

EPISODE 14

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:04.1] 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]

[00:00:36.4] RP: Hey everyone. Welcome back for another episode of the Creative Empire Podcast. I am here with Christina.

[00:00:41.7] CS: Hey guys.

[00:00:43.1] RP: And we actually have a mentoring session with Ashley Cox of Ashley Cox Photography and she was so gracious in meeting up with us in Ashville, North Carolina earlier this year and she took our beautiful photos for the Creative Empire Podcast and we're super happy to have her and talk to her about what's going on in her business. Hey Ashley.

[00:01:03.8] AC: Hey ladies, thank you so much for having me here today. I'm really excited to join you and be part of the Creative Empire Podcast family.

[00:01:12.1] CS: Thanks.

[00:01:12.1] RP: Absolutely, we're pumped to have you. So, thank you so much for taking our photos, they were so great and the audience has been responding really well to them.

[00:01:21.3] AC: Thank you, you're so welcome.

[00:01:23.9] RP: Yeah, we were super pleased to have those but tell us what's going on in your business now and I know that there is a big transition coming. So tell us what's going on in your life and figure out what the question is that we can do mentoring around today?

[00:01:36.2] AC: Absolutely, that's such a great question. Things have really gone a 180 for me and I am very excited to announce that I'm starting a new business, not leaving my photography business behind but just another business to be able to help creative entrepreneurs. My background is actually in human resources and I have a long, long, long history of helping to interview and recruit and hire and train the best people for very, very large corporate teams. So I'm really excited to bring that knowledge, that training, that expertise to the creative community in an HR consulting type of role.

[00:02:19.1] RP: So exciting! I'm personally pumped because I know that this is a huge need and Christina and I have talked really extensively about outsourcing and managing and being leaders in our businesses. So we're pumped to have you here.

[00:02:35.1] CS: Yeah, definitely and this is a totally new thing. I haven't heard of anybody doing this. So can you give us a little bit more clarification about what it is you're going to offer, not that we're going to hold you to it but if we went to your website and we pulled up your services page, what would it say?

[00:02:50.4] AC: Absolutely. You know, it's really great for the entrepreneur who is really growing their business. They've been doing business either solo for a while or they have been using contractors to do some work but now they're really ready to bring on a team member and they feel overwhelmed. They're in over their head, they really don't know where to start.

I'm going to come right alongside you and guide you through the process of how to set up an interview process, how to ask questions that are going to get you the candidates that are going to be the best fit for your job. Not just, "Oh my gosh, I really like her," or, "He's so fun." Those really aren't good indicators that somebody is going to be a great employee for you or great team member for your business.

So definitely starting at the ground work, the building blocks of starting a team. I'm also going to offer services such as team building, leadership coaching and development so that you can become the boss, the leader that you really want to be and that you know deep down in your soul that you can be. So I'm really looking to work with very heart centered individuals who have a lot of interest in leading a team and not just managing a team.

Because there's really two very defining roles there, we do have to manage our teams and our day to day processes and the things that we need to do to be successful in our businesses but we really have to have some very finite leadership skills to get people to come along with us, to follow us and to treat our businesses as their very own. A lot of opportunities to have some resources available for entrepreneurs to kind of DIY a few things on their own and then also offering that really intimate one on one coaching and consulting where I can get to know you, your business and your specific needs.

[00:04:36.1] RP: Awesome, so what questions do you have that we can help you with?

[00:04:41.2] AC: Absolutely, I would really love to talk about how can I market my business without coming across as super salesy or kind of that sleaze ball car salesman type of person that we envision in our minds? Because I really, truly want to help people and it comes from a deep seeded passion in my soul to be able to really give back in that type of way. So I want that to come across really genuine and really true to who I am as a human being and as an entrepreneur myself.

[00:05:15.9] RP: Yeah, Christina you go first.

