



## EPISODE 41

### *Alexa Tips with Katherine from Voicebrew*

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Gary V.:	00:03	Hey guys, it's Gary Vaynerchuk and you're listening to the Front Row Entrepreneur Podcast with our girl, Jen.
Jen:	00:14	Our guest today is founder and editor of voice brew, a digital media company focused on helping people get the most out of Alexa, which we will refer to as Lexi during the show as Sonata. Wake up your devices like I think I just did voice Bruce 40,000 plus Lexie enthusiastic, a daily email newsletter with tips for using Lexi and publishes comprehensive guides on voice brew.com covering key Lexi features prior to launching voice brew. This guest was senior vice president and head of corporate strategy at a global alternative investment firm where she spent eight years. She graduated from Harvard college in 2009 welcome to the show, Katherine Prescott.
Katherine:	01:01	Thank you Jen and thank you for having me. I am thrilled to be here with you today.
Jen:	01:08	I'm so, so excited. You and I met at a voice conference and I was immediately just blown away by the work that you are doing and voice brew. You know, one thing I want to talk about before we dive into the whole Lexi stuff is what a prolific content creator you are and how incredibly

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consistent you are. So for listeners who aren't familiar with voice brew, tell us a little bit more about it.

Katherine: 01:37 Sure. So voice Bruce sends, as Jen said, over 40,000 Alexa super enthusiasts, subscribers an email Monday through Thursday with one really great thing to try with Alexa. So my goal when I send that email is that you spend less than a minute reading it and you come away with something actionable that you can do. And my hope is that you go and actually do that thing. I also publish a flash briefing, a companion flash briefing to go along with the email. So the emails usually don't come out until 2:00 PM everyday. But the flash briefing is available every morning as kind of like a preview with some highlights for what's going to be in the day's email. And then as Jen said in the introduction, I also publish extremely comprehensive guides on things like Alexa routines, how to create an Alexa shopping list. You know, the best smart home devices, you know, the best games, uh, you know, I could go on@voicebrew.com.

Jen: 02:46 It's really become the GoTo resource for anybody. Whether, you know, like you're a hardcore enthusiasts or you're just getting started using, taking advantage of the Lexi device you might've bought two years ago and it's sitting on your kitchen counter. Eventually when people are ready to come around to take an advantage of all that, that amazing little echo device can do. You have become the GoTo resource. And I'm just really am blown away by how consistent. And like you said, like those emails, they are what we should all strive for. They are actionable. They are interesting. They, um, they con they hit my email box at the same time every day, Monday through Thursday, and it's one of the few emails that I never miss. Uh, so kudos to you for that.

Katherine: 03:28 Thank you, Jen. That's, that's so nice of you. I'm, I'm, I'm really happy to hear that. Um, you've been enjoying the emails.

Jen: 03:35 Well when, when you and I first discuss come you coming on the show, our world was still pretty much our regular old world and we weren't under attack from a killer Iris. So although I do want to dig into some general uses and Ninja uses for Lexi in our lives, I thought maybe we could



talk about ways that people might be able to use Lexi to help us get through these challenging days. You got any ideas for us?

Katherine: 04:03 Absolutely. So this is definitely a time for hunkering down and, but that probably means Janice that a lot of your listeners who are hearing this are home and you know, working from home of course, but also looking for things that they can do at home to have a little bit of fun instead of going out to a restaurant or going to the movies or to a show. Because for most of us, those were no longer able to do those things for during this period. And Alexa can definitely help fill the void. So maybe we can kind of start by talking about a few really awesome Alexa trivia games. What do you think of that?

Jen: 04:45 Oh, love it. Cause I know our family uses one that we totally love. Yes.

Katherine: 04:49 Okay, awesome. So, um, I have four that are really, uh, really my favorite for a trivia games. And um, let me kind of talk through those. Uh, briefly. So the first one, uh, song quiz, this is, you know, one of the most popular Alexis skills in general and it's really a fantastic game. It's a great experience. So the way it works is you hear a short clip of music and you have to guess the song. And what's great is that if you're home with family members, you can definitely play it with them. But if you're home alone and you want to play, you'll get matched up with someone else who was also playing at home alone. So it's also kind of a nice way to, um, you know, have some connectivity with the outside world. You know, if you're, you know, home by yourself right now,

Jen: 05:46 we love that game, but I did not know that you could get matched up with a random player. And what I love is that, like I've got a kid that's 11, and then I have, you know, two older teenage children, um, one in college and then one in high school. And then of course the old geezers my, my husband and myself. And so our, our music knowledge is going to really be, you know, it's like if we do, if we do, um, music of today, like our kids kill us, you know, but if we do the sixties and seventies, so I just liked that you could do Sharas, you know, all these different genres by time period or, um, I think they even have like, what are



some of the other genres? I can't, I can't remember, but whatever. It's a great game. All right, what else you got for us?

