grown and pivoted to this open marketplace where you can connect with other students, but also outside individuals, businesses, startups, and we wanted it to have that networking aspect that we always wanted from the get go. You can chat with anyone on the marketplace. If you're a student chatting with another student, or if you're coming on as a non student, you can also chat with any student and then eventually hire them. But you can also just start a conversation. We wanted it to be a place where a bunch of students who are all interested in entrepreneurship, all interested in building all interested in you know, bouncing ideas off of each other can find like minded students chat with them, you might even find your co-founder for the next project you want to work on. So that's what it's grown in today. And that's what it is right now. We're launched it a few schools. So yes, that's kind of where we're at.

M **Moira McCullough**   09:14

Okay, so I just have to go back to your intro. I love the advice that you just shared about colleges. And when you were in the moment, what you were you thought you would be your college list. I think it's so hard for a high school student trying to apply not getting into a particular school, thinking the world is over. I work so hard to get to that number one choice that they have in their head that they think is the right choice. And then for students like yourself to say guess what, it didn't work out that way. But I am so happy and grateful that I ended up where I am so it's easier coming from a student to say it all works out in the end versus the parents who are always like don't worry, it will work out in the end. That sometimes doesn't resonate that well with students.

S **Sabine Rizvi**   10:03

Yes, I remember being in those shoes. And I remember older students said it's not the end of the world, like, it's not a big deal. The college process is just one phase in your life and

you're gonna look back and I was like, yeah, that's easy for you to say, because you're not living it, you're not buried in college apps, you're not buried in SAP prep, I remember, there was just so much stress. But then when I look back, and I talk to younger students, I always see the same thing, I'm like, trust me, it's not gonna make or break your life, you will make the best of whatever, you know, wherever you go, you will learn so much regardless of where you are in. At the end of the day, all of the options are great. Like I said, you know, every college has something different to offer. Yes, just kind of trusting in that and just believing that it'll be good. And you can make the most out of it wherever you end up.

Moira McCullough   10:53

And also, though, making sure that you're engaged, and you're driving the process to say, this is where these are the schools that I would like to consider applying to and attending, and then making sure that you have actual experience, you visit, you talk to people who are there, and you can really connect. And then the fact that you were not overwhelmed in freshman year or board, you immediately called up your best high school friend across the states and said, x, which I think is just shows your entrepreneurial spirit that you have kind of alluded to, and saying that you always wanted to start something and how could you improve the experience of college students, not just in the classroom, it's the college experiences learning outside of the classroom and trying to take your interests, hobbies, and make something more of whatever that may be a better hobby, or something that you want to start as a business. So how did you then where did you go once you decided, Okay, we want to create this marketplace, we want to create a conversation network where students come together, what are the first steps that you took? It was obviously an app. Right? So you have an app, it wasn't a website?

Sabine Rizvi   12:00

Yes. So we realized that we wanted to pivot to this early 2020. around January, February, we launched our Dormzi V.1, I guess you can call it, which was our app, back when I was like a sophomore, and all the way through to the beginning of my junior year as well. And, you know, we definitely, we got a lot of users. But we definitely realized that there were some issues with it, we didn't like how it was locked onto campuses, I think the biggest one of the biggest takeaways is we made a lot of decisions based off of what we thought would work without necessarily doing our research and validating that. So for example, you know, we kind of anticipated okay, these are the services we want to offer on the app. And we just kind of put those there. And then we were like, we decided that we wanted to launch it and why you because I went to NYU. And the idea stemmed from my experience at NYU, and we decided to lock it onto campus. So we felt like there were some limiting

