

EPISODE 47

[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]

[00:00:36.2] RP: Hey everybody, welcome back for another episode of the Creative Empire Podcast. I am so excited to introduce you to our guest today. Obviously, I am here with Christina.

[00:00:44.5] CS: Hey guys.

[00:00:45.3] RP: And our guest today is Amber of amberhousely.com. Hi, Amber.

[00:00:50.4] AH: Hello, I'm so excited to be here.

[00:00:52.7] RP: Yay. Amber is the creative business and sweet life cultivator and she has so many wonderful things that are happening in her corner of the world. So she is super multi-passionate serial entrepreneur and she founded her business in 2007 but she now has the Joyful Garden Planner and she's also the founder of the Inspired Retreat. I'm sure you've heard of that.

She has a brand new course and it's launching in the fall and she's also really passionate about helping mom entrepreneurs who run creative businesses really efficiently without the expense of sacrificing family time. And in addition to all of her personal business activities, she's also the marketing director at Southern Wedding Magazine and Lara Casey Media.

So you know you've seen her work and she's super enthusiastic about sharing the message of meaningful marriages and intentional living and we're super excited to talk to Amber today about what it's like to have a full-time job and to be running multiple creative businesses. So welcome Amber and we're super excited to talk to you today.

[00:01:52.5] AH: Thank you.

[00:01:53.3] RP: So tell us a little bit about all the various pieces you have in your business, in your jobs and how they worked together?

[00:02:01.7] AH: Yeah, well I think one thing that will be helpful is maybe to start at the beginning. I think that's easy to talk to about where it all unfolded and I've always been an entrepreneur. It's something that is in I guess my family. At a young age my mom would do craft shows and all of the family would pitch in and help create all of the things that would be sold at this craft fairs.

Growing up and going into college, I actually had an invitation business with a sorority sister, where we would sell handmade cards to our sisters for sisterhood events and what not and just going from there, I always was wanting to learn. I'm a lifelong learner and just wanted to keep growing businesses. That was something I was passionate about and have a lot of interest, a lot of different passions. So over the years that's how the business has evolved to where I've been today.

So the most formal representation of my businesses started in 2007 and I started doing invitation designs that came out of my own wedding and then I went on to be a wedding planner and then as my lifestyle changed, as I grew a family, as I was married, I had to make certain decisions along the way on what was going to be best and fit in with all of those pictures, not to mention having the full-time career throughout the thing.

So now to the present day, I do wear a lot of hats and I still do have a lot of interest but I think there are a lot more meaningful and a lot more heart centered and help my family and help me personally than they did in the very beginning in 2007 when I was chasing a lot more things

related to success and dreams and it's just a whole different ballgame. I had a different mindset in 2007 that I have versus today.

[00:03:36.7] RP: I love that and so can you tell us about what it looks like now?

[00:03:40.4] AH: Yes, so now I run Inspired Retreat. So that is a four-day experience for women entrepreneurs and we do a lot of business context. I just love business, I love marketing and we also do some creative sessions at those retreats and they're very intimate. They're only about 35, 40 people that are there on site. It has a really great mentor-speaker to attendee ratio that I love. It's just something that I've been passionate about. I have done that actually for three years now and over about 250 women have actually attended an Inspired Retreat.

[00:04:10.9] RP: It's awesome. It's such a great unity of women that come together and it's just soul filling.

[00:04:16.5] AH: It was great to have you in this Spring. So it's great. It is, it's a camp almost for women. It is cute, so you get all the fun camp activities but then you're learning the whole time and creating lots of new friendships and relationships so yeah.

[00:04:30.8] RP: Yeah. So you have Inspired Retreat and you have all the other projects that are also going on.

[00:04:35.2] AH: Yes, yes. So I came out with — the Joyful Garden Planner came out this past spring and this was more of a passion project. I learned to garden when we first move to the south 10 years ago and I have also been a memory keeper too so I wanted to have a place to record all of our gardening adventures and memories with the kids and whatnot.

So I created that and I hadn't done product design in a couple of years since I missed that element and I always have said that I never want to be separated from the people that I'm serving. I always want to know exactly how they feel, how the marketplace is changing, how to roll with that because I never want to be, I don't know, just not up to mind like everybody else.

