

Episode 10

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:01.1] ANNOUNCER: Welcome to the Creative Empire Podcast. Each week, Reina Pomeroy, the life and biz success coach and Christina Scalera, the attorney for creatives are taking you up close and personal with successful influencers in the creative community and tackling your biggest business hurdles. Their mission is to help you, creative entrepreneurs, think beyond your daily biz so you can make the brave decisions that build your Creative Empire.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:35.3]CS: Hey everyone this is Christina Scalera, I'm here back again with the Creative Empire Podcast. Reina is with me today and also we have a guest, Nicole Yang from Southern Weddings and Making Things Happen, you guys definitely know her work, she is the art director over there. If you have seen anything that has to do with Southern Weddings or Making Things Happen, I'm sure that you have seen her beautiful design work.

We're so excited to talk to her today and hear a little bit more about her journey and why branding is really so important and how you can build some consistency with your branding.

Hi Reina, hi Nicole.

[0:01:10.5] RP: Hello there. Nicole, we're so excited to have you.

[0:01:13.7] NY: Oh my gosh, I'm so excited to be here, thank you guys.

[0:01:16.4]CS: Thank you. Yeah, so why don't you just start by giving us a little snippet of your background, how did you get to become the art director of something so amazing as Southern Weddings and Making Things Happen? What was the process?

[0:01:30.0] NY: It happened all by accident. It happened because I started as an intern at Southern weddings when I was in college and I never expected to get my dream job right off the

bat but it was like most of these stories, the classic story of great timing and partly luck. I started as an intern and then when I graduated, just had been working on graphics for the company for a while and made it very clear that I wanted to do this full time, that I wanted to be an art director.

The need arose as I was graduating so they just popped me right over there. I had very little experience so that was definitely a leap of faith on their end but it's been wonderful and it's been great to kind of start from scratch and kind of start as a little tadpole because I think that I really learned a lot about the brand and have had the chance to grow with them and I think that's what makes us able to operate on such a really consistent and a kind of tight knit way.

[0:02:29.5] CS: Yeah.

[0:02:30.0] RP: I love that. Oh my goodness, and I think that your story is so inspirational, so many people that are listening here because many of us are going to be full time entrepreneurs and that's what we aspire to but there's a different path like yours and like Amber and Stephanie Crowder of Fizzle and you guys are I think intrapreneurs like you are in an organization and in like a very entrepreneurial organization, and this is a totally different topic but I'm just super excited by your journey because people don't necessarily consider that to be an option.

[0:03:04.9] CS: Yes, I totally agree and I think that's the kind of beauty Southern Weddings like you said Reina, you get to feel like an entrepreneur because you're a part of a small business and you really get a say but you have a team to fall back on. I think that's important if you're by yourself as an entrepreneur, if you're part of a company, find your chain, find people who can support you and know your heart and why you're in this business so that you can make decisions and not feel like you're just stuck by yourself in this big blue ocean.

[0:03:34.7] RP: Love it, I'm going to have to connect with the offline about this but anyway, let's give that to the branding aspect. I think we dug into branding a tiny bit but Christina and I are not Britney experts. We love pretty things which it's great but it doesn't get us very far. Tell us a little bit about branding and can you talk to us a little bit about consistency across platforms and website and all of that stuff? Especially when you're first starting out.

[0:04:02.6] NY: Yes, when you're starting out, I think that's the hardest part and I think that people starting out, something important to realize is that your brand when you start out is definitely going to change. Like you are going to grow, you're going to discover more things about your audience and your clients and who you're trying to reach and that is going to morphed over time. Something that I think is so important to realize when you are starting out is that, your brand is not necessarily about you.

I think that's a really hard to kind of admit to yourself, especially if your brand is named after yourself like both of you guys, you're Reina and Co. There are parts of your personality that you do need to communicate to your clients so that they know what they're getting into. After that's determined, you also have to say, "Okay, here is my brand and it can't change as often as my mood changes. It has to stay — it has to stay consistent, so that everyone who comes across your brand, whether that's on your website, in person, on Instagram, on Snapchat even.