factors that we wanted to get rid of. And so we knew that there were a lot of students who are looking for work opportunities, especially now in COVID. But even then, you know, students looking for work opportunities, but they don't necessarily want to be limited to what we have to offer on the app. And so that's kind of why we wanted to open it up. And we thought, you know, we're putting it in a more professional development type of trajectory, where students are being able to monetize whatever skill they want, it's becoming more entrepreneurial, more business focus, then we don't want to limit it to college campuses, either, because there's opportunities off campus that students can start getting real world work experience through. And so that was kind of the idea. And we we were originally going to continue with the app, it was always an app, I just felt like an app is so easy, you know, everyone's always on, you know, Gen Z, we're addicted to our phones, as everyone knows. So I wanted to keep it in app. But as we were building out, what are the features, what are we going to offer, we realized that a web based platform makes more sense for what we want to do, because we wanted it to be really easy for students to create offerings in which they can put a description, they can upload images of their previous work, they can manage, they can have some sort of like an admin portal where they can manage their orders interact really easily with customers who are hiring them, etc. So we figured that the app could kind of limit those functions. And so we thought, let's just start, let's transition to a web based platform for now. And we can always come up with an app later. And it is in our roadmap to come up with an app. And I'm glad we kind of decided to wait on that decision. Because now as we're getting feedback from users we're seeing Okay, these are the features that people are liking. These are the features that need improvement. And now we have time so that when we start building our app out, we can really hone in on okay, what are people liking? And we don't know if we necessarily want to create an app that's just identical to our web platform, maybe we want to do some sort of an app that works with the web. Soyou can manage some stuff on the app, but not everything. Because when it comes to someone who's doing maybe graphic design, you know, you're sending files, you're receiving files, you're uploading, kind of like big, like high storage items. And so we figured having a web based platform would be better. And there's also, you know, less friction, because you don't have to download an app. If it's a web based platform, we can just link it everywhere, and it takes you straight there. You know, with downloading an app, it's an extra step. It was an interesting kind of comparison to figure out, you know, we started had a couple of meetings about this to figure out, okay, which way do we want to go, but ultimately, we decided let's start with the web. And that'll also give us a chance to really validate it, see what people are liking. And then we can always roll up an app later down the line.

Moira McCullough   15:53

So I just want to preface this, you're not working in an entrepreneurial program at NYU, this is you and Milan your partner just kind of testing the market rolling something out. hardest part for an entrepreneur is actually to say, wait, it's not working, how can we put the brakes on reach out to our current clients and customers and say, is it serving the purpose? Are we hitting the mark? If not, what do you want? So you did this whole outreach to your Dormzi v.1 community to say, how are we doing?

S Sabine Rizvi 16:26

Yeah, exactly. I think we felt it in, you know, with our marketing efforts, we've felt that there was a really positive respond to we're getting signups and we were getting conversions. But we didn't have people coming back using the app on a daily basis. And so yeah, it was definitely hard to be like, Okay, well, we worked on this now for so long. And now we have to not scrap the whole thing. But we have to brainstorm all over again, and kind of think of what direction we want to take it in. So it was definitely a little bit hard at that point. And ultimately, like you said, it came back to what we were hearing from people, the biggest thing with a marketplace. Also, there's this chicken and egg problem, right? where it's like, students would go on and be like, Oh, well, I wanted to pick up a job. But there was nothing there. There's no one there. And then on the other side, people would say, oh well, I posted a job for someone like a tutoring job, I needed a tutor, but no one picked it up. So it's kind of like this, a chicken and egg problem where we we felt like we were trying to manually match people together at some point because it was like, it wasn't working. And so that's when we realized that it was just too limiting the way that the app worked. And that's why we're with this marketplace idea. We kind of changed our strategy with marketing as well to say, Okay, well, let's tackle the supply first, and really get a supply side. So with our old app, no one population supply or demand was really set up. And on the platform, it was kind of like if you go you just kind of had a profile, you go on, you see what other people are doing. But with this marketplace, we really focused on the supply side who are students who are monetizing their skills and looking for work opportunities, and we're gonna prioritize them. Because that was always our goal. Our goal was always empowering college students who our goal and mission never changed throughout all of this, it was just the way that it manifested. But we decided, Okay, let's really focus on our supply. Let's focus on our students and get them on boarded, have them be able to create these profiles where you can see exactly what they want to offer, rather than a student just coming on to our old app and saying, Oh, well, I can do this, and or I can do that. But it's not on there for me to do, you know, so we wanted to put all of the agency and autonomy in the hands of those students. And so that's kind of what we did. And that's reflected in our business model as well. You know, unlike other freelancing websites, we don't take any cuts out of our students jobs, the price that our students sets for their job, which they have full agency over setting up price for

themselves is the payout that they will get at the end when they get hired, we don't take a cut out of that. That's kind of always been our mission. And so making that transition with the marketplace, I think has helped because now there's this supply of students on there and you know, when demand comes in, they can see what all they have to offer and then higher chat or whatever.