So I started to sense that after I've built Inspired Retreat and was doing different things. I thought, "You know I want to go back and have a product." I want to market it, I want to concept it and basically go through all the same motions that every other business person is experiencing right now. So that's been a really fun and enjoyable.

So Blooming Business Kits is launching this fall and it is a course to help women who are starting out in their creative business, who don't know how to do all of the marketing functions or they feel like they have to do it all but they really don't know why and so I will be breaking down a lot of the different pieces, everything from Google Analytics to Facebook ads to Pinterest.

Lots of different strategies and tactics but at the same time, I have a big passion for intentional living and finding a time for yourself to cultivate all of these other things in your life and in your family. So there's a little bit of lifestyle content that's going to be listed with the course that I'm kind of known for so.

[00:06:05.2] RP: Yeah. It's such a good mix of the two sides of your life I think. You have the marketing background and you're really passionate about that but also like the intentional living and just being present and all of that. So that speaks, I think it is going to be such a good combination for people.

[00:06:20.8] CS: Yeah.

[00:06:21.2] AH: And it needs to be fun. Doing a business course needs to be fun in some ways so I don't know.

[00:06:26.2] RP: It's going to be really pretty, I'm guessing.

[00:06:28.4] AH: Yes, there will be lots of pretty accents and details along the way too.

[00:06:32.1] RP: Love that, and so we are super happy to talk about all of these things because I think a lot of our listeners are very multi-passionate people as well. Christina is one of those people. She's a hand letter, she's a horse person, she loves taking photography and she's also a painter and always has been this multi-passionate person, and a lot of our audience members

are the same way. What kind of encouragement would you give to somebody who feels like they're lost in their path they should pursue?

[00:07:02.9] AH: I would actually encourage you to just be patient and give yourself grace as you are deciding which course to go on because, in this almost 10 year now creative entrepreneurship journey, it has ebbed in flowed. The amount of projects or hats or anything that I had at any given time would change because life changes.

And so there were times where I said, "You know I can't do it all." I can't be a wedding planner, I can't be an invitation designer, I can't have Inspired and be a mom and a wife, I can't do all of those things and so there was a year there where I cut everything. The only thing that was left was inspired and it was hard. It's not easy but I think just giving yourself grace.

Just knowing that your time is not going to run out, there's going to be another time for you ahead where you maybe be able to add more things to your plate or maybe what you were very passionate about a year ago or two years ago, it could be something totally different and just giving yourself grace and permission and all of that.

[00:07:57.3] CS: Yeah because on top of all this, I was first introduced to you at Making Things Happen where you were a speaker. So you're doing a lot of speaking and when I went to the conference, you had just transitioned out of a full-time job even. So a lot of our listeners are still working full-time, they're still doing the nine to five and then doing their creative hustle on the side. What are some things that you did to help, not just ease the transition, but to help make the transition won that you knew that it was going to be successful? Because I know you set this up well ahead of time prior to leaving your full-time job, just from hearing your story.

[00:08:30.1] AH: Well, I still do work full-time. So for Southern Weddings and Lara Casey, I still work full-time. It's just different. I guess it's a different atmosphere so to speak so I worked for almost 10 years at a digital marketing agency that was very corporate minded. That was very sat in a cubicle and I worked with a lot of big named advertisers and whatnot.

It was your typical nine to five job wearing heels and suits and everything like that and during that time, that's when I founded a lot of my businesses, founded at Inspired, founded my

wedding planner and invitations. And for me, I found myself always seeking out the best use of my time. Always making sure that if I ever had a few minutes available, it was spent on that business.

So I was taking client meetings during lunches when I'd leave the office on certain days of the week my husband knew that. So it was like Mondays and Wednesdays, those were my client meeting evenings and that was something I learned early on is making this whole business and thing work for me and for my lifestyle. If you can afford to have that luxury with your clients and at the time I did.