As soon as they see it, they say, "Oh, that's Reina or that's Christina, I recognize it because of this color or the way she does this treatment or because she said this word." I immediately trust that. What you're really doing when you're branding and when you're starting out is you're just creating a language that serves the customer and you're giving them something to invest in.

[0:05:31.7] CS: Yeah.

[0:05:34.8] RP: All right. I love that you said one word too and I think that that's such an interesting thing that people don't typically think of. I'm thinking of all kinds of brands and I'm like, yeah, there is one word to kind of wrap things up for people. The Lara Casey brand and for Making Things Happen, what's like the one word?

[0:05:56.6] NY: I would say cultivate, and that's actually the word that has changed a lot for us and that's something that we kind of get stuck in this trap too because especially for the Lara Casey brand, that is a brand that's based off a person and of Laura's story. So we have to be really careful about as her story changes and as our audience grows with us and they either start out not as entrepreneurs and then become them and then they become working moms, we have to kind of train them to think the way that we do and to adopt these new words as we adopt them too.

In the past it's been a lot of, "Make it happen, you can do this, let's go," and we've had to kind of merge that with cultivate and now it's all cultivate. There is like a training process that is kind of involved, you can't just say, "Oh hey, here's your new thing, trust it."

[0:06:48.6] RP: I love that, training your clients well.

[0:06:52.8] CS: Yeah, and I think it's an evolution of not just the brand but also it's Lara's done a really great job and obviously through you of mirroring that concept because I didn't really realize that was your word until you just said that but I'm like, "Yeah, that makes a lot of sense," because just following her through the last two years, watching her build her family and build her business and I don't know if build your family is the right way to say that.

[0:07:21.9] RP: Grow your family maybe?

[0:07:23.0] CS: Grow your family, yeah, embrace the new babies in your family. Yeah, I mean, she really has been cultivating, not just a magazine or a website or something like that, it's like you don't cultivate a website, we cultivate a brand so that makes a lot of sense, you cultivate a community and a team and all this beautiful big concept things that she has been cultivating.

[0:07:50.6] RP: Cultivating a team too. You guys just had a retreat a while ago, that kind of thing is a big investment for all of you plus for the brand.

[0:08:00.7] NY: Yes, totally. It just changes everything when you get everyone in the same room to go there and you can say, "Here are all the things that we want to do and here are some of the problems and how can we tackle this together?" I think that a big part of this is what we've been doing lately is saying, "Okay, here is the circle where our mission lies, here is the circle where our customers want to get something from us and here is the circle where we thrive in our business and where we personally feel fulfilled and wherever that meets in the middle, that's what we concentrate on and everything else falls away."

[0:08:37.9] CS: Do you have graphic of that?

[0:08:37.9] RP: That's awesome. It's like a triple Venn Diagram.

[0:08:43.3] NY: Triple Venn Diagram, I like it.

[0:08:46.9] CS: Yeah, it's beautiful.

[0:08:47.1] RP: So let's get back to the branding thing again, I think we're kind of in the territory of but let's bring it back to somebody who might be a little bit newer at the game and who might not necessarily have a team at all to start. What should they be thinking about with the consistency piece with the one word, all the other components that come into play?

[0:09:08.8] NY: Yeah definitely. Well I will first say, if you don't have a team, ask for help, find your tribe of people of supporters and then find people who can be experts in what you're not an expert in to help you. To start out, I would definitely concentrate on what is it that you are trying to serve, how are you serving your client, what makes you different? Is it that your mission is totally different? For us at Southern Weddings as we're focusing on marriage instead of weddings and that is the one thing that we try at home, time after time.

For a photographer, it might be that they are doing just film and that they're focusing on memories and they're not just focusing on moments, it could be anything. To find those things and repeat it over and over and over again because we found that if you say it once, people don't catch it or they don't remember it. I mean you can scroll past an Instagram feed so quickly and not barely understand what the true heart of a business is. Representing that in your words but also in your visual.