M Moira McCullough   19:27

So let's just even take an example. I'm a student and I am a graphic design artist. And I'm going to post my profile Moira McCullough. So I go on, you have a profile that you can set up, I can load all my previous work that I have as samples of work and I list the rate or price or whatever and then that's up on a profile. Now you Sabine are coming in and you need graphic design work done. So you're just searching on graphic design. Do you type in, I'm looking at graphic design?

S Sabine Rizvi   20:03

You can there's different categories. So we just launched, it's been about a month since we launched. And when you log in, it immediately takes you to the marketplace where you can see everyone's offerings. And then you can search for graphic design, there's categories on the left hand side, so you can click graphic design is one of them, you can click on that, and it'll show you every one. So when when setting up an offering as a doorman, or as a student, you put in the name of your service, you put in a category of price, and then a detailed description where you can talk about what your previous work experiences been, or what your interests are, what you like working on. And then yeah, you can upload images of your past work, publish it, you can always edit it and change it as you go along. And then yeah, when you when you log in as a non student or a foreign student, you can see all of those offerings, you can chat with the person first and say, Hey, you know, I kind of need this done, is this something that you could get done, and then they'll say what they need to say. And then you can, you can hire from there. Or you can just hire from the beginning and put in a description, if you feel confident that what they're offering is in line with what you're looking for, you can just straight hire them, or you can chat with them and maybe see if there's room for some sort of collaboration, if it's student-to-student or something like that.

M Moira McCullough   21:21

I like that - the bartering system. I'll run up the 10 flights of stairs and deliver your takeout if you can do a design for a logo for a site, that type of thing. So when so you have the

billing mechanism set right in the system as well.

Sabine Rizvi 21:37

Yes, anyone who's made a decision to go ahead with that particular artist or business person can just basically message them and then close the deal and work with them and you have the whole payment system built into the system. Okay, all the payment is built in.

Moira McCullough 22:00

Have you heard about Anchor, it is the easiest way to make a podcast and it's free. You can use their own creation tools to record and edit your podcasts right from your phone. Ankor will distribute your podcast for you. So it can be heard on Spotify, Apple podcast, iTunes, and many more. You can make money from your podcast with no minimum listenership. If it sounds easy it is because it is here's how you do it. Download the free anchor app, or go to anchor.fm to get started. So how do you recruit students? How do you get the word out that hey, if you have a specific skill set, we have a great marketplace and forum for you to build your business.

Sabine Rizvi 22:45

Yes, great question. So we've kind of done like I said, with our marketing strategy, as of now we're still focusing on getting those Dormzis - getting that supply. So we've done a number of things. We've run ads targeting students at our launch University. So we're launched currently at UCLA, University of Michigan, UC Berkeley and Florida A&M University. And we ran ads there for each skill set that we anticipated. So a few months prior, we put out some other ads to gauge what are the top services and it's really interesting, because you look at a school like UCLA, where everyone's super artistic. So from UCLA, there's people doing album cover art, there's photographers, there's illustrators, and then a school like Berkeley, which has an amazing engineering computer Sscience program, has software development, students doing software development. Michigan, also, very comp sci oriented. So you have that you also have, they have amazing UI/UX interaction design programs, you see those types of offerings as well. So essentially, we kind of anticipated certain services or offerings that we thought students at that school would want to offer. And we just put out ads targeting students at those universities who may have expressed an interest in that or just are a student at that university. And then besides that, we have ambassadors as well. So we sent out DM'S looking for ambassadors a few weeks before launch, and the way our ambassadors work