Because having a full-time job and having a business, you don't have the worries of paycheck to paycheck or "where is my income in?" You can be saving it for bigger expenses which is what I did and so I can be very selective and choosy with my clients and I could tell them, "Hey, I only meet on Mondays and Wednesdays evenings between this time. Which day would you like?"

It wasn't, "When are you available and I'll kill myself to make it work for you?" And that is something that I even practice to this day. As I moved, after I left the agency after nine years there, I spent a year and a half at another business that was still a full-time business and managed a team of eight people and it was a company that was growing exponentially and it was huge. It was during that season that I had to cut back on everything I had to cut and it closed a lot of doors on different chapters of my businesses.

But it was the best journey ever that year and a half to then see where I am at now in this new full-time position with Lara Casey and Southern Weddings in making my lifestyle in a whole different way I guess. You know having a different perspective on everything and all the puzzle pieces are fitting much better at the place that I am right now too.

[00:10:37.8] RP: Yeah on top of all those responsibilities, you're also a wife and a mama to two and I mean this is such an obvious question but how do you make it happen? How do you make all those things fit into your week?

[00:10:51.4] AH: I know, it's hard. Because I am working full-time, my husband works full-time so our kids do, they're outside the home so we don't have nannies. Both of them have attended

full-time daycares or school their whole lives and I have been okay with that. It's just a choice that we made for our family and it's been a good one when they are home, I cannot get anything done. So all of the women who do have their kids, more power to you. I don't know how you do it because I would get way too distracted.

[00:11:15.6] RP: I know.

[00:11:16.1] AH: So the mom thing and the wife thing it's hard and I am learning as we go. I mean we're in a whole new season now where our oldest is in school but our youngest she's in toddlerhood and potty training and then we got a puppy on top of this like you're completely crazy. I don't know what we were thinking. So yeah, most days it feels like a circus around here for sure.

I think it's just knowing that all of these are just different seasons and that defined the little moments that are good and just try to breathe through all the ones that are hard because right now I do. I feel like this time period is really hard right now but I know it's going to get better so I have an optimistic attitude.

[00:11:54.4] CS: Yeah, I mean I am not happy that it's hard for you but in a way it's a relief because you have such a beautiful presence in person and online and you carry yourself so well in person or online and I remember when before I was introduced to you, I was like all these people like yourself and Lara and all these role models that I saw, I was like, "How do they do it?"

And Lara has gotten much better about this but, "Everything is so perfect all the time and my house doesn't look like that and I don't dress like that," and so it was really hard coming into the creative world and seeing all of this perfection. I think people are getting better at it and you're definitely the same way where you peel back that curtain and you show people it's not necessarily like this all the time.

"Yes, this is a really hard season of my life and yes, I value the way that I've put things together but it's taken a long time to get here. This didn't happen overnight whereas for someone like me

that just came off the Street and I found the right one and had decided and I found making things happen and about you, to me it looks like it did just happen overnight.”

So I'm not where we have taken here, it's at all but I am a little bit relieved to hear that this is something that is a real struggle not just for you but for all of us and it's maybe not a visible one for everyone but it's happening because it's like how do you run all of these different businesses and do it so well. On the outside, it just looks seamless but I'm sure on the inside...

[00:13:18.7] AH: Yeah, it's so hard and over the years, I've had help in different capacities. I've had virtual assistants and independent contractors. I've had salaried employees that did that work out of my home office and because I am a learner, I want to test everything so you should know that too. So I was like, “Let's see what's the magic formula?”

And now, I felt like again this season and this last year or so, it was, “Okay, let's get back to basics here. Let me be a one woman show again. Let me know how to do everything before I start to build again and start to add” so yeah. The other thing I was going to point out to you is when you talked about what you see online and everything.

I was actually thinking about this the other day because again it's hard, potty training or home life as anything. I was just thinking about how I would love sometimes to be more honest and to share more and I think I do it fairly okay. A lot of people tell me I'm a very honest person and like you said, pull back the curtain and tell you what's going on right now.

But at the same time, I'm like, “No” because I want to be encouraged and I want to be inspired and I don't want to bring you down with me because I want to be in this funk. I don't want to be in this hard situation now. That's why I'm not brutally honest all the time about the bad day that I'm really having. I'd rather tell you about something I am excited about than the crummy stuff.