Katherine: 06:30 So another really classic game is price at right. This is Amazon's take on, um, the, you know, classic game. Uh, the host will present product descriptions listed on Amazon and your goal is to guess the items price to score points. So it's just, you know, it's just a nice, it's just a fun little game to kind of test your knowledge. Another game that I absolutely love is question of the day. So this has something like over 20,000 reviews. It's got almost five stars. It's really, really fun. And you'll get a trivia question every day. And it could be something relating to arts and entertainment, science, the questions feel fresh and engaging. They're always different. And I just think, you know, I really want to highlight the skill because I think the team behind the skill, which is a matchbox does a really great job of coming up with new creative, kind of surprising, um, content every single day.

Katherine: 07:39 I always learned something new. So that's also a great one to do. And it's one that, you know, tonight it's a really nice way to kind of start the day with your sort of question of the day. And the last one I would love to highlight is totally different from any game I had ever played. And it's really not as well known in the U S it's called pointless and it's based on the British quiz show called pointless. And the goal is actually to score the lowest number of points by coming up with really obscure answers to the questions. So if your answer to a question is unique, meaning no previous contestant ever provided that answer, it's considered pointless and you scored nothing. And the goal to win is to score nothing. Um, it's really fun. It's a really different, and I, it's, it's definitely one of my favorite Alexa games.

Jen: 08:42 Oh, I'll have to check that out. And where does that originated from? Not the States.

Katherine: 08:46 It's, it's, it was, it's, it's a, it's based on a British um, quiz show and the team behind it is in the UK, but they have also launched it in U S Oh,

Jen: 08:57 definitely. Have to check that one out. All right. So we've got some games covered that should keep us busy for a



little while, uh, and help deal with the stir craziness. What about stuff to help with anxiety? Like, I could think of a, I don't know, right off the top of my head, I'm thinking a ambient noise maybe.

Katherine: 09:14

Absolutely. So, um, I don't know, Jen, we were just chatting a little bit about this before. Um, we started recording, but you know, with all this stress around the virus, like I've definitely been having a harder time falling asleep recently than normal. And I've started, you know, I, you know, I've used ambient sounds on Alexa for a while, usually kind of more like white noise kind of sounds, but I've started using like thunderstorm sounds or ocean waves or things that feel, you know, even a bit more soothing than just a sort of normal white noise. And, and that's been kind of a nice addition over the past couple of nights. And it really, it's, it's so easy to turn on ambient sounds. You literally just say, Alexa, play, thunderstorm sounds or play rain sounds. And you know, almost, you know, any ambient sound, um, will work. So, you know, I highly recommend that if you're, you know, looking for some ways to um, make it a little easier to fall asleep or if you just need kind of a break from the stress of, you know, reading the news during the day, it can be a nice way to just sort of turn it off for a few minutes.

Jen: 10:30

Yeah, I've gotten really, mine is ocean noise. So I say Lexi play ocean noise every night before I go to bed and, and, and somehow like I think it plays all the way through the night. So I don't remember how I enabled that. Do you have to say like lupus or something you want to say loop on. Okay. But I never had to do it again, so I must've just done it once and it sticks. Is that right? That's right. And then back to the games, cause I was remiss in asking you for, um, for our listeners, how do people get those games to play on their device?

Katherine: 11:07

So you just say Alexa, play song, quiz or play price at right. Or play pointless or play question of the day. So you can say, you know, you can say Alexa, play game or open game, but as long as you remember the name of the game that you want to play, all you really, all you have to say is just Alexa, open it, play it, you know, she'll sort of figure it out. And if you're listening to this and in a few



hours you wanna play a game and you forget the names of these games, you can always just say, Alexa, like I wanna play a game and she'll suggest something and it'll probably be pretty good.