is on their college campus. They are in charge of recruiting Dormzi's. So with our recruitment strategy, we want it to be really authentic and put the point across that we're students, Milan and I are students. We're looking for other students. And so that's why we really like the idea of having ambassadors who are just reaching out to their network sending just direct messages to people who they know who would be interested. They're welcome to post on social media as well but we emphasize that a little bit less because we really wanted everyone who comes to Dormzi to come with the intention of setting up a store. People who are excited and passionate about the product rather than sending out mass messages. And that's kind of also why we wanted to launch it just a few schools for now. Just keep it small really identify the needs of our users. Because Milan and I fall into the target market. So we do the best job we can to anticipate the needs of students. But, of course, our experience is only two out of millions. So our ambassadors are great, because they're reaching out to their friends, people who they know and trust who are coming on as Dormzi's. And then besides that, we run some email campaigns. Whenever you sign up, you get put into our email retargeting. We don't spam you don't worry, but we'll send you emails guiding you through the process. I've had a lot of meetings with ambassadors, and even new Dormzis who've come on just to talk to them, hear how they're liking the product, how can we address their needs? Well, besides that we were also sending out DM'S to students at the campuses who we think have have a skill set that they would like to offer, because a lot of students are their Instagram page is a reflection of, it's crazy. I feel like I saw somewhere recently that people were saying Instagram pages are like the new resumes, because I guess, in our generation, you know, Instagram is so rapidly used, and people put their businesses and their work and whatever they're doing on their Instagram. So it's really exciting to DM students and say, hey I see this amazing work on your Instagram page. We would love for you to showcase that on Dormzi. And of course, there's no fees, there's no downside to signing up. It's just more exposure. And from talking to the students who have signed up a lot of them say, yeah. I had, I've been doing this over summer, during COVID times, because a lot of businesses have sprouted from being kind of at home and having all that extra time to think and they were saying, I was looking for a place to advertise another place to get more exposure and Dormzi is a really good place for that.

M Moira McCullough 26:59

So then that brings me to my question as to how do you monetize it?

S Sabine Rizvi 27:03

So for us, we take a small fee from the customer side. So anybody who's hiring, we have an additional fee, an additional 15% fee on that side. So that's kind of our monetization

strategy at this point. Because ultimately the demand side, it can be fellow students as well. But it can also be outside businesses, individual startups that have that extra money to spend. So when we were figuring out, okay, what's our business model? What's our strategy, as far as monetization, we were so adamant about not taking any cuts from our students, because we felt like that's just that just goes against our mission, and the heart and soul of the company as it started. So that's our monetization strategy.

M Moira McCullough 27:51

I wish I was that savvy at your age, because as a as an entrepreneur, you're hitting all the points in terms of what businesses do. But sometimes they don't do it soon enough. They go through and they've spent years and money with marketing and outreach and development costs to build something only to find out that it wasn't the marketplace wasn't there for it. You guys sound really mature to be going through every aspect and doing a quality check. Is this where we want it to be? Is it resonating with our students? And you're holding true to your mission, you always said, this was a marketplace for students by students to help them. So it's a great way and looking at it in small segments to make sure that you are thoughtful, and you can actually scale. So if you can get it right at these four campuses, which you've chosen for a variety of reasons, that are only going to be able to just crush it by rolling it out nationwide.

S Sabine Rizvi 28:53

Hope so.

M Moira McCullough 28:54

So, lessons learned - anything that you would recommend to a student who's listening who's trying to launch a business, I mean, there's so many lessons that you just shared with us in your stories in terms of constantly reaching out to customers and making sure that there's a need and need for what you're doing. And and I think more importantly, you can note, recognize the need and recognize the problem, but you guys addressed it. And you addressed it relatively quickly.

