

**EPISODE 52**

[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]

**[0:00:35.4] RP:** Welcome back for another episode of the Creative Empire Podcast. It's Reina here and I have Christina with me.

**[0:00:40.9] CS:** Hey guys.

**[0:00:42.4] RP:** Today, we're actually back for mentoring session with Ashley Takacs. She is the creative behind A. Tak Crafts and we're so excited to be chatting with her about her questions about how she can up level her business and we're so excited to have you Ashley.

**[0:00:58.0] AT:** Hi, yes, I am so excited to be here.

**[0:01:02.7] RP:** So let's jump right in. Tell us a little bit about your business and lead us with the first question you have for us.

**[0:01:10.1] AT:** Well, currently, I have made necklaces. I make handmade pendant and tassel necklaces. I have done that for about a year now. I just celebrated my first anniversary in September and it's been a fun adventure. I live in Houston and have been able to meet so many wonderful creatives and fashion bloggers and just creatives of all types here through the creative community through my endeavor at making necklaces. Now I'm at a space where I'm not quite sure if I want to abandon necklaces. I mean I enjoy making them and they're addicting, but kind of the idea of what else there might be for me.

I'm assisting a friend of mine with a conference that she has in February in the Woodlands, it's called Thrive Creative Conference and I'm helping her as an ambassador for the conference as well as Tribe Manager. So I will be essentially stage managing for the conference the day of. It's something that kind of excites me but yet I'm not sure yet where to take it from there, so to speak.

**[0:02:21.8] RP:** Yeah, this brings to mind the fact that you have a lot of other talents, other than creating these necklaces, right? A lot of the conversations around just because we're creative in one way doesn't mean that we're not creative in other ways and I know from your bio that I read, you're a theater major and you like that sort of thing. So as soon as you said "stage managing", I was like, "Oh yeah, that's another part of your gift is coming through." What other things have been part of your journey that's creative, that's fun, that really lights you up?

**[0:02:56.1] AT:** Well, things have been just amazing is I attended the Allume Retreat back in April, which was absolutely amazing, it was worth everything and I know Christina.

**[0:03:08.4] RP:** Christina is a huge advocate, yeah.

**[0:03:09.0] AT:** Yes, you attended the one before me and in fact, it was your little blog post that made me decide, "Okay, I'm going, I'm going to do it." That was just so wonderful and meeting them and watching these wonderful women have topics that they can talk about and that they are passionate about with helping with Thrive it's kind of made me think, well, I maybe want to do that but I don't know yet what I would talk about or what, I'm kind of in that in between moment of just kind of having fun and meeting women through Tuesdays Together, from Rising Tide and just enjoying all the community that I've found.

**[0:03:49.9] CS:** Yeah, first of all, I want to just take a pause and say, that's awesome that you're just taking some time to enjoy it because I didn't and I really regret that. I just wanted to get to that next level and do the next thing and accomplish that stuff. I got there and guess what? There's more work there. I wish I had stayed a little bit more in the "beginner phase" and just kind of enjoyed it and explored and played a little bit more.

So I have to congratulate you on that first of all but second, it does sound like you're searching a little bit for a purpose and I think, I'm not sure that we're going to be able to uncover what that is today. But at least trying to set the foundation for what gets you excited, what really ignites you and so, I mean, one way to think about it is if you were on Pinterest, what do you find yourself constantly searching for? Is it the jewelry or is it something else?

What do you like to look at constantly on Pinterest. I'm not talking about like home remodeling. If that's really it, we can talk about that. But when you're looking for business articles or when you're looking for ways to grow, whatever it is that you're thinking about growing, what do you find yourself searching for?

**[0:05:03.2] AT:** Well, honestly right now for Pinterest, I typically look at images. I'm not much more of an article person. I'm more so enjoy, which I do myself, sometimes I'll style my own photos for my products and that's something that I have also really enjoyed doing. So typically just pretty images that that's kind of more so what I use Pinterest for. Maybe more to answer your question is, I enjoy talking with people and creating genuine connection, trying to help them whether it's just talking, hashing things out with them where the position that they're in.

I have friends that all kind of text message back and forth just when they're like, "Oh I need to create a cocktail for my blog." We'll talk back and forth about it and I really get passionate about just being there to be able to kind of be a sounding board, if that makes sense? So that's not something really that Pinterest can help with but it's something more that's like an in person, communicating, maybe more so through Instagram sort of thing.