[00:05:18.0] CS: Okay, yeah. I think this one is actually a really easy question. The answer is that you always constantly add value for people and you do that by giving them something that solves a problem that they have. For example in my business, obviously if you need a trademark, you're not going to teach yourself all about trademark law. You're just going to hire me and I'm going to do it for you. I'm going to do a way better timeframe and it's going to be much better done than if you went out and try to learn all of that on your own.

Similarly, it sounds like in your business the way that you could add value to people is not only by giving them their time back but also providing this valuable background. These years and years of experience that you have and coordinating teams and working with HR departments and big companies and applying all of that information and all the skills that you've learned and infusing it into all these different solopreneur associations or small businesses and basically helping them, it sounds like, build their own little mini HR department which I don't have any experience doing at all.

I have heard a lot of people struggle and myself included in finding independent contractors so I think that's a huge pain point in finding good independent contractors to hire into your business. Like who is actually what they say they are? And then huge, huge, huge pain point is how do you onboard that person? Because once you hire someone, now you actually have to teach them. Now the real work begins and it's a lot of time and effort.

So adding that value into the organizations and taking care of that work for them, that's a huge weight that you're going to be lifting. So I think if you constantly drive home the message that that is the value that you add and show people how you add that value through blog posts, through guest posts, through maybe some content upgrades or something like that, you're not going to have any problem at all in selling.

[00:07:05.9] RP: Yeah, I totally agree and I think Ashley, just in the way that you ask that question is so apparent to me that you are heart centered because you're not saying, "I don't want to go out and go gang busters and just sell all my services and be sold out." You're really concentrating on, "I really want to help people. I want to make sure that their businesses are set up in a way that they feel confident growing."

That's what you're saying, and so as long as you keep listening to that gut and keep being heart centered in a way that's serving people first, I don't think you're going to have that problem. But to answer your more poignant question about marketing, I think Christina hit it on the head, right? That you want to make sure to give them value to keep adding without adding useless information.

Adding value that they're going to be able to take back home and use in their business immediately. Kind of like when you get an Amazon package that's perfectly wrapped rather than all these random shenanigans that's in the box. You want it to be exactly what you need. This is on top of my mind right now because I just bought a Kindle and it had exactly what I needed in it. But just to think about what is it that your ideal client needs immediately, and how can they use your services or product whatever you end up coming up with?

And I can see your business being product and service based just like many consulting kind of thing and you're going to be able to do more hand-holding, one on one services at the beginning when you don't have a huge client list so to speak. But once you do have a fuller client load, you're going to want to create more products, more services and be able to have more "passive income" and be able to disseminate that information more widely with less of your time being needed. So yeah, and I think the unique thing about what you're doing is that you have done HR in a huge corporation but you're a creative.

So you know what it means to run this kind of business and you know the pain that people in these Facebook groups are facing and you can do market research with these groups and say, "I get the creative struggle. I get that you are a small business owner and you don't have huge resources that HR departments with corporations have but I have that knowledge and I have that training and I can bring those to you," and that's such a unique value proposition that you're offering to the world and I think even if somebody was offering photography services, it's the same thing that you have to be able to understand what it is that you specifically bring that's really special to their audience.

[00:09:45.6] AC: Excellent.

[00:09:45.6] CS: Yeah and Reina, what do you think are some good ways that she can actually deliver this information? Because one thing that comes to mind that we mentioned a little bit off air is that taking what your audience is saying to you and using that language to tell them about your services. So can you talk a little bit more about how she maybe can integrate some of that into her services or sell them?

[00:10:08.8] RP: Totally, yeah. Great question, so anytime you do market research, all these calls that you're doing right now Ashley, the things that people are saying over and over and over to those are the pain points that you need to write down and every single time create results for. Whether that's in a blog post or in a newsletter or social media post, I think you are so great in teaching and you're really a natural at teaching.

So being in front of the camera, doing video, periscope, webinars, that's going to be a really great form of communication for you and once you have credibility, people are going to want to bring you on stage and that is something that I've always seen for you, talking on national stages because people need this information.