S Sabine Rizvi 29:20

Yes, I think, you know, there were a lot of lessons learned. I would say - one thing I think doing all that quality check and interacting with users, we kind of learned that through the first time around with Dormzi V.1 because when we were focusing on that and doing our

task-based app. We spent a lot of time just me and Milan working on the product, trying to make improvements without putting as much of an emphasis on let's put it out to people and hear what they say because we were so attached to it. I mean, it's totally natural. For us, it's our child and we just wanted it to be perfect before we rolled it out. And that kind of hinders? To us in a way, because we spent we wasted time. I mean, it wasn't wasted time. But we spent a lot of time working on perfecting the product, without really hearing from people and hearing what their feedback was. So had, we maybe spent less time trying to improve and improve and improve on the product based off of our desires, and spent a little bit more time earlier on talking to people and really hearing what they had to say.Then we would have probably come to the point of pivoting much earlier than we did. So that's why this time around, I'm super intentional about every, every week thinking, Okay, what are we hearing from our users? And how can we improve on that. So it was definitely a lesson that I learned myself through my experience. So I would say like, one word of advice would be to really definitely create the product first. Make it as great as you can possibly can but don't wait too long to put it out there and to hear what people have to say, because at the end of the day, the product will never be perfect. Even the marketplace as it stands right now. If you ask our dev team, they'll be happy to tell you that I am always messaging saying, well, I'm not happy about this, or can we change this? Or can we do this and I have to constantly remind myself that it's okay be patient. None of these big four big five companies looked like they do now when they first started. I think about like, Instagram or Facebook, they were so different, and they've become so much better. So I'm like, it's okay, we just started. So I guess that would be one thing is to really, don't worry if the product is imperfect. I remember I saw a quote once that was if you launch, if your product is perfect, you've launched too late. So I always remind myself of that. So that's one thing. And then I think the other thing is to be just really authentic and true to yourself and what you do, I think it really translates I think, Milan, and I like, in the beginning, I like now looking back, like, every time we like you know, really putting those brand like that brand vision and brand mission that I talked about. putting that on paper really helped us because then we were super intentional about what we wanted to do. And we had this kind of vision. And we were really authentic with everything. So I would say you know, be true to who you are and make sure that you're coming across authentically. Because I think even our first time around, what happened was we were hearing so much advice from other people, well, your target market responds well to this, or your demographic that you're targeting will they'll convert if you do this. And that's great. You obviously have to learn from other people's mistakes, learn from people who've been in that situation. I've learned so much from just reading books, listening to podcasts and stuff like that. But it's also sometimes stepping back and thinking, Okay, well, this is a product that we came up with, and ultimately follow your gut into what seems like the right move for your company, because no one necessarily know or your business because no one knows that better than you. So I think once I was I think the first time around, it was

a lot of okay, I'm gonna do this, because this is what everyone says. And I mean, that's what learning is, right? Until you make those mistakes, you don't know. So when we got to version two, I was like, okay, I'm gonna take in all the information, taken all the advice, but also decide that this is what feels true to us. So not gonna do something or try and put out some sort of image of the brand that's not necessarily authentic.

M   Moira McCullough   33:38

When you and I first talked, there was so many connections there, I felt like oh my gosh, because as you are your own client, I am my own client as well, with College Scoops. I'm like, wait a minute, I'm a current parent, with a student going through this, we're looking at trying to find the right college fit for my son. So I think it's really important. You're your worst, toughest, harshest critic, because you're constantly re-evaluating it. But to your point, when you know you have something that feels a need. And that is it. You could be a perfectionist, and you can never launch anything. You could be in the development mode for years and waste time, money and energy on something that will never be right, as you said. And authentic is something that we use all the time. Because I think if you're really true and you have your mission and your goals, as you said lined out, then you stay true to that. And you don't deviate from that. But you can change your product or service, but the end result and why you're doing it holds true. So I think that's really, I think that is something that's very hard to do today. And I think people struggle with that. So kudos to you guys that you are on and I think as an entrepreneur, I think it's also hard when you're working with a colleague, you have a co-founder. And probably one of the other aspects or reasons for your success has been the fact that you're on the same page. And I think communication is key, because it's great to have a co-founder, a partner, but you have to make sure that there's that dialogue, and you both are on the same page, or else that kind of could create challenges for sure.