**[0:06:06.7] RP:** I'm guessing, are you an INFJ on Myers Briggs?

**[0:06:09.5] AT:** Say that again?

**[0:06:10.1] RP:** What's your type on Myers Briggs, do you know?

**[0:06:13.4] AT:** I've done that before, but I don't honestly remember what it is.

**[0:06:19.2] RP:** You're definitely an INFJ. Here's what I'm hearing from you is that you love community, you love to be connected with people. You're also a helper and I'm guessing that you're the person that people go to when they're like, "I'm like struggling with this thing, let me go see Ashley." You intuitively knew, as a product maker, that your images had to be beautiful and that you're really good at the photography or just figured out how to do it and so you're very resourceful.

I think all of those things, they're not connected necessarily but they make up you. A lot of the time our creative journeys are so windy and we don't know where they're going to go but all of these things matter because they make up who you're going to be as a business owner at the end of the day.

**[0:06:59.1] AT:** Right.

**[0:06:59.5] RP:** So lean into all of these things and you know, it takes a little bit of time to reflect back on, "What do I actually like doing? What do I get lit up by?" Like Christina said. So maybe some of the things that you've already said are like being behind the scenes at the events or what other things are kind of part of your history or just things that you're enjoying right now that you're like, "Yes, I get lit up by this."

**[0:07:26.8] AT:** Well, I have been going to events locally. My Instagram personally, I've tried to curate it in terms of the people that I intentionally follow being more local people that I would meet, be able to meet in person and will be able to get coffee with or kind of just wanting to be there as a person that if, "Hey, you want to schedule something, maybe you just want to talk, you just want to vent, that's cool. I'll tell you my life story. I'll listen to your life story and if it has to do with business cool, and if it doesn't, that's great too."

But I don't know, I think what really sent me on this path was at Allume, Katie O. Selvidge did Assured and Well and it was just ground breaking and she and I had a moment to talk about it and a lot of it is owed to her. The fact that she helps me come to the conclusion that I enjoy creating environment and so that's something that I thought about and I still just kind of, it's hard to really process what it means for me. But I definitely, I have it on sticky note on my desk what

I'm looking at right now, just to try and keep it as a reminder and in terms of what it is that I can do for others, I feel like I'm kind of just blabbing at the moment.

**[0:08:47.5] CS:** No, it's fine. I mean you're at a really interesting place in your business development, which is a place that a lot of people are at where they know that they're good in a lot of different things. And they know that they could do calligraphy or they could do water color or they could do, in your case, you could do jewelry or you could do styling or you could do events or whatever is on the horizon for you. But I think that's one of the hardest places to be at in your business because there's so much opportunity.

And I am willing to bet that you have a lot of ideas going through your head at any given moment and you're like, "I'm going to go in this direction. Oh, I'm going to go in this direction." So it can be a really hard thing because when we go on all this different directions, we don't make progress in any direction. Reina talks about, Reina, do you want to talk about that? Like how, if you take a project, if you have six projects and you're only doing 20% on each project, I'll let her talk about it. She's much better at it.

**[0:09:44.8] RP:** I think that you're spot on, right? When you're doing things, sort of half @#\$! all the way through, nothing is actually getting done. What do you want to put on the front burner 100% of the time? And it's not 100% truly, but the portion of your day is very committed to, working on your business, not in your business, or in your full time job or whatever, the other commitments, life commitments you have. That 100% of the time, what can you commit to or what do you want to focus your energy on?

The other thing I want to point you to as well is that is A. Tak Crafts doing what, in terms of financial gain, are you doing what you need to be doing? Do you feel fulfilled in that way from it?

**[0:10:32.3] AT:** Probably not because I still have a full time job that is not A. Tak Crafts. So ideally, I would want it to get to a point to where at least I could supplement my income part-time. Ideally, and I'm talking for me, my personal, more like five years down the road would be more of a full-time thing would be great by the time I want to have children and be able to do my business and do that. But financially A. Tak Crafts is good, I am in terms of, I could see — my husband of course would love there to be more from it but I'm not upset with where it is.

I'm content with it, I have a huge collection right now of necklaces, probably about 120 of them and so for Thanksgiving, they will all go live on my Etsy store and then I will have them on there through Christmas time. So you'll be able to see some of my stuff on there but I don't know. I definitely dream about it being able to give more to me. But at this exact moment in my life, it's not 100% necessary that it does.