And so I would say start small and once you have a couple of those testimonials, a couple of those pain points really understood by you, you can start to speak on those and say, "Okay here's a blog post that I created around this thing that I am seeing that everyone is asking me about." Or, "This is a thing that everyone is struggling with so I can really address that in this particular way." Does that help?

[00:11:13.1] AC: Yes, yes. Those are so many great ideas and you can get so overwhelmed with so many ideas that are out there but it sounds like what both of you are saying are really "think about the ideas that makes sense for you and your business where you are in your business" and so at the beginning, being very honed in on those first few ideal clients and then being able to grow those services and those products from there as you understand a deeper need from your client.

[00:11:41.6] CS: Yeah, figuring out what makes you money first obviously as you establish your business and then building yourself out and up as some kind of thought leader, whatever you want to call it as you help people along the way, right? That's the whole goal and it sounds like you're pretty much in lined with that.

What are some of the ways that you planned to get yourself out there and to talk about or promote your service and the ways that you help people right now?

[00:12:06.3] AC: Sure absolutely, well definitely being visible in Facebook groups where I know my ideal clients are.

[00:12:14.7] CS: Yeah, what do you mean by that exactly? Are you planning on posting or just waiting for people to have these problems and talking to them?

[00:12:23.4] AC: Really a combination of multiple things. So definitely posting tidbits or helpful information or, “Hey, had this happen the other day, thought you guys could benefit from this.” So sharing little insights and bits of information here and there, answering questions and posts. There are lots of questions that I see out there that are either like a specific HR related question like, “Hey, I’m getting ready to hire a part time person, what do I do?”

Then there’s some better little more kind of hooded or hidden and it’s still an HR aspect but some people don’t necessarily see it that way. So being able to bring in that experience and that expertise in multiple fashions and really being able to build my credibility not just in interviewing and hiring and training but in multiple aspects and facets of the HR functionality as well. Definitely putting myself out there on social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram. I loved Reina’s suggestion about video platforms.

I have always been very comfortable in front of video, very comfortable in front of crowds and I’ve done tons and tons of training, thousands and thousands of people and so it’s just a really natural place for me to be. I do enjoy writing so that is another great way to engage audience members who maybe don’t enjoy watching videos because I know not everybody likes this form or that form of communication. There’s all different types of learners out there and I think it’s going to be really critical to engage each of those different types of learners with different content pieces.

[00:13:59.1] RP: Yeah, I think that is absolutely spot on and one thing that I’ve noticed you said is you would comment back on things on Facebook groups and one thing I need you to understand is that people are not going to know that you are the solution, right? And you’re going to have to show them that you are the solution to whatever their problem is and so a lot of people don’t know that business coaches even exist or that we’re the solution.

I think with attorneys, they probably do know that if they need copy write, they will probably come to an attorney but with a little bit more of an obscure kind of profession like HR consulting or business coaching or whatever, they just don't understand that that's the thing that they should be looking for and rather they're just going to ask kind of a blanket question that they think that other people might have experienced before.

So yeah, answering those questions is going to be really critical and then my suggestion would be jump on the phone with them, not to sell them on anything but just to give them value and if you are comfortable doing that and you're an extrovert, so I assume you can do this, just get on the phone with them partially for market research but partially to add massive value to them and those people are going to be the people that tag you on Facebook as experts. You know, "Experts at X, Y and Z" and they'll be the people who are going to recommend you to their friends when they have issues.

[BREAK]

[00:15:16.3] ANNOUNCER: 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 packed content.

Back to the convo ladies.

[BACK TO INTERVIEW]

[00:15:31.9] CS: Yeah, I would tag along with that Reina and you do a great job of this Reina, on website, which is the education portion of it because you're right. There are some things that they just inherently need more explanation. If you say you're a wedding photographer, people know exactly what that is. You go to a wedding and you take photographs. If you say you're a business coach, well, there's a lot of different kinds of businesses.