Jen: 11:48 It's amazing. And it's also amazing how she, I shouldn't say she, I guess how it gets so, so much smarter and so much better and so much more intuitive every day. Really. It's, it blows my mind all of a sudden. You know what? I don't like that. She's suddenly gotten a little bit too personal with me. I mean, like have a, have a great morning Jennifer. And I just, it kind of annoys me and I, and I said to her, I said, Lexi, stop chatting with me. Or I said, stop, stop saying my name. I can't remember what it was. And then she pretended like she didn't know what I was talking about. So that's, um, is there a way to make her stop being so chatty? Like I don't want her to tell me some days. I just don't want her to say, have a great weekend.

Katherine: 12:34 You know, you could try. Do you have your Alexis set debrief mode? I don't know. You could try that. I'm not, I'm not sure if it'll work. You open up the Alexa app and navigate to settings and you'll see an option for, um, for brief mode. But what's nice about brief mode is that, you know, for example, if you say, Alexa, turn on the living room lights instead of responding. Okay. She'll just play a short little chime and then turn them on. Um, and in general she'll give much more succinct responses to your questions. So it's possible that that could help. But honestly, I've had some of my subscribers reach out with the same question and an issue and I'm not sure if there's a way to stop that now. But it's, it's funny cause for me I actually like that personalization but different people react really differently.

Jen: 13:33 I, I'm, I'm sure I'm just being like a curmudgeon and it, you know, most of the time it doesn't bother me. I think the issue, I think the issue is actually you just saved me because brief mode is perfect for me. Like I'm the person who listens to podcasts at one and a half speed. Minimally. I listened to every, you know, I watch every online training at like two times speed. I mean I am just do not have the patience and so I think that's more of what it



is. It's not that, it's like creepy to me. It's annoying because it's just like get on with it lady, you know? So I think if I put it on brief mode at brief mode, I think that will solve all my problems. So thank you so much. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, cause even if she says like, good morning, whatever, she just says, you know, if she says it quicker, Oh and I also have it's, I even have Alexa set up to speak faster, you know, cause you can make her talk faster and you just do it by saying Lexie talk faster and yeah, it's kinda fun to or more slowly.

Jen: 14:33

Yeah.

Katherine: 14:33

No, totally was great. Helpful settings.

Jen: 14:38

What are some other things? I don't do meditation. I don't, I don't have any kind of meditation thing set up on Lexi, but I imagine that could be something that would be helpful.

Katherine: 14:46

Absolutely. So, um, you know, just a quick like personal note, you know, I've been meditating every day now for over a year. It's one of the best things I've done for myself. And I think that meditating with Alexa is another effective, easy, and it's also a freeway to distress during this period right now. You know, one of the great things that most people don't know about meditating is that every time you meditate, you help to clear away some of this information overload that contributes to stress. So one analogy that people use is, you know, you have this sort of hose and over time, like all this gunk gets stuck in the hose and so water, less water can move through the hose, but meditating helps to sort of gradually clear out that gunk so that the hose can like work better and water can kind of flow flow more freely.

Katherine: 15:39

This is something that I had sort of learned previously and as something that more recently I read on the Mayo clinic website when I was researching this for one of my voice brew newsletters. And there are a bunch of great meditation skills on Alexa that can help anyone, particularly people Jan like you that have not meditated before. You can do a really brief, you know, meditation anywhere between two minutes up to 10 minutes. And, um, these skills also have really helpful meditation primers to sort of guide you through the basics of how to



get, you know, find somewhere comfortable to sit, guide you through some of the breathing that will help you relax. So the two skills that you know I would recommend if you are interested in trying meditation are a new meditation skill from real simple relax. This one has a selection of really nice two minute meditations.