[00:14:37.7] RP: I think that's really interesting. It's like a delicate balance of being vulnerable and being open to normalize how we're feeling versus just being able to be a support and encouragement to other people and that's been your brand. And so you're finding that delicate balance and I think that just by saying all of these things, you are bringing, I don't know, normalizing this conversation more. Thank you.

[00:15:01.0] AH: You're welcome.

[00:15:03.1] RP: So what tricks or maybe if somebody is in a job that they're maybe not miserable in but they're not loving and their heart is really in their side hustle, how can you encourage them to, I don't know, use more of their time efficiently like you were suggesting or what other tips would you have for them to make this time more meaningful in this season?

[00:15:24.1] AH: Yeah absolutely. I love this question because this was something that I wrestled with at Making Things Happen in the beginning. I think I have attended eight now over the last however many years, like four years or something so it's been a lot of life changes through that time and I remember one of the earlier ones I spoke at. I was still at the corporate position I had been out for nine years and it took an attitude shift to stop being miserable to make the choice that I am not going to be unhappy anymore in this position and instead feel grateful that I've given this opportunity.

And it was hard because it was a time when the recession was starting then. A lot of people were getting laid off and every time they would do layoffs in our department, I would never get picked and I remember sitting at that desk thinking, "Why won't they pick me? Please like is this a sign, why won't they lay me off?" Because if you get laid off then that's my big break. That's when I could finally do it and be like, "this is the thing" and obviously, now I'm glad that I was not laid off.

And I stayed there and I instead learned how to make the most of where I was at and see all the benefits that I had in that position. So during those years that I was there, I was able to write my saving. Everything that I was making, I was able to invest in great branding then. When you're first starting out, you can't afford the big name guys. Instead, I went straight to the top and was like, "No, I had this great sum of money. I believe in what I am going to do and I'm going to invest it in the best way possible."

So I did branding which actually was when Lara Casey and Emily Ley had a company called Making Brands Happen. This was years ago, and I did branding with them and consulting and we launched my whole brand for all of those things. I was able at that time too to invest in a lot

of conferences and workshops. And now to this day, I have attended almost like between three and four dozen different conferences and workshops in the last seven years.

So all of those things I think is I would encourage someone. Just think of all the possibilities you have with where you're at and what kind of tools and things that you're learning right now in that position like how can you use that to benefit what you're doing on the side? And because I was working in marketing and I was working a lot of strategy and digital e-mail marketing and things like that, I was able to apply everything that I was learning to my business and that is actually how Inspired came to be.

It's doing all these things for these big clients and I thought, "Wow", a lot more of my friends who have this one will be doing these things and it's making a really big difference in their businesses.

[BREAK]

[00:17:48.1] CS: How do you build an audience overnight? Well, it's actually pretty simple, you get in front of ours. We have literary thousands of people that listen to our show on a weekly basis and we could not be more excited to offer some of you a very limited offer of a spot, a sponsorship on our podcast where we'll be singing out your amazingness to our fans and to our listeners who are super excited to hear what you have to say and what your gifts in this world are.

So if you think you have a unique product or a unique service and you're struggling to build and audience, let us do it for you. Head on over to creativeempire.co/apply and we will check what it is that you are selling and if it is a good fit, we will be guaranteed to put it in front of our audience.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[00:18:34.6] CS: Yeah, what are some of those things if you wouldn't mind elaborating just maybe one or two that stand out to you?

[00:18:41.1] AH: Absolutely, so I would say for e-mail marketing when you're just starting out, you're told I need to have an e-mail list or at least that's what people are being told now but they maybe don't understand all the reasons why. Or, if I was telling someone that is just starting out as I've told a lot of my friends is that you want an e-mail list because you want to establish a personal relationship with your customers and have a personal invitation into their inbox.

It sounds really great to go and have all your Instagram profiles and your Facebook and build up all of those numbers but at the end of the day, those relationships in social media form aren't going to be as strong as the ones that are coming into your inbox or that are actually going to be very trackable. I am a big analytics person. I want to know the return on investment on anything and so e-mail you can do that, you can track everything.