So if you really want to get that memory capturing feeling of your photographer then the images you need to show need to be full of emotion, they need to elicit some sort of nostalgic response from whoever is seeing you. If you're a really happy brand then your color should be bright and happy. I think that sounds so simple but a lot of brands don't do that, they don't say, "Does the color yellow spark people into this feeling of joy? Or is it blue and they feel like really tranquil and peaceful and is that what I want them to feel when they interact with me?"

[0:10:50.8]CS: Yeah, that's awesome. As somebody who does love bright colors and I think it turns a lot of people off in the wedding industry that people who are like, "pale, and the blush". I'm not that girl and so when clients come to me, I know that they are my people when they look at my website and they're like, this is awesome. I get feedback like, "I wanted to hire you because your branding was very aligned with me or whatever." I think that those are the people that you do attract and you want them to feel a certain way.

[0:11:18.6] NY: Yes, exactly. I would say, don't feel afraid to do those things and to get really specific because Reina, I'm not sure if you had the client who came to you and did really like pastels and pink things and would you be really happy working with that client? Would that fire you up?

[0:11:35.0] RP: I think that as long as she relates to the rest of my brand of servant leadership of really leading from a place of I am going to serve my client even if they are of a non-service based provider or if they are just aligned in terms of having a mission driven organization, I'm happy to still coach them but they're probably not going to get through the door that many times if they don't really resonate with my visual brand.

[0:12:03.0] NY: Exactly.

[0:12:04.8] CS: If they're just starting out and you don't really have the audience or the clientele to — you don't have the luxury of saying "no" yet maybe the clients, you're just trying to figure out who you want to serve. What are some things that you could do to figure out what your brand communicates about you because when we look at our own brand, we think it communicates one thing but maybe not?

[0:12:26.7] NY: That is so true. I think there are a couple of different points here, the first is that when you're talking about branding and communicating that message to people, there's a difference between branding and between having a logo.

[0:12:42.1] RP: Yes, tell us more.

[0:12:45.5] NY: I consider it like when you have a logo that's like marking your territory. When you have a brand, that is the messaging where you really get people to buy in and where you do tell them why you're different. The logo is important I think that that's what people gravitate toward, that's the first visual indicator that something's different and that something is yours and belongs to you.

But it only means so much to people. Shapes and words and letters are like, they read it and they say okay, I understand what that is now but I don't get anything from this. When you're starting out, I think it is important to really pay attention to who your client or your customer is. Do they gravitate toward really luxurious looking things or do they gravitate towards something that's a little more organic? And capturing them where they are by reflecting that in your visual is so important. Then you can train them to recognize your logo and to recognize those words.

[0:13:46.3] RP: Yeah. I think that that's so interesting and there's so many things that as we as individuals probably love, right? Some of those components might be part of it like you mentioned earlier but it really is about the audience, it is about the clients that you want to be attracting and if you're not doing that visually then it's hard for them to find you and kind of like land and be like, "Yeah, this is it."

What would you say, as your title is art director, right? As an art directory, what advice would you give kind of a newbie, if there is an activity or some kind of a journaling exercise they might do or maybe a Pinterest board exercise they can do in order to help them kind of make this part of their business more concise?

[0:14:39.1] NY: Definitely. I would say, start with Pinterest and there are two ways you can kind of go about this, I think that there are different steps. The first is, if your brand is, if it has your name on it and you want to reflect your style and the kind of person that you want to work with, start by pinning anything that appeals to you, whether it's words or pictures or anything that you find. You're going to start seeing, after you collect enough of those things, you'll start to see the patterns that really represent who you are and how you want to communicate that to a client.

Then after that, you should be creating a Pinterest board of who is your ideal client? What do they like? Is it Pottery Barn, is it Anthropology, is it puppies or peonies or a coffee or tea and

where do those things kind of meet in the middle? That's kind of where you should start and obviously that's going to change the more that you discover yourself as a business and as an entrepreneur and the more you work with clients.

After that, you have to be asking yourself, how do I want to make people feel? It's not just what you want to communicate to them because those messages often get blurred but how can you make people feel and that is such an instant way to grab people and to make a connection because that is just, it's a visceral and inherent in your body to react to things sensually, like through sight or with your sound or through smell. Whether that's in person or on social media or on video.