**[0:11:41.1] RP:** Cool, yeah. So that's a great answer and I think that if it is your desire that this current side hustle becomes your full-time hustle, you need to create a plan for that, right? If your hope is that this side hustle stays a state side hustle and then something else takes the rest of the passion journey, whatever it is, let's figure what that is. So I'm wondering what path you want to go down in this conversation.

**[0:12:09.1] AT:** Well, I don't necessarily see myself making jewelry my entire life. I definitely have a point where I kind of want to leave that as more the side little thing and maybe once in a while make a few. So I definitely want to see myself gearing towards something else under A. Tak Crafts. When I branded I tried to make the name also, very general like I could be doing anything. I could be crafting anything really.

**[0:12:38.4] CS:** Ashley, I just have this gut feeling that it would be a really great idea and I mean, I'm just going to push this a little but I think it would be a great idea for you to at least through the end of the year pursue just your jewelry line and just kind of put other things on the back burner. And the reason I say that is because if we could maybe work through today and in our follow up session, figure out how to get that kind of running on autopilot so that it's at least, you know, the creation of jewelry is at least batched. So it's not something that you're working on every day that just kind of nags at the back of your head, but it's something that you work on maybe once a week or once a month even and then we just let everything else run on autopilot.

We maybe setup like a sales funnel or something for the jewelry. Or figure out like how we need to write that copy in Etsy so that it's selling itself when people are searching. So I would encourage you to actually go full force with that jewelry stuff and then after that sale is done, I think November is a great time to capitalize if you are a product based business but, you know,

after that, maybe take a step back and either let that jewelry continue to run on auto pilot as like a very small side hustle and then you continue to pursue these other things that are calling you that maybe aren't, they don't sound like they're very — it doesn't sound like there's one thing that's just like, "I have to do this."

Which is making me feel like that's why the jewelry business might be worth pursuing really hard right now because it's not an effort lost, it's an effort gained because you're gaining so much valuable experience. No matter what you end up doing, you're going to have experience selling physical based products, which is like incredible. That's really hard to do. Managing inventory and ordering all the supplies that you need. So I don't know, how do you feel about that Reina?

**[0:14:24.4] RP:** Yeah, I think it's a great idea, especially since the holidays are coming up right now, you know, as this airs, it's December and people are focused on finding the perfect gifts for their people, right? So how can we get you in front of more eyes and just have that be front and center for people and I think you're already doing a lot of that on your social channels. So kind of boosting that a little bit and maybe help getting help from your own set of ambassadors to spread the word. So, like Christina was saying, if you can go full force in this business and hit a particular revenue goal that you have for by the end of the year, and maybe you can let off steam a little bit once it's up and running, like Christina said.

[BREAK]

**[0:15:08.8] SC:** Do you have a business that serves other businesses? We would love to feature you as a sponsor on our podcast. Each week, our episodes reach thousands of listeners and they are hungry and eager for the solutions that you provide. If you would be interested in advertising with the Creative Empire Podcast, we would love to have you. All you have to do is jump on over to [creativeempire.co](http://creativeempire.co) and learn more about becoming a sponsor and getting your services and your products in the hands of our thousands of listeners. We're so excited about what we can do for you.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

**[0:15:46.8] AT:** Honestly, that was kind of my idea, my idea of switching in 2017 would be kind of the, because I had a market just this past weekend. I have another one, I have a market in October, I have a market December 3<sup>rd</sup>. So I have like kind of my little marking points on the calendar leading up through the holiday season and then I think your Christmas and then okay now we can possibly focus on other things.

So my push will be to get everything on to my Etsy store because that's not — it just takes time since all my necklaces are so unique. I always feel like they each need their own listing, the first time I uploaded stuff, each listing, I had 30, had five photos and so now, I'm definitely like, "There was a period of time when my Etsy store had nothing in it at all." So definitely that's kind of my idea through the fall and Christmas is just to get the stuff out there to where people not just in Houston would be able to see it.

**[0:16:44.7] CS:** Right, yeah. I think, first of all, anybody listening that has an Etsy store needs to follow Lisa Jacobs. She just recently closed one of her Etsy shops where she sold handmade jewelry, but she also had been doing it for many, many years. She has some really great advice as far as copyrighting and cleaning up your listings.