Socially you can, that's a lot harder. You have to do all these extra steps, trackable links and whatever, whatnot but e-mail you can just see the big picture so that's a big key and then the other thing you can say is I would help them or I would spend a lot of time learning numbers because as creatives we don't want to deal with numbers. We think we're not mathematicians or we think it's too hard. We could hire people to do that but when you're starting out, you can't afford anyone to hire.

You need to learn these things yourself and then maybe when you get big enough one day, you can then hire it out but at the end of the day, you need to know these numbers and knowing Google analytics and knowing how that works and the analytics of anything. If if you go on Facebook, you go on Facebook, you can get great insights on your audience. All of these things like if you do the research or even if you do my course, you can find out a lot of those things of what you need to know of just the basics because that paints the whole picture of your business.

[00:20:24.9] RP: That's awesome. I was just about to ask you what other resources do you suggest so there you go, go into course.

[00:20:31.7] CS: And that will be on amberhousley.com?

[00:20:34.5] AH: Yes.

[00:20:35.4] CS: Perfect.

[00:20:35.5] RP: Fabulous. I wanted to ask you a quick question about conferences because I know you've talked a lot about how much conferences has really shaped you and you've attended a lot of them and now you host one and so I'm curious to hear from you, how do people or how should people make conferences a priority and what can they expect to see as a result of them?

[00:20:56.1] AH: Yeah absolutely. So can you repeat that question one more time Reina?

[00:20:59.1] RP: Yeah, so I'm just curious to know like if they're in a full-time job and they're really busy and they're doing a side hustle, how can they make it a priority financially and time wise to attend a conference? That was my first question, and then the second one was about what kind of personal development or business development happens as a result of attending conferences?

[00:21:17.7] AH: Yeah, so the first question about what conferences, how to make that a priority, how to make that financial commitment. For me, early on, I'm the grease searcher. So naturally, I would go out and find all of the brands that I look up to. They weren't necessarily in my own niche like I was a wedding planner at the time and they might have been photographers. Actually, I went to a lot of photography conferences in the beginning.

I would be the only stationery designer there or the only wedding planner that was there but I just wanted to see what they were doing in their industry and how could I apply it to mine. So I would find all the ones that I really looked up to and see what they attended and a lot of the times they were really expensive like workshops and conferences can be a huge investment and thousands of dollars. However when I made it a sales goal.

When I knew this was the dollar amount I needed for the ticket, for my travel, for everything and oh, I only needed to book three invitation clients to cover those cost that became almost like a game to me. That was a little carrot that you wanted to chase after. I almost should have put up

a thermometer in my office to go and color in to reach the goal but that's how it was for me and it was a great sales incentive for me as I chose those different things.

Regarding on the return of investment I get, the opportunities that I've had as a result of attending conferences have almost come out of the relationships that I've formed there. It was always the people that I met and more than likely I was going to conferences. I didn't know anybody at. I would go within Facebook groups. I was about to say I didn't even know if they had Facebook groups back then it's been a while but go on Facebook groups.

Find your roommates and say, "Hey, anybody want to be my roommate?" and it would naturally happen. These wonderful people end up being my roommates with and relationships were formed and introductions to their friends or network and that's where the value has come in for me just in terms of either working maybe with those people, maybe they would hire me for services or maybe I needed their services or just the whole across the board.

[00:23:18.1] RP: Yeah, and maybe collaborations or just other types of ongoing friendships.

[00:23:22.3] AH: Yes.

[00:23:23.2] CS: I love that you said that you went to photography conferences and workshops because I'm a huge proponent of putting yourself in a space that is unfamiliar like that not only because I feel like it gives you a competitive advantage in your own field because people like photographers, they have to be way ahead of the curve as far as marketing and digital products and things like that go.

So I am so happy to hear that you did that because a lot of times, when I've worked with people that are putting on conferences or workshops and things like that, they say, "Oh one of the biggest FAQ's that I get is can I come to this? I'm not a _____? You know, I'm not a wedding planner and I know this is for wedding planners. I'm not a photographer and I know this is for photographers.