There's Fortune 500 businesses, there's solopreneurs, there's women based businesses, there's tech startups, whatever. I mean that's a very ambiguous term and so you do a great job of this not just through your branding but also on your about page. You walk people through

exactly how to choose a coach. You hold their hand and show them, “If you are in these situations, it’s time for you to hire me.”

So I think Ashley, Reina would be a great example and maybe some other people that are in service based professions where it’s not as obvious as to what they do exactly, that just to start to emulate their pages as you develop your website and things like that. Do you have any idea of the kind of pages that you want to have on your website right now?

[00:16:38.3] AC: Well, I definitely want to be able to help people understand exactly what it is that I do and who I help and how I help them. So having a page that clearly outlines, in very easy to understand and simple terms. Not a bunch of corporate jargon, not a bunch of acronyms and I could give you a probably 500 page dictionary of HR acronyms. So making sure that clients understand or people that land on my page understand what even does HR means?

What is Human Resource? What all that does encompass? And then narrowing that down to say, “But I don’t even function in every single one of these very complex areas because there’s everything from benefits to unemployment to worker’s compensation and those aren’t necessarily areas that I’m going to be diving into in the beginning. So helping them understand how very specialized and very niched down what I’m doing is.

Then how that can help them in their creative business to grow a team that really cares about their business and that they can feel is trust worthy and capable of doing the things that they need for them to do. Definitely having a services page and how can you work with me and who do I work with best and what does that process look like? I really want them to feel comfortable if they’re hiring me to work with them one on one.

What does that look like? What does that feel like? What am I going to gain from this interaction and just like Reina was saying earlier and even you Christina, what are those pain points? How do I help them overcome those pain points and helping them understand the whole process, the linear process there?

[00:18:14.2] CS: Exactly. Okay, so if you had one sentence to tell you guys like one sentence, it's not a run on sentence or anything, how would you describe what you do or what your point to them?

[00:18:24.1] AC: "I am an HR consultant for creative entrepreneurs who are looking to grow thriving teams."

[00:18:31.0] CS: Beautiful.

[00:18:31.3] RP: I think that's succinct and I have a question. Do you have any more questions for us in terms of mentoring? I have a question about something else.

[00:18:39.9] CS: I actually — yeah, I'll let Reina ask her question but I would just like to interject and say keep honing down that sentence because you need to make it as plain English as possible and so what is an HR consultant? Like break that down. What even is a thriving business what does that mean to you and just keep that in mind. Always go to that extra layer, deeper, deeper, deeper why do they need this? Why is this here?

[00:19:05.6] RP: And what is the result you create?

[00:19:07.5] CS: Yeah, so sorry. Go ahead Reina.

[00:19:09.6] RP: Yeah, my question is related to I'm thinking of our audience as they listen to this and Ashley you're in a unique position because you have this very, very unique skill and some people will be like, "I don't really have that side, I don't know how this is applicable to my business." But I really want to take them through the transition of you going from HR person to a photographer back to HR and how the process. How that's been on you, your family, your emotional health, all of that stuff and I'm sure it's been a transition and so could you walk us through a little bit of that?

[00:19:44.3] AC: Absolutely. It has been a wild ride that is for sure. After spending the last 10 years in corporate America, very buttoned up and very professional environments. I worked for a Fortune 25 company for about 11 years so that was pre my corporate professional jobs so

working with them in a clerk role and then another couple of years with additional company. I always had this idea in my mind that I wanted to be an entrepreneur.

I didn't know what, I didn't know how, I didn't know when, I did not know what I was going to need to do or how I was going to do it to get out there but I always knew I wanted to be able to be in charge of what I do every day and who I help and how I help them and have those flexibilities that we entrepreneurs love, the freedoms that we love and so when my husband got relocated to a new state, I thought, "Oh this is the perfect time. I'll just start a business," right?

And it was a very thought out process. I had been thinking about it really solidly for three years. What did I want that business to be, what did I want it to look like? And for some reason, I just kept coming back to photography as my passion. I loved to do it, it's so much fun. That will be such a great job if I could make that something that I could make a sustainable income.