[0:16:04.6] RP: So cool.

[0:16:07.1] CS: Yeah, I think what a lot of people struggle with as well is we have all these messages out here that say, "You need to immediately, like before you even know if your business is going to make money, you need to brand, you need to have that strong representation of what you want to sell and what it is, you'll never make it if you don't." I fell into that trap in my last business and spent a lot of money and the business never went anywhere, just basically wasted a lot of money and everything was gone.

When I started my new one, I started fresh because that wasn't the same brand that I want. I didn't want wreaths and pastels and water colors and things like that anymore. So this one, my legal information in my law firm business, I just got a template and did it all myself and now I'm kicking myself because it's flip flop right? So I should have spent the money on this one and not the last one.

Now I'm going through that branding process and I'm really late and I feel like it's hurting my business a little bit but that's a really hard struggle for people because branding is not cheap. If you're not a graphic designer, or you're not a brand designer or something like that. It's hard to come up with these feelings that we'll hire someone that is good at coming up with these feelings and figuring out when to hire someone like that. What's like a good middle ground maybe that somebody could find there?

[0:17:33.4] NY: That is such a good point and that's something that I see with so many of our freelance clients too. Is they're just like starting out with the business and they say, "Okay, I want to invest X thousand amount of dollars but I have no clients yet, I have no idea what I'm doing, I have no website and that is a really hard investment," and I often try to talk people out of it because Christina, you're right, you don't know where it's going to go and you also don't know like I said, how your client's going to grow and how you're going to grow.

I always say, start small and you can change your brand. Branding is obviously important but you can change it, it's not the end of the world to do that. As long as you know from the start what you want your clients to feel and what your mission of your brand is and what that messaging is. As long as that stays consistent, everything else can change and it's fine.

So I think the middle ground is that, is find what you really want people to experience with you and what you want to serve them with and how you want to serve them best. That is your brand, that is the messaging and that goes leaps and bounds further than creating a logo or creating a website. Because people will talk about that and that is what gets you more business.

[0:18:50.7] RP: So true. I think even with this creative empire collaboration that we have, people have resonated with our branding because we kind of started out with, we had this idea, Christina had this idea and then we put it out there and we had a lot of people kind of buy into it before we had the logo, before we had the branding and the spirit of the work, right?

Then we did have Katell of Reverie Lane Design put it together and now it's like housed in this beautiful container. But it doesn't always have to start out like that. I think there is a couple of different ways of doing it. I think Christina, your business is thriving so much and I don't think that you're hurting necessarily. You know what you are you know?

[0:19:33.2] CS: Yeah, I say that and I'm not. It's just hard when I want to have consistent thank you notes for clients that were consistent things that I give out as client gifts and I don't have any — I'm like, "I don't even know? What's my color? I have no idea." That's hard, creating a consistent experience for the clients as far as that level, that out of level of professionalism which I want to have there but it isn't. I'm working on it.

[0:20:03.0] NY: Yeah, totally. I think for a lot of people starting out, there are so many work around for that. Whether like we told a lot of people, we used to do, making brands happen under the Lara Casey hat and we would brand clients but there are so many clients who are starting out and we just said, “Hey, take this gorgeous stack of cotton paper that feels really luxurious and then get a really high quality stamp and just stamp your logo on to it. That is your kind of patch for the meantime, it looks branded but you have room to grow and you have room to change it later and you’re not losing time or resources.”

[0:20:37.5] CS: Yeah, so smart.

[BREAK]

Are you enjoying the show? It would mean so much to Reina and Christina if you take two minutes and head to our iTunes and leave a review. It doesn’t take much time but it helps them bring you more value pack content. Back to the convo ladies.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:20:55.7] CS: So Nicole, we’ve also seen in the last year or so, correct me if I’m wrong Reina or Nicole, but I just noticed in the last year, a new genre of a form of an artistic director for like a freelance artistic director pop up, and that’s the brand designer. These are people that maybe don’t necessarily do the graphic design but they designed the entire brand, the come up with the colors and the feeling and all that kind of thing.