And it's like, "Yes. Yes, go if this is something that could be beneficial for your business." Or you feel like there's skills, marketing skills, advertising skills that you could benefit from that are

going to be there go. That's why I love Inspired as well because it's not necessarily for anyone creative field. So anybody does hopefully feel very welcome and maybe you've mitigated some of these people coming to you asking, "Is this for me? Is this for me?"

But in your experience, what is the value not only of going to conferences and workshops but what is the value of stepping outside of your community whatever that maybe? If you're a stationer or a photographer and maybe not following all those stationers or photographers on Instagram?

[00:24:46.1] AH: Absolutely. Well one, I was following other industry people that have that, maybe your competitors. It's probably just going to demoralize you in many things but unless you are content with where you're at in your journey which I feel like I am fairly content. So most of the time when I'm actually opening Instagram, I just want to be an empty space and I just want to look at that. That's usually how I use Instagram not really for comparison.

So I feel like I have a good relationship with Instagram but as it relates to just stepping outside of your industry and going to other communities, I found that when I was a wedding planner and I was following other wedding planners, you feel like you're almost a fake form, like you almost don't have any confidence in your own work because you're always concerned that you're doing the same thing that they are or vice versa.

That they're going to have some kind of a pity in about whatever you're launching is going to have the same problem and so when I would go outside my circles and go to photography workshops and find completely different ways of thinking, completely different ways of doing things and then bringing those into how I operate my business, how I market it then suddenly, I became a leader in what I was doing in my industry and I don't know.

There's so many eye-opening things that you can get when you just go outside of your own little bubble and we're actually are in these small little bubbles. We think that everyone in the world is doing X, Y and Z or everyone is launching a course or everyone is launching a podcast or whatever but really, no this is this tiny little bubble in a world of billions and trillions of people.

[00:26:15.3] RP: And that is such an important distinction that we are in this very unique niche and we feel like everyone is doing the same thing as us, we're piled on top of each other but actually, we can each have our own little impact and it doesn't have to be little and we can have our own little space to be able to really have a special type of message that comes across. So I love what you're saying.

[00:26:39.3] AH: Absolutely. I remember early seven years ago, I remember I attended workshops of Justin and Mary Mirands who they both speak to this day still and Jasmin Star, I went to her once years ago and it's really neat to follow the journey of their businesses that they've grown over the years and I still look to them as leaders in the industries that they're in and I'd like to see what new tactics that they were doing and I think if they're doing it, then maybe that's me. You know what I mean to be looking into?

[00:27:08.7] RP: Yeah and I think that you and Christina both do this. You step outside of your natural comfort zone and look to other people for inspiration, for guidance, for new strategies and I would never have thought to do that and one of the things that I talk to Shay Cochrane about when I saw her was she always talk about blinders on, blinders on like never looking outside of her work. Well, she doesn't look at other competitors.

She looks at anything else, she looks at everything else to get an inspiration and I think that's so important, that's what makes a thought leader, that's what makes people like Shay Cochrane leaders in the industries that they're in and I love what you're saying about it. I guess the questions is, how can you look beyond where you are if it's not attending conferences that aren't in your spheres? How can you tap into other types of inspiration beyond where you are?

[00:28:03.3] AH: I am just a big information nerd so I want to learn everything. I am usually going to go outside of the traditional space that all of my friends are in and I am going to find new people that are teaching new things, it is going to podcast that other people aren't listening to or I'm going to go take courses that other people aren't doing. Even though it is a conference as well, there is a conference that I have attended this past April in Atlanta that was called a Digital Summit.

It's a great conference and everyone there was in a suit. This was corporate, this really catered to the people who are representing Coca-Cola and actually Nicole Yang from Lara Casey's, she and I went together and we were probably the smallest business there and we didn't actually talk to — I don't want to say that we didn't talk to anyone like we're rude or anything but we were not fitting in this little bubble and it was just amazing.

The experience it was just from a learning perspective, just all the extra knowledge of what all the big guys are doing. I'm such a person that I love to go and look at what the national media is doing. I think that is the agency environment I came from and if the big people in New York and San Francisco are doing these things, how can I adapt the same ideas and techniques for my own business and that goes the same with social media campaigns.