S   Sabine Rizvi   35:14

I think working with a friend is really fun. There's a lot of I mean, it definitely has its challenges. But I think it comes down to working with someone who you have, like a sense of mutual trust, and each other is really important when you're running a business. So it's definitely a blessing. It has its challenges. But it also makes the whole experience so much more rewarding, so much more fun, and we work well together.

M   Moira McCullough   35:42

The other thing I would add to it is that it's you both probably see can say things to each

other that very few other people could say, and it's received well, like, okay, you know me well enough to say that. So I'm going to listen to that. So that's really important. Yes, exactly. So how could people get in touch, you have students out there at those particular campuses, they would just go on to Dormzi and register. Sign up as a Dormzi and go through the process? Is that correct?

S Sabine Rizvi 36:11

Yes. So essentially anyone can sign up, whether you're a student at our launch university or not, or not a student, anyone can sign up just by going to Dormzi.com, you sign up. And if you're a student, it kind of asks you - Are you a student? Are you not a student, and then you go down that path, and then you sign up with your edu email address. So that's kind of how we verify that you're a college student, or that you attend the universities that were launched out. So sign up with your edu email address, and then you have full access to the marketplace and can chat with people and talk to people. And yes, the signup process is pretty easy. We just ask you a couple questions. It's not long, that was another thing that we learned actually, from our first time around, because when when, when we were doing the signup process, we were like, Okay, this is the signup. So we need to ask all of these things, and then we learned, okay, no, people don't like giving other people their information. We know this, we've been in that situation. So that was like kind of another thing that we've learned through the process of like, okay, let's ask for sensitive information at the very end. So you don't have to put in like payment information or anything like that unless you actually want to hire, although, obviously, everything is private and encrypted. So there's no concerns that way. But just creating as little friction as possible was something we learned as well, when signing up,

M Moira McCullough 37:32

You and I could probably share some stories we would have solved it saved each other a lot of time and energy. So our last two questions. What do you wish you knew before attending college?

S Sabine Rizvi 37:41

Hmm. So I think one thing I would say is definitely relationships that you build in college are really important. I think the learning and the growing that you have inside the classroom is just as important outside of the classroom as well. And so like I said, I was an eager freshman trying to make friends. And I think that was because of my previous experience just in school. And I just wanted to have that, because I was alone actually, is

the main reason. I didn't really know anyone was going to NYU, I didn't have family, and it was across the country like California to New York. So I didn't have a safety net. That way, I didn't have family that I could reach out to her. I couldn't call my mom and be like, come like I'm struggling because it's too far. So I would say prioritize relationships and the relationships you make in college can last so long. And just even that dorm experience, like I said, you you get really close with people. And I think like walking away, almost walking away from college. Like, my favorite thing about it is the relationships I've built. So I think definitely prioritize relationships. And also don't worry if the first few people you meet aren't your new BFF you know, you always meet new people. I remember when I was a freshman people would always say, oh, you're gonna meet so many people. And I was like, No, like, I have to make all my friends now because then no one's gonna, you know, want to make friends. But it's true. You do - I met one of my best friends sophomore year, who was my neighbor in my dorm. So you meet so many people. And then I guess the other thing I would say is like, prioritize relationships. And also be this is something I wish I knew is to kind of be comfortable being alone also, like understanding that, you know, this is a time of people always talking about independence and a really, it's a really positive thing. It's great, but also being comfortable with the fact that independence means being on your own and sometimes being alone is okay. I remember when I was a freshman, I'm really interested in fashion and that's also why I really liked NYU because obviously New York is like the fashion capital. But um, I remember there was this like really cool fashion related event that I wanted to go to and it was uptown. I live downtown where NYU is. And I remember I was talking to one of my friends from high school and he was Yeah, you should go. And I'm like, I don't have anyone to go with like, I didn't have any close friends who I knew were interested in this, like, I had some friends, but I was like, I don't know if they would be interested. And I went alone. And I remember when I was there, I was like, This is so weird. Like, who goes to like things alone, like, I'm just like, by myself, but it's one of my fondest memories of college too, because it was such a cool event. And it was exactly like up my alley. So it was kind of a cool kind of reflective moment. For me, I was like, I have to kind of learn to be okay with doing things by myself. I grew up with, like, I have a big family, you know, always having family friends over and setting the I'm kind of like by myself with no one. But you know, with that independence comes that and I think it's just something to be comfortable with. And like I it's just something that I felt like I really learned and grew from. So I would say, basically, my advice for people entering what I wish I knew is that you're going to make amazing relationships, but also, you know, be comfortable being alone, being independent and stuff like that.