I decided okay, I'm going to start this photography business and it was really thought out and I had great plans and put together a business plan and I had talked to an attorney and I'd had a CPA and I felt like I did all the right things and you know, it wasn't quite as fulfilling as I thought it was going to be. I really missed HR and so for the last several months, it's been something that's just kind of been swirling around my head. It was swirling around my heart, swirling around in my soul.

I'd spent the biggest part of my career educating myself in HR, practicing in HR, training HR, helping other people learn why it's important and how it can help them and how it can help them be better leaders and be better managers and just enjoy their job overall and help their teams enjoy their jobs. Just having the opportunity to really transform the way someone sees their team, to be able to help them work through situations that they feel overwhelmed by or consumed by just making someone else's life a little bit easier is such a fulfilling part of being in human resources field.

And so craving that. I was talking to Reina and came about, "Well, have you ever thought about consulting?" And I was like, "Well, yeah," and I hummed and hawed. Absolutely hummed and hawed around it. Because I think sometimes when we really, really want something bad, it's the scariest thing of all and so kind of pushing through those fears and figuring out what do I really

want to do? How can I really make an impact? What's going to feed my soul so that I can feed other people's souls? Is where I came full circle and so here I am, back in the HR world and more excited about this than I have been about a lot of things in a really, really long time.

[00:22:57.6] RP: That's awesome. Yeah but it must have been really scary to go from feeling like you weren't fulfilled but you spent a lot of time and energy doing this photography thing and now you're like, "Okay am I going to actually do this?" Girl, scared right out of my yoga pants. But I have done it, Christina's done it. When we have this "failed businesses" where we were going gung-ho and then it just didn't do as well as we thought it was going to go, and I think that's really common in the creative entrepreneur industry. So I appreciate you walking us through because you're in the thick of it right now.

[00:23:17.7] AC: Yeah but you can't really see it as a failure. I really fully believe that it's an experiment. Life is an experiment. We have one life and we've got to make it what we make it and so if I was hiding in the corner for a couple of months, ignoring the fact that this is my passion, this is my calling, this is how I help people, well that's okay. But you've got to come out of the corner. You've got to come out of the corner and you've got to walk in that truth of what you can give to other people.

[00:24:04.4] RP: Look at you.

[00:24:06.4] AC: I know, "preach!"

[00:24:09.1] RP: Ashley is giving us the preaches right now.

[00:24:11.5] CS: So where do people going to be able to find these resources?

[00:24:15.4] AC: Well, I am in the process of getting my business established and so I'll have a website and definitely social media. So you can follow along when I get those set up and I'm sure we'll be able to link that through your site.

[00:24:30.4] CS: Sure.

[00:24:31.1] **RP:** Yep.

[00:24:32.5] **CS:** Definitely.

[00:24:32.9] **RP:** Fantastic, we'll hold you to it.

[00:24:33.8] **CS:** Yeah, you guys can go to Creativeempire.co/episode14 and that's going to be Ashley's episode. Thank you guys so much for joining. We're really, really excited to see where Ashley takes this and we are backing her 100% of the way. We're just so thrilled to be able to offer just a small bit of support for you Ashley and really hope that you're able to help and support that many more women, all of the other women in our community who could so benefit from this resource. So thank you so much for being here today.

[00:25:10.4] **AC:** Thanks you so much Christina and Reina. This has been a really great opportunity. I really appreciate it, all the feedback and the support as always.

[00:25:18.3] **RP:** Absolutely and go build your creative empire today.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:25:24] **ANNOUNCER:** Are you ready to build your own empire? For more information, show notes, downloads and tips on how to do it, head to www.creativeempire.co where you can find out more about this week's episode and the two lovely ladies behind it all, encouraging you to build your own creative empire.

If you enjoyed this week's show, it would mean so much to Reina and Christina if you could take two minutes to go to iTunes and leave a review. It's a little thing that makes a big difference for the show.

[END]