For example, I am an affiliate for Stitch Fix. If you're familiar with that, it's a clothing subscription and I'm one of their influencers and quite honestly, I joined the influencer group because I wanted to see how they operated the influencer group. I mean I love Stitch Fix and so I am a proud affiliate but at the same time, I just want to know how it worked and that's just how my brain works. I will find any opportunity like, "Okay, yes. I'd love to participate," because I want to see how you can do this. So I can see if maybe there's a way that I can tailor it and tweak it to fit my business.

[00:29:46.2] CS: Yeah.

[00:29:46.6] RP: That's so funny, yeah. That's a really cool way of looking at other people's businesses. I'm wondering when you learn new information, how do you start to implement that into your strategies or I don't know if it's long term or maybe just changing a course, the course of your path?

[00:30:04.7] AH: I think right now because I'm a one woman show, for the most part, it is a short term strategy. It's on the fly but even in my role at Southern Weddings and Lara Casey or my previous role, marketing is something that is always evolving and you have to be ready to pivot on any given day at any given moment and so when I am learning these things, I'm almost immediately implementing them to see if they work or if they don't or whatnot.

So I think it ends up becoming a long term strategy over time but usually, the new things that I find I'm tackling them right away like, "Okay, let's try this to see if it works or if it doesn't so. "

[00:30:43.3] RP: Yeah, that's the beauty of having a small business right? That you get to choose what you like. Yeah, there's a lot of agility and if it doesn't work, you just try again and so I love what you're saying. I think a lot of people who talk about the five-year plan, I think it's good to know where-ish you're going, but it's really hard to know. You just never know how far you can go or how long you might take to get there.

[00:31:06.1] AH: Right and you know it's funny that you said that because recently, I came across it was actually from, it was a goal planner from Tanya Dalton at Ink Well Press. She spoke at the last Inspired Retreat and we actually did a little bit of goal planning at the end and in it, I was just looking at it the other day, I had written a to-do list. It was to create a two-year plan because I have never done that. I actually quite honestly have never done it.

I have done one year cash flow projections, I have done one year goals or just a list of things that I would like to accomplish and do my power sheets about the goals that I want for the year but I have never really set a two or a five year plan for my business and in thinking again about how life has been lately, how it's been hard and how power sheets as well have been a great tool for me in this season of seeing that even though this time is really hard. I'm still making meaningful progress on these goals.

And these goals aren't so much the type of goals that I've made when I first started this business. When I first started the business, they're good goals to have but they were like, "I want to be published in here. I want to make X amount of dollars. I want to quit my full-time job. I want this, this and this," and when I think back to that girl who does want everything she wanted, that just sounds so selfish.

They really do and if that's your goals, that's fine but when I think of where I'm at now and in creating the two or five-year plan, now I kept thinking about what are the goals of how I want to feel? What is the life that I want to live and I know Reina you and I have to have conversations about this too is what do I want my data to look like? What kind of satisfaction do I want to have for myself, for my family? To me, those are goals that I want to have for my business.

They're not always going to be a dollar amount or when I get this, then suddenly I will have made it in this business so.

[00:32:50.5] RP: Yeah and I was just about to ask you this question of what does success look like now versus what it looked like then and I think you're already answering it but maybe you can elaborate then on what it might have been like then to pretty successful?

[00:33:03.2] AH: Right. Well as I've said before, the goal back then, the end all be all in the beginning was quit the full-time job and I remember when I quit the corporate position after nine years there, I remember posting a picture on Instagram and it was of the building, the big skyscraper in which skyscrapers in Nashville is all relative because they're not that tall but I remember posting it and I was a very bittersweet moment because I still loved that position.

And the reason why I had kept the full-time job is that I love being on a team. I had a lot of energy and I have a lot of passion for what I do. So I can't limit that just to my business that's why we made that as a choice for me but I remember posting that picture and it was heartbreaking because when I posted it, I said, "I'm closing the chapter in this door. I will tell you about the story when I'm ready to," and all of the people in captions we're like, "Yeah, you do it! Way to go!"