Katherine: 16:43 So Jen, this is literally like two minutes of your life and you might not like it, but if you don't, you only spent two minutes on it, right? That's like the amount of time. So I highly recommend trying it if you're looking for some new ways to distress. And then of course there's also the Headspace Alexis skill, which is fantastic. So I highly recommend giving these both is the Headspace cause I've done Headspace on iPhone. Is Headspace in, is it paid or free on Lexi? There are, there are. You can do it for free or you can do a paid version of it. And you can also, if you have the paid version that you use on your iPhone, it's pretty easy to link up your Alexa account to your Headspace account so that you can kind of pick off, pick up on meditations that you started on your phone or you know, have access to additional meditations that you don't have access to in the free version. Okay. Any other sort of like good ones we can turn to? So here's not

Jen: 17:50 meditate the necessary, Oh, sorry. So

Katherine: 17:53 you know, this is an idea that I got from a voice Bruce subscriber, which I thought was just so kind of clever. The like everybody's talking about good hand hygiene right now and saying that washing your hands for 20 seconds, you know, is that's the right amount of time. And you know, there are different tricks that people say, you know, sing happy birthday in your head two times. That's 20 seconds. But if you really want to make sure that you get in a full 20 seconds, just set a 22nd Alexa timer while you're washing your hands. It's so easy. It's hands free. So you know, you're not touching anything, you know, while your hands are dirty, before you flush them and you can easily make sure that you're practicing good hand hygiene and really getting those germs off your hands with soap and water for the right amount of time.

Jen: 18:46 Such a good idea. And I have to say that is one of the ways, not for hand washing, but I use my Lexi timer for





everything, especially when I'm cooking. It's just so convenient to see Lexi set the pasta timer, you know, 10 minutes and then I can set an infinite number of other timers as well in my kitchen if I'm really like really cooking up a bunch of stuff, like Thanksgiving for example. And you might have, you know, six different things going. I only have two timers. I've got the one on my phone. I guess you could do that with your phone too. I don't know. You can have multiple timers. I just love that I could just yell it out. I don't have to touch anything. It's, it's fantastic.

Katherine: 19:22

Yep. Totally agree.

Jen: 19:23

You know, a way that we're using it. Um, that's, that's been very comforting to me during this time is that a while back I was in search of, I was thinking my mom, I wanted to get my mom one of those like medical alerts bracelets cause she lives alone and she's, she's perfectly fine and she's, uh, she's, she's a busy, busy person and she's, you know, it's not like she's, I'm sick in bed or anything like that, but she's older and she lives alone and she has stairs in her house. So I worry and I thought, well, it'd be nice if she had one of those not medic alert, the thing that you hit when you like, I guess it's a medical medical or the when you, when you need to call for help by pressing a button on a bracelet or a necklace. And I was asking around in Facebook about that and somebody suggested, well, why don't you, why don't you just get her a couple of Lexi devices?

Jen: 20:10

And I was like, Oh yeah, that's a great idea. So we put one downstairs and we put one upstairs. And you know, the obvious, you know, her being able to just say to yell out. And we tested it like from different parts of the house. Lexi, I've fallen or no, not Lexia fall. Alexi call Jennifer, you know, is, is really, it makes, it makes us both feel better. So that's great. But there, there have been benefits during this like crazy time that have really, you know, made me love the fact that she has these devices even more. And uh, one is, well she, she has pneumonia right now and she, and she lives alone. And so I'm like, I'm super scared, so I like that I can just drop in and she's given me permission to do that. So of course I could say Lexi drop



in on mom downstairs and then she hears the little chime and then she knows it's me and then I can just check on her and sorta hear what's going on. And then at bedtime when I'm in bed and she's in bed, I, it's become one of our routine. So I'll say Lexie, jump in on mom upstairs and then she hears the chime and then we like chat before we go to sleep. And it's just the coolest thing and it's comforting to both of us, you know?

Katherine: 21:24

Yeah. That is so nice Jen. I mean I love the example of using the drop in.

Jen: 21:29

Yeah. I mean it's not for everybody, you know, but and you have to like set boundaries with the whole drop in feature for sure. But it's, it's, it works for us. Of course.

Katherine: 21:41

Yeah. So are we, are we missing anything? I think, I mean I think those are, those are, those are some pretty, you know, great uses that we've talked about. I and I really particularly love the drop an example that you gave, which is just, I'm sure it gives you great comfort too, to know that if you're trying to reach your mom at home and she's not picking up, that you can drop in and you can immediately kind of open up the line for her to talk back to you in case there is an issue.