Then obviously, we also have a huge market of graphic designers and listeners to the show that design and it can be really tough for them as they’re starting out because the market feels so crowded and there’s such a pressure to come up with something brand new, that’s never been done before or just buck the trend and come up with their own and so, you’ve done a phenomenal job of this at Lara Casey Media and all of her different media companies and Southern Weddings and things like that. What is your secret?

[0:21:59.6] RP: Tell us all the secrets.

[0:22:04.0] NY: Oh gosh you guys, I don't have a secret. Sometimes I'm like, "What am I doing on a day to day basis?" but I think that's kind of where it comes from, when you have a really strong brand and you know what it's supposed to look like and what you want people to feel when you look at it. Those design decisions come so easily once you know that.

I think that there is room to grow and to change and there are often times where we take on big projects and it is not the exact, perfect representation of the Southern Weddings brand as it exist in our style guide. That's because things change really quickly, we have different partnerships and we have different aesthetics that we need to work in so that we can represent both sides of the puzzle differently and then we have so many different social media accounts that are popping up all over the place now because social and mobile is big.

So a lot of it is flexibility but it's flexibility within a set of rules. Once you have your style set, once you know your URL is always displayed in this font and that this size with this [inaudible], those are really tiny things but that's what like once you put like that tiny stamp on all this other stuff that kind of looks a little out there and that might be a little different like that's what makes it feel so tight end cohesive.

[0:23:27.8] RP: Yeah, mind blown right there. I'm going to talk to my graphic designer and be like, "Hey, do we talk about this?" Can you talk to us a little bit about style guides. I know that this is like a concept that graphic designers or branding folks are really used to, but as a non-designer I really don't understand what should go into it. Like how should one use it, once you receive it I guess, and what should be in it and what should we be asking for?

[0:23:54.9] NY: Yes, definitely. I think it depends on what kind of level you are at with your business. Obviously, corporate style guides are these huge documents and they're a little ridiculous and very, very strict. For us, our style guide is a collection of our logos and what gets used where, so there's obviously a lot of flexibility there but we have a more square logo that is used for avatars and then we have a horizontal logo that is used for documentation and we have a logo that we use for water marks.

We also have our color board; so our primary colors, our secondary colors, this accent colors that we used, we have a color table because you can't just use five colors and get away with it

all the time, you need a little bit of variety. We have our fonts and then we have a lot of examples. So we have made graphics that say, “Here are the patterns that we use but here is how we use them. Here is how we always use our URL whenever we’re posting to Pinterest or to Instagram.”

The more you work with your designer and the more that you see what kind of graphics you’re creating, whether that’s Pinterest, Instagram or you’re creating a magazine, you’ll get to know the things that you’re using consistently and how it need to be displayed. That’s why like a style guide should always be growing, it’s not something that you create right off the bat and just determine willy nilly and say, “Here are the rules, here’s what we’re doing.” It takes a lot of experimentation before that even happens.

[0:25:28.6] RP: Yeah, I’m definitely going to be taking this conversation back to my team and be like, “hey, how could we make this better, how can we check in and grow with it?” Because we branded a year ago and I feel like I’m growing out of it already. So I think this is really helpful, personally, very selfishly.

[0:25:48.6] NY: But I’m glad it’s helping you.

[0:25:51.4] CS: Yeah, Nicole, you’ve been super insightful. Yeah, I think that is the challenge is that I feel like I personally don’t have any tattoos and I could never get a tattoo because I would hate it six months later. So my branding, or whatever you want to call it right now, as temporary as it was because the business was kind of accidental as I fell into it last fall but after making things happen.

But yeah, it’s something that I worry about. I’m like, “Well I’m going to do this but a year from now, how am I going to feel about this?” This is really insightful and that you can still feel okay about your brand and it can change. I guess going forward, what are some of the things that if you’re just starting out, you have your logo, you have your website. What are some non-traditional forums where we might see brands pop up? How could we integrate that into Instagram?