M   Moira McCullough   41:07

That is so important. Because that insecurity and that thinking, Oh my gosh, I'm alone all these thoughts and come into your head and screw you up, basically. And you're right, I've

become more confident in my ability to be alone. I'm like, actually really like this. Or if I really, as you said, you went to that event, imagine you would have been so disappointed that you hadn't and that's one of your fondest memories. So great advice for all those students. And I would say anyone in life being alone is a good thing. Do you have a favorite food place? Dessert plate? It doesn't have to be dessert. I'll open it up the floor will be hard for you because you and I are foodies.

S   Sabine Rizvi   41:48

Yeah, so for NYU, so I love ice cream. Ice cream is my favorite food. Almost, I would say. It's definitely my favorite dessert. It's up there with my favorite foods. And there's this amazing ice cream place in New York City called Cafe Panna And it's kind of Italian style. It's not gelato, but it's like Italian style ice cream. And they have the most amazing flavors. They will like mix and match insane flavors and sundaes and affogatos and it's me and me and my friends absolutely love it for my birthday actually, which was a month ago, one of my friends shipped like Cafe Panna from New York to my house, because they were doing some they're doing some delivery thing where you can get 12 pints and I opened it on my birthday. And I was like in shock and me and my friends literally opened all of the tubs at once and we were like, we're just gonna, we're just gonna try all of them eat all the flavors. So that's definitely my favorite at like NYU area. I think other college campuses. I live close by to Stanford. And there's also good ice cream places on like University of where the campuses there's like a salt and straw, which I love. There's actually Salt'n'Straw, kind of, you know, a lot of people know, but there's a gelato place called Gelato Classico, which is like on a side street, which I used to go to growing up all the time. And they have this amazing flavor called cafe mocha, which is a chocolate coffee flavor. So yeah, I feel like I'm going on and on about ice cream. I should stop myself.

M   Moira McCullough   43:23

First of all, I think you have the nicest, most thoughtful friends. But we'll have a whole other segment on food. You and I could walk people through the streets of New York City and I can't wait. And when you get back into New York City, it would be good to meet up for that I searched sure for sure. Thank you so much for joining us today.

S   Sabine Rizvi   43:47

Thank you for having me. It's super fun. I feel like we we definitely had like some sort of a connection on food on New York City. I feel like it was you know, female founders love that.

M   Moira McCullough   44:02

Thank you Sabine for joining us today to share your story. Dormzi was created by students for students as a marketplace to support an engaged student entrepreneurs providing a platform for them to monetize their skills, and create a conversation with fellow entrepreneurs. As an entrepreneur, take the time to listen to your community. Ask for feedback. And don't be afraid to launch a product or service before it is perfect. Be open and adaptable. You can find all of our show notes and links to the helpful resources mentioned throughout our conversation on our website at collegescoops.com/podcast. You can learn more about Sabina and Milan on their website, Dormzi.com on Twitter, or on Facebook or Instagram. Please take a couple of minutes to rate review and subscribe to College Scoops. Thank you for listening to our College Scoops podcast. Our entire College Scoops team strives to make the college journey a little bit easier, less stressful, fun and tasty by sharing all the inside scoops we have curated along the way. We would love to hear from you about topics to cover and your ideas and everything college related. Reach out to us at collegescoops.com or follow us on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.