Jen: 22:07

Totally. In fact that exact same thing happened last night. I called, she answered, but there was no sound there. I called like on the phone. Of course I immediately like am sort of starting to freak out cause I'm imagining her lying on the floor gasping for air or something. I mean, I don't know. I was just like why? Like I imagined her being able to answer the phone but not being able to speak. So I dropped in on her and I can hear the news, I can always hear the news when I drop in on her and she's listening to the news and I could hear her on the phone talking to someone and that was what had happened. She was on the phone and she must've clicked over accidentally to me but then went back to them. So I was, so then I didn't need to talk to her.

Jen: 22:47

I just, I hung up and I was comforted that she was not helpless lying on the floor. She was chatting away happily with someone on the phone. So, all right. So can you talk about a couple of smart home devices that you love? Because I use like I use skills a couple, like I have my



favorite skills that I use, the ones that we've already talked about, those are pretty much the ones that I use over and over. But I haven't really taken advantage of the whole smart home devices. Do you have any that you love that we might not know about or that I haven't set up? Yes. And Jen, I think that connecting Alexa to smart home devices like smart lights and smart plugs, kind of basic devices like that. It's really one of the best use cases for Alexa right now. You know, you've, you've seen, you've really seen, you know, when you look at the use cases that are sort of picking up the most steam smart home is really right up there. And I also think that one of the reasons that we're starting to see all of the smart home devices kind of, you know, going off the shelves, is that as more and more people have Alexa, they have kind of a single hub for being able to control their smart lights, their smart plugs and their, you know, smart microwaves and they're smart, whatever else. It makes it much, you know, easier to imagine having a smart home versus, you know, you have smart lights and you have to control them and this one app and then you have a whole other app for your smart plugs.

And then you kind of have this smart, you know, oven, but you don't really know how to, um, you know, like how do you actually use the smart part? What does this even mean? So I think one of the reasons that we're actually seeing smart home picking up so much steam is that all of the voice connected, um, element is creating kind of a single interface for controlling your entire smart home. And just to go back to your original question, you know, can you think of any devices that, you know, maybe others haven't occurred to others to set up? You know, everyone knows how great smart lights and smart plugs are and I 100% agree with that. They are fantastic. I have every single light in my home is, I'm either connected to a smart plug or has a smart light bulb in it. But I would say the smart home device that's been kind of the most surprisingly, you know, just like delightful on the upside for me or my smart shades.

So I've set up smart shades also throughout my home. It is super, super convenient to be able to automatically close



them with a daily Alexa routine. So like my living room faces West and in the afternoon especially, you know, as you know, March, April, sort of may, June, you know, the S, you know, the sort of spring and summer months are upon us. My living room just gets blasted with sun, you know, it's just a heats the entire room up. If you're in the room, you know, you're, you, you basically have to turn your back to the window in order to, you know, not be blinded by the light. And it's extremely convenient that every day at whatever this time is that I set. So, you know, if I set it for, you know, three o'clock or four o'clock, it changes as the light changes. But the shades in my living room come down at that exact same time every single day.

Katherine: 26:25

So even if I'm not home, I know that I'm not going to come home to like a sauna in my living room, which is really, really nice. And then I have a routine that runs in the early evening after the sun, you know, the strong sun is gone that brings the shades back up. Another use for smart shades. So when I get in bed at night, I say, Alexa, it's bedtime to dim the lights in my room, but also my shades all close. And it's really, it's such, just, it seems like such a small thing, but when you don't have to night after night, go around to each lamp, turn each one off, you know, pull the, you know, shade cord down on each shade when it all just sort of comes down together at the same time. It's really, really nice. So look, I would say awesome. If you don't have any smart home devices set up yet, definitely start with smart lights and smart plugs. If you already have that stuff up and running and you're wondering, you know, what does phase two look like? I definitely think that, uh, considering smart shades is the way to go.

Jen: 27:34

And the thing that is really, I think some people will be surprised by that have not invested in like smart plugs and smart light bulbs is how incredibly affordable they are now. So, you know, it's not like, you know, even, I dunno five years ago if you're going to try to do some of this stuff, it be pretty pricey, but it gets, it gets more and more affordable every day as tends to be the case with new technologies. All right. Let's talk about routines. Cause you mentioned your bedtime routine. Can you explain



what a routine is and maybe some examples of some of your favorite routines?