A lot of people put out these Instagram guides and it's like, have pictures that are bright and airy and here's how to edit them and whatever but — and obviously Southern Weddings has done a great job at this in social but how can our listeners basically take this information and translate it to a photo because with graphic design or with words, it's a little easier I think to grab that concept of like, as far as the photo and the style goes, do you recommend they have some kind of style guide for that too?

[0:27:20.6] NY: Yes. Again, and that's one of those things where it takes a lot of experimentation and this is something that we're actually working on with all of our brands but with Lara Casey in particular, we have gotten caught in the trap a lot of doing a lot of these pretty, styled, product photos on white and we realize that we're trying to communicate to women who are in the mess of it all and we want to say, "It's okay to be in the mess." But then we're showing them photos where everything's perfect.

As an example, what we're trying to do is to take more photos in our office to tell our story, to take more photos of Lara whenever she's working on her power sheets or her journals with her kids to post real life and obviously there is a bit of finessing that needs to happen there and a little bit of refinement because sometimes it is dark and it doesn't matter how real a photo is if someone can't see what's happening it's not going to do you any good.

You do have to communicate like those brand colors too and luckily with Lara, a lot of the brand is based on her. Those things are natural in her house, she naturally have the pens in the right colors and the blankets in the right colors. But I would say, for those things, have this idea of what you want people to feel and communicate them and don't be afraid to experiment.

A lot of brands, their big thing is posting inspirational quotes on a background and that's fine. A lot of brands are really styled and they always have peonies and they always have white backgrounds and that's fine too. But if that's not what you're trying to communicate then go back to that Pinterest board that you created or go back to your style guide and look at those words that describe your brand and take photos that represent each of those things.

[0:29:09.5] RP: So good. I just kept circling. You've said it a couple of times, "How do you want your audience to feel?" And I think that's such an interesting way of looking at branding and

yeah, I'm thinking about all kinds of brands that have different types of logos, different types of colors and stuff like that. It takes an extra layer deeper I feel like and I just pulled up the Lara Casey shop Instagram and I'm just going through it and I do notice that it's like embracing that messy middle.

I love that it's really come into that more than just being a really pretty picture that you took with the white background, which is great but I think you're right, that people want to see it being used and life being life.

[0:30:00.1] NY: Yeah, exactly, and that's different for everyone. I think that's a big part of branding too in like making sure people feel the way you want them to feel is that is what branding is and your logo is just the way that you say, "This is ours." The branding is the experience in like that's how you serve people, it's not about you and how you represent your business necessarily but it's how people interact with you and the experience they have. Because they can be having that same exact experience with anyone else in the world. So making them feel something is what is going to set you apart.

[0:30:35.5] RP: That's cool.

[0:30:37.1] CS: I wonder too for you because you are part of the organization but you're also your own person and I think you have a really similar but different personal brand as well. Can you speak to that a little bit?

[0:30:50.3] NY: Definitely. This is such an interesting thing because I am the person in the office who really likes the bright colors and I don't want to call myself edgy because that sounds really weird but a little edgier and a little less like — I am not a preppy person and that is the brand outside and they're obviously like parts of my personality that do gravitate toward that. I think that this is just personally as a designer but you have to be willing to represent yourself differently and to learn different styles and to experiment with different things and to see yourself as an individual.

Because I think where we get stuck is if you as a designer become the brand that you are working on then you're not really doing anyone any favors because you're not introducing any

new concepts, you're not learning any new skills that can be used to help bring the brand forward. You're not able to see if what you're doing is actually the right representation of what you're doing because you have no mode for comparison and relativity.

[0:31:54.0] RP: Wow, that's really interesting.

[0:31:57.5] CS: Nicole, this is a lot that you do every day. I just want to acknowledge that and I mean, a lot of us have different companies or at least different projects going on. How do you manage that? Because Southern Weddings has a different feel from your brand like we just were talking about which has a different feel from the Power Sheets or whatever. How do you keep all this in track or how do you manage that on your end?

[0:32:24.2] NY: That's a good question. I'm not sure if I have an answer for that but I think part of it — this goes back to a lot of what we talked about during the making things happen conference and that if you are working from a place that is rooted in what you feel is most important to you and your business and what you're working on reflects that. Then that makes everything so much easier because everything comes from the space where you're saying, "This is my mission in life and this is how my business serves that mission to help other people."