Like, "You quit that full-time job, you've mad it!" All of these messages that sunk my heart. It's like, no actually I am taking another full-time job. This is my choice but I'm glad that you guys all think that's the measure of success like I've made it once you ditched the man, kicked him to the curb and so when I realized that my identity wasn't wrapped in that and realized about how I wanted to be on a team, how I still thrived in that kind of environment and there's still a lot of work I wanted to do.

With great products that are out in the world, the goals that I have now and what I aim for in my business are fulfilling myself creatively. So are the products and services and anything that I do, does it make me happy? Is it fulfilling? Does it not wear me out does it not completely exhaust me which at times can? And then the other thing is how does it benefit my family financially and so for so long since my business wasn't like the number one source of income for me.

For my side of the family, I would just bank it and constantly reinvest it the whole entire time and so now, I'm in a different period where I'm now able to use those financial means to benefit my family in different ways and when we go on these vacations that fulfill me completely, my heart is at the beach down in Florida in the seaside Florida area it's where we go and so when we go there, we stay in a really great house and sometimes it's the color pink because I get to pick it out.

And we rent umbrellas and we do all of these extra luxuries that on our normal family "this income we would not be doing but because of the hard work mom is doing in the business, we get to have all of these great nice cities and it's extremely fulfilling to be able to do that and we'll take my parents, we'll take his parents and it's all on me and that's a fantastic feeling to have when you do those things, when you decide this is what I'm going to bring to the table now and my job is benefiting us in these ways.

[00:35:51.5] RP: That's so beautiful.

[00:35:52.7] CS: It's as cute as Amber, I know. It's something that I'm just starting to get a grasp and a handle on and it does. It feels so good to be able to not just have a direction of where you're going because that always changes but just to know that you're supporting yourself and doing it well where you're not burning out or driving an hour to work each way or whatever your crazy commute was.

[00:36:15.9] AH: Yes, that was great. That was like 80 miles. It was a crazy period but it was a good period. It was a hard period but all of those experiences are learning experiences so.

[00:36:26.0] CS: Yeah and my favorite part of your story is where you've been so open in sharing that this is not an overnight thing. This is something that's taken over seven years to cultivate to this point plus all the years of experience and learning and growing as you grow up before that. So one thing that I hope the listeners take away is that this is not something that's going to come overnight to any of them but it is something that's definitely possible.

And as you guys touched on earlier, we are in such a little tiny area where we feel like everybody has a course or a workshop or this or the other thing and in reality, in real life outside of our sphere, these things are all new to people. We have a real ability to give people this gift, maybe not to other photographers but maybe it's like you're teaching your mom how to do something really cool. So with that in mind, what's one way that people could go out there and they could build their own little piece, their own little creative empire using some the strategies and the things that we've talked about here today? "

[00:37:27.2] AH: I would say, is just to know what your success definition is and what you're capable of because when you're building these empires, you want to do it all and you all want it right now and as I told you, it's been a seven-year journey and it's not over yet. There's still more I want to do that's on that list and so just recognizing this is what I'm capable of right now in this moment in this life space because whatever you give to your business, you have to still have some leftovers for all of the other people in your life.

Just to really recognize these things and say, the business I want to build is going to equal this. It's not going to be a dollar amount in the bank account or it's not going to be these other concrete things are nice like I'm a numbers girl so I like concrete numbers too but I mean just knowing where it's going to fit in your life and how that's going to affect your family. So just recognizing that.

[00:38:19.6] RP: That's such a great answer. I love the success measure as well. It's not just the dollar numbers. It's not just the tangible numbers but also how you want to feel in your day. I love that. How can people get a hold of you? How can they learn more about you?

[00:38:33.5] AH: Yeah, absolutely. So you can visit amberhousley.com is my online home base for everything and there you can learn more about Inspire the Retreat and Joyful Garden Planner and Bling Your Business Kits everything and then on social media, I'm Amber Housley as well across all platforms.

[00:38:50.4] RP: Wonderful, thank you so much for being on the show Amber and thank you for listening to another episode of the Creative Empire Podcast. We can't wait to see you next time. Go build your creative empire.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:39:00] 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.

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