Katherine: 28:09

Sure. So an Alexa routine to like the best way to, to sort of give you a sense for what it is is with an Alexa routine, you can set it and forget it. So you can say, for example, I want every morning at 6:30 AM for my bedroom shades to come up and my lights to dim on and my coffee maker to turn on. And you never have to set that again. And you can trigger an Alexa routine based on a time based on a location. So that's a really cool option. So for example, you could have a routine that triggers when you get home. So when you enter, I think it's, it's a radius of, you know, 500 feet, something like that around a specified location. When you either enter that or you leave that you can trigger routines. So you can have a routine that turns on your favorite music and turns on your hallway lights, you know, when you get home.

Katherine: 29:12

So that's, that's the second way that you can trigger routines. The third way is you can trigger a routine with a voice command. So in the example I gave of my bedtime routine, every time I say Alexa, it's bedtime, my shades come down and my lights turn off, turn off. That's the third way. And then the fourth way that you can trigger an Alexa routine, and this is, you know, somewhat new came out in summer 2019 is when your Alexa alarm goes off, when you dismiss it, the act of dismissing your routine can, I'm sorry, the act of dismissing your alarm can kick off a routine. And that takes me to my favorite Alexa routine, which is definitely my morning routine. So I, you know, it's probably a little challenging for most people to get out of bed in the morning. And I am definitely one of the people for whom it's, um, a little tougher.

Katherine: 30:14

And having an Alexa routine in the morning to help me get out of bed has just made it much easier. So first my Alexa routine, my Alexa alarm wakes me up. So I usually set a music alarm. So I like to mix up the song. And this morning it was Mariah Carey fantasy. I, you know, looking for some happy pump up music. And then when I, I say, Alexa, stop to dismiss the alarm, it kicks off my routine. So when I dismiss the alarm, my lights turn on gradually my shades come up, the smart plug in my kitchen, which is



connected to my coffee maker, turns on to start brewing my coffee. And then Alexis starts up my flash briefing on the echo speaker in my bedroom. And so it kind of helps me, you know, you know, get my mind kind of, uh, moving thinking, um, you know, get me out of bed and I really love this routine and it's extremely easy to set this up as well.

Jen: 31:19

I love that. What's on your flash briefing list? Like what's number one? Like I'm curious like what can you tolerate hearing when your eyes are still half closed? Like

Katherine: 31:28

you know, to be totally honest, I have flash briefings from a lot of like our, you know, flash briefing community gen. So I listened to Dave camp's flash briefing, I listened to Terry Fisher, I listened to Emily benders, I listen to Daniels. So there's something nice about hearing, you know, like I, you know, I love to listen, you know, towards the end of my flash briefing I have, you know, the wall street journal does a really nice tech update. You know, the New York times daily has, has some good stuff. I really liked the Reuters flash briefing as well, but I don't always want to hear about, you know, the kind of, you know, the sort of what's happening in the world cause first thing in the morning. Cause sometimes that stuff is not the nicest thing to wake up to.

Jen: 32:18

Yeah. You think.

Katherine: 32:20

Exactly. Yeah.

Jen: 32:22

You know, I'll tell you what I, I don't, I, I have to redo my morning routine cause I didn't have the right stuff in the beginning, but one, one of my favorite flash briefings, which kind of, I meant to actually mention this when we were talking about this stuff that can help us survive this difficult time that we're in right now. And it's one of my favorite flash briefings. You know what I'm going to say? Can you guess everyday positivity. Yes. Everyday positivity with pate Cocker. I just love it. It's so, so good there. She's got this amazing British accent and um, it's not just like she's reading motivational quotes, she just kind of chats with you, uh, in a really nice way about stuff that makes you feel good and gives you sort of reframes things for me a lot of times I'll really, really liked that one.



Katherine: 33:10 I also think that that Amy Amy Summers, her flash briefing, the pitch that is also for me a really nice kind of motivational flash briefing. It kind of goes hand in hand. You know, that Kate Cockers is a bit more kind of reflective and Amy's is kind of like, here's something you could do today to kind of like make your day better, you know, be more effective. And I really liked the sort of one, two of those to kind of make me kind of feel good in the morning. And those two are both on my list as well.