There are obviously different ways that that gets expressed, Lara Casey is a lot more bright colors and messy life fun and Southern Weddings is definitely that preppy southern happy feel and those represent themselves differently but each time, there is a formula for putting together graphics, there are design rules and that definitely helps but then you just kind of get to know the heart behind each of these brands and that makes it so easy to make design decisions and messaging decisions and to talk about things a specific way.

[0:33:30.4] RP: That's really interesting that — my mind is really just blown that you really are managing so many different brands and so many different looks and we've been on the phone for like what? 45 minutes now and it feels like I'm still not really sure how you do it all. I think that some graphic designers or brand designers might feel this way that they have — they're personally invested because they're doing the work. But they really want to do the brand justice and really exemplify what the company is trying to do and stuff like that.

I'm wondering, I don't know if this is a natural question but I feel like just from the outside, Lara really brings you in and gives you kind of the autonomy or ownership of the area of what it is that you're an expert at. Can you speak on that a little bit? I'm wondering, I think I'm wondering how graphic designers, how brand designers can really take ownership of, even if they're not joining a company necessarily. But does this is like sort of question makes sense to you?

[0:34:31.3] NY: Yeah, definitely. I think that a large part of it is it has to be bit self-directed like as a designer and working with some free-lance clients and been working with three different brands under Lara Casey Media is you have to be tuned in to the audience at all times so that sometimes that means a lot of Instagram scrolling. Minutes on minutes, on minutes, just to see like what people are saying and what do those people like. The people that are following us and commenting on us, what do their feeds look like? Who else are they following?

That is the one thing that I feel gives us designers a lot of room to make decisions that we feel best represent the company but don't have to be run off the flag pole a million times a day. Like, "Can I use this font? Can I use this shape?" Those are decisions that we make 500 times a day and they shouldn't have to be run up the flag poles.

Obviously having a style guide helps with that but then being really tuned into the audience and really tuned in to different team members and what everyone's priorities are and what the messaging is, that's what helps people make those really informative decisions I think. Just being tuned into the audience.

[0:35:50.2] RP: Very cool, and I love that you said like "going up the flag pole". You don't have to get decisions approved every time you make one.

[0:35:57.4] NY: Definitely. I think another part of it too is, I think design is so important in how we interact with our world but at the same time, it's not that important like it doesn't matter sometimes if something is pink or if it's blue. If the message gets out there, that's what works. Put function over form.

[0:36:17.4] RP: Oh interesting. Okay, that's a tweetable.

[0:36:19.4] CS: Yeah, Nicole, after you said that I'm like, did anything get out there that you guys thought was going to be like a huge hit and it just totally flopped or vice versa?

[0:36:30.5] NY: There have been some products that have flopped. But I also think...

[0:36:34.0] CS: Even like quotes or post or stuff like that?

[0:36:38.3] NY: Oh yeah, all the time. All the time, and we go back and delete them because we don't want them to be a representation of — obviously if it didn't resonate with anyone, we don't want people to go back and say, "Why is this on there? This doesn't quite feel like the rest of the brand." Again, that goes back to bad experimentation sometimes you just got to put it out there and see what happens. If it doesn't work, then it's fine, go back and do it again. It's not the end of the world.

[0:37:03.3] RP: That's so interesting that you guys still have flops.

[0:37:05.6] CS: I know right?

[0:37:07.7] RP: Just mind blown. But I think it really goes back to that experimentation and failing fast and being willing to try something and just being okay with not being super attached to the outcome.

[0:37:20.1] NY: Absolutely. I think we get really — designers get a bad rap for being emotionally attached to their designs but I think a lot of it is they're emotionally attached to their time and the time that they spend on the design that is maybe not working. That's part of the process as you got to experiment a little and you got to see what sticks and that's how you'll learn and you move forward.

[0:37:42.1] CS: Yeah, speaking of that Nicole, what's next for you?