**[0:17:01.7] RP:** Including Creative Live that she did.

**[0:17:03.7] CS:** Yeah. I'm really glad to hear that you're streamlining your listings. One thing that I'm hearing though is a little bit of overwhelm about the amount of work that you're facing. So I'm wondering, if you have the budget to hire somebody that would be able to either, I think the first hire that if you have the budget for it, and let me just see if we have a budget here for this.

But if you have a budget for a VA, somebody that's maybe charging like even \$10 to \$15 per hour, there's certainly people out there that are willing to work for that much on a short term basis. Would you be willing to hire them for like five hours a month if you could find somebody and maybe like \$15 an hour to do some of the work on your shop or is that out of the question right now?

**[0:17:50.2] AT:** Honestly, my product numbers aren't really there.



**[0:17:53.8] CS:** Okay, that's fine.

**[0:17:54.7] AT:** In terms of — but I mean, it's definitely an idea. My husband's great at counting beads.

**[0:18:02.8] CS:** I think where there's not the financial resources, we have to do time and so in order to make the most out of that time, what we're going to have to do is figure out how to batch that. So you've at least been doing this for a year, that's really good news. How do you feel about ordering the product ahead of time? Is that pretty much under control and you kind of know how much you're ordering or is it still a guessing game?

**[0:18:29.2] AT:** Actually, that's another thing that I could focus on. I haven't actually done big orderings. My orderings typically are on a smaller side and I count my beads in person. I go to a shop and do that. Luckily I do feel like I have that down to where if I know what I need, I can go in, I can find it and be in and out within 30 minutes because if I get there 5:30 and they close at six so I have to be. Just my point in life I guess, my husband and I will work through the weekends because he's in a career transition and I'm doing this and so we'll spend all weekend on the sofa watching Netflix and I'll be making necklaces and he'll be working on his stuff.

**[0:19:11.8] RP:** Yeah, it's a season of hustle for you and there's nothing wrong with that.

**[0:19:16.3] CS:** How many listings do you want to have? How many different SKUs, if you will? Like how many different necklaces would you like to have in the shop by November?

**[0:19:26.0] AT:** Well, the month of November is when I plan to list everything I have left from left over from my market on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. Right now I'm at 120 necklaces so I'm imagining it might be around a hundred and they're all pretty unique. Almost rarely, there may be like three of one style. But of course each bead is different. That's where I fell into the trickiness of well, I kind of want them all to have their own photo at least is because, they're still different and so it's just something where I do have some base styles that I continuously go back to and they have names but then my other is I just kind of make ones, I'm like, "Oh, I like the way this looks together."

**[0:20:14.1] RP:** I have an idea. What if you only had 10?

**[0:20:17.5] AT:** 10 styles?

**[0:20:19.8] RP:** The reason why I'm saying this is because if you are kind of in a place of "I have too many things going on and I'm not able to focus in on all the things", honestly, I don't think your customers are going to be able to appreciate the customization that you're bringing to all the listings. You love it and so you know exactly what's going into it. I think your clients or the people who are buying are going to appreciate the end product but they're not going to appreciate the difference of the products and how much time goes into shooting one product and then making that one thing. So what if we streamlined it to only 10? And maybe 10 is not the right number so you'll have to pick that. I'm going to challenge you not to do a hundred.

**[0:21:04.2] CS:** I actually yeah, I just have to jump in really quick. I love this idea because one, I have a suggestion for the 10<sup>th</sup> one that would get rid of the excess inventory that you have but also not bankrupt you and then also, I just want to elaborate a little bit on this. One of the things I'm noticing in your Etsy store that's missing is a story behind each piece.

So where is going to be worn? Who is the girl that wears this and where is she wearing it to and like how does it make her feel and what is her partner say about it when he or she sees it on her and what are all the things that are going through her head as she holds this jewelry and like puts it on and looks in the mirror and does it change her outfit, does it change the way she feels about herself?

It has a very mala quality to it. Is this something that she could wear to yoga and like, maybe do some meditation? So what are all the benefits? And it's like Reina said, if you only have 10 listings, first of all, you're going to sell more because your customers are going to be overwhelmed. Second of all, you're also going to be able to create that story for each one of these so that you know, maybe each one has a little bit of a different story and that might be something where if you decide to invest, I know you know Ashlyn. SO if you either talk to Ashlyn or you invest in a copywriter or you know, like you just take the time to craft these stories yourself, it's a lot easier to craft 10 or even five and then you reuse them or something stories

than it is to do a hundred. Then for that 