Jen: 33:42 Yeah, and just worth mentioning that every single flash briefing that you mentioned are these are, these are flash briefings that are updated can systemly. And so the flash briefings that are just sort of like fly by night and they do it a little bit here and a little bit there, people aren't going to listen to those because you can't count on them. I mean, let's say you have it as part of your routine. If you're gonna hear the same flash briefing every day for three weeks, it's no bueno. So I love that about all those people in our, in our S in our flash briefing circle who, uh, their consistent flash briefing creators. Definitely. So that's just a side note. All right, so have you learned any cool things that Lexi could do recently that you know that we don't know about that you just think is, is cool?

Katherine: 34:31 Yeah. So, um, you know, this isn't a super new feature, but it's, it's just not one that I had used until recently and it's follow up mode. So are you familiar with follow up mode, Jen?

Jen: 34:44 No, I wasn't even familiar with brief mode. So tell me about followup mode.

Katherine: 34:48 So when you enable follow up mode, what happens is when you make it an Alexa request, Alexa will then stay awake and ready for your next question just for a few seconds. And the reason that that's nice is that you don't have to keep saying the wake word, you know I E Alexa or echo or computer or Amazon or whatever you have, whatever your wake word is. You don't have to keep saying it over and over. When you have a series of questions you can just say, you know, Alexa, what's the weather, what's the weather in Vermont today you can kind of have, you can ask a few things in a row without continually having to reawaken her and if you want to turn



it on on any of your echo speakers, just say Alexa, turn on follow up mode and you know, say that you want follow up mode enabled for one speaker but not for the rest of your speakers in your home. That's totally fine too. You have to turn it on individually for each of your speakers by saying, Alexa, turn on followup mode to each one.

Jen: 35:59 Okay. I'm going to do it right now. Alexa, turn on follow up mode.

Katherine: 36:05 Oh, I love hearing how fast your Alexa speaks. That's so great.

Jen: 36:13 Oh, okay. So she told me I already have it turned on. Okay. So cool. All right. So I know you have to hear this all day long cause whenever I talk about Lexi and how much I love it, I love, love this, this, all this technology. Um, I hear but I don't want to have one of those things in my house. So is there a way for people to use Lexi without an echo speaker? Yes. So when they're out walking around and stuff,

Katherine: 36:42 absolutely. Anybody who has the Alexa app on your phone, you can use that Alexa via that app in almost all the ways that you can use Alexa on your echo speaker. And of course the biggest difference is that when you're speaking to Alexa on your echo speaker, you just say Alexa and start talking. And with the app you have to open the app and then you have to tap on the Alexa button, which is that, that one, that Sydney center of the bottom navigation bar in the app. So it's not fully ambient, but you can access Alexa that way. And of course if you do have the echo buds that came out at the end of last year, then you can literally use Alexa in that same ambient way that you do at home even when you're out and about.

Jen: 37:36 So not with my Apple buds, I, it has to be Amazon buds. I don't even know about these buds.

Katherine: 37:43 So if you have Apple buds, if you have the AirPods, you would have those AirPods in your ears. You pull out your phone, you would tap on the Alexa app and then you would tap on, there's this, this icon, when you open the app, you'll see the navigation bar that's at the bottom of the screen. And in the center of it there's a little icon that almost looks like this, like a speech bubble. And you tap





on that and you'll get to a screen that has like a little like a blue like light at the bottom, kind of like a, like a strip that's sort of blue that looks like what your, the top of your echo light ring looks like when it's listening. So you'll see this blue is on and you just start talking. So you don't even have to say Alexa because you don't have to wake it up. You've already awakened Alexa by tapping on that Alexa icon and accessing the tap with that blue kind of light strip.

Jen: 38:48

So what kind of things do you see people are using the phone app for?

Katherine: 38:56

So I listen, I listen, I often listen to my flash briefing when I'm walking around. So a lot of flash briefings are also offered via podcast apps. But if you want to listen to all your flash briefings, just like as if you were listening to songs on a playlist, so you don't have to keep turning each one on individually in an, in a podcast app, it's a lot better to just listen to them via Alexa on the Alexa app. So that's a great one. Of course, going back to the meditation skills that we spoke about earlier, if you want a moment of peace outdoors, just find any spot where you could sit down, close your eyes, put on your headphones and you can invoke either of these meditation skills that we spoke about. So Headspace or the real simple relax meditation skill. And then also, you know, I think that during this time when we're all sort of coop, we're all cooped up. You know, if you live in an area where you're able to sort of get out for a walk in a place where you know there are not a lot of people and you can still practice social distancing, you know, play a game on the go, you know, just walk around and entertain yourself. Why not? Why not? I mean,

Jen: 40:14

who cares if people think we're talking to ourselves because well actually that's not even a thing anymore because we are all talking to ourselves cause we're talking into our ear buds on the telephone. So, so who cares? Uh, all right. So can you give us a few general pro tips for using Alexa that have made the experience even better for you?

Katherine: 40:35

So this is, you know, the seems like such a small thing, but it has really made my whole experience with using



Alexa at home a lot better. And I actually learned this tip from a voice bruise subscriber. So you know, you know, first things first, if you're an avid Alexa user, I highly recommend putting echo speakers in multiple rooms around your home so that Alexa can truly be ambient. You know, it doesn't make a ton of when I've know got my first echo speaker, I only had one in my kitchen, but I had a smart light in my bedroom that was connected to Alexa and I had to go into the kitchen to turn off my bedroom lights. And that doesn't make a whole lot of sense. Um, you know, a lot of the examples that we've talked about, like if you have an echo speaker in your bathroom, you're washing your hands, you can set the 20 minute timer to make sure you're washing long enough. It's there. So many, you'll really be able to rely on Alexa much more to sort of help you and truly be your intelligent assistant if Alexa is ambient and in multiple rooms in your home. So with that in mind, if you have Alexa in multiple rooms across your home, what, you know, when I used to say Alexa in my kitchen, it would trigger Alexa instead in the, you know, the bathroom that was nearby, which was, you know, really annoying. So what I would, what I did is I changed the wake word on all these different devices that are near each other. So the living room, the wake word is Alexa, the bathroom nearby, it's echo. I have one in my, in the hallway, which is also kind of open to the living room and that one, the wake word is computer. And so now when I am trying to access Alexa on these different devices, it never gets confused and it's extremely easy to change the wake word. All you have to do is say, Alexa, change the wake word and then pick your new option. Um, so that is kind of a, you know, little pro tip that's been really impactful for me that I think for those of you that also have multiple devices in your home, you might find really useful as well.

Katherine: 41:31

Jen: 42:57

Yeah, I totally love that because that happens when I'm in the living room. If I say, if I say Lexie too loud, it wakes up the one in the kitchen, then they're both talking back at me and it's, it's annoying too. I love that. Now the only thing I'm thinking of is like when I'm yelling for one of my kids, I can't get their names right. So it's like if I'm trying to



figure out whose computer and use, you know, echo and who's Lexi, I guess I'll just, you know, it'll be like more, the more I practice it, the better I'll, I'll remember it, I guess sometimes. And, Oh, go ahead. Go ahead, Jen. No, no, no, no. You go ahead. You go.

Katherine: 43:33 No, you're totally right. It definitely takes a little bit of getting used to, but it's, it's, it's, you know, it's, it's worth it.

Jen: 43:41 Yeah, totally. And the other thing I want to say with the, with the, with the drop end thing and having them in an every room is a, my oldest child particularly has always hated me yelling through the house. So he just, I don't know why it's like it's, it's just put them in a bad mood, but at the same time I don't want to walk up two flights of stairs to tell him the dinner is ready. So what do you do? Like seriously? I, I D I every single night it would me go to the stairway, yell up, dinner's ready, Jake, Jake, or whatever. Jake, you're late for school. Jake, are you up? Whatever. Once we got the devices, it made everything so much easier. Now I just say announcement and then for dinner ready and then every everywhere we've got the device it says dinner's ready. So that's been, that's been super handy.

Jen: 44:31 Yeah, that's a great, that's a great one too. Well thank you so much Catherine, for the time that you spent with us today. I learned so much and I know that our listeners did as well. And I want to encourage everyone to go and check out voice brew@voicebrew.com. Make sure you subscribe because even if you think, eh, I'm not that interested in Alexa, what I will say is that if all you do is sign up to see what stellar content creation looks like, like the bar has been set high by this woman, so go and you're going to love it. So go and check it out. And, uh, anything else, Catherine, before we sign off?

Katherine: 45:16 No, that's all. Thank you so much, Jen, for having me on and for encouraging everyone to sign up for, for voice brew. I really appreciate your support. Thank you.