[0:37:46.4] NY: That's a good question. Lots of designing still, there is so many changes with Southern Weddings and with Lara Casey that we're making in the next year. We just came out

of our team retreat and it was mind-blowing, like how many things we felt we could catch up on and just change to serve people better.

So a lot of storytelling and that's something that in my personal life I am working on too is stories are the things that we take with us when we leave. All this branding and everything, it's important and the short term but at the end of the day and at the end of your life, stories are what you learn from and that's what you take with you.

I am working on a personal project with my boyfriend and a bunch of other creative and it's called The Scrapped YouTube channel and that's focused on stories that would otherwise go untold. So there are a bunch of different things that are happening there and that's just a really exciting part of that goes back to the messaging, that's what people want to hear, that's something that you take with you.

[0:38:46.0] CS: Yeah. How can they find that project and how can they find you and get in touch with you if they want to?

[0:38:53.0] NY: All the ways.

[0:38:54.4] RP: Everything.

[0:38:56.5] NY: The Scrapped YouTube channel, that is going to be launching at the end of the month so maybe when this podcast comes out. That will be scrappedproductions.com and that will lead you straight to our YouTube channel and then my project within that channel is called From What I Remember. So that's from whatiremember.com. You can also find all of this on my Instagram which is @nicoleayang.

[0:39:21.2] RP: Cool, I have one last question before we kind of wrap up and that is, if you can go back to the Nicole that was just graduating college and/or just starting in your internship with where you are now and if you can give yourself advice about the trajectory of your career from there, what would it be?

[0:39:44.9] NY: I think I would just tell myself to speak up because I think that we control a lot more of our future than we think that we do and it's because we kind of like put these ideas out into the world. I don't think I ever would have gotten the art director position if I hadn't Lara from the start, "I really like design and my dream job is being art director at a magazine."

[0:40:11.6] RP: Boom.

[0:40:12.5] NY: Exactly.

[0:40:14.0] RP: I love that. Speak up and I think that resonates for me so strongly because I'm all about people living the brave life and just really being intentional about the things that we ask for and are present with. That's so important. Thank you so much for that answer.

[0:40:30.4] NY: Thank you guys.

[0:40:32.8] RP: How else can we find the rest of all of the brands that you're working on?

[0:40:37.1] NY: Yes, great question. So if you go to Laracasey.com. She's got links to Making Things Happen and Southern Weddings and her own shop, but you can always find us on Southernweddings.com and Makingthingshappenintensive.com too.

[0:40:53.1] CS: Awesome. You'll be back at making things happen this fall?

[0:40:56.1] NY: Yes, I will be at every single one, I can't wait to see anyone who is there, it's always a really fun time.

[0:41:01.5] CS: Yeah, I'm sure that anybody that signs up is not going to regret it. So yeah, thank you so much for coming on Nicole. I hope they can go to Making Things Happen and stop by and hang out with you a little bit and go ahead and check out your two other projects and they sound really interesting so I really can't wait to go check out Scrapped Productions.

[0:41:21.0] NY: Thank you guys.

[0:41:21.4] RP: You went to Making Things Happen right Christina?

[0:41:24.1] CS: I did, I went last year and it was really eye opening. It's a very different conference from anything else I think that's offered out there and again it's because you guys have done such a great job honing your mission and your message and obviously the branding surrounding that. So yeah, I think it's a more intentional, deeper conference than what is traditionally offered. But yeah, it's a great experience so I would recommend it for anybody on the fence about it. That's for sure.

[0:41:54.5] RP: This conversation has brought my attention to the fact that we probably need a tag line to close this podcast. Okay, what is our brand tag line and so we'll have to brain storm on that.

[0:42:06.6] NY: I can't wait to see what it is.

[0:42:08.7] RP: I think for us it's like, all about empowering and educating, people who are the next level or the next wave of creative entrepreneurs. So something around that.

[0:42:18.1] RP: I love that, thanks. So go build your creative empire today, I don't know. Awesome. Well thank you so much for being here, it was such a fun timer talking to you Nicole.

[0:42:29.9] NY: I had a blast, thank you Reina and thank you Christina.

[0:42:32.6] CS: Thank you, we'll talk to you soon. Bye.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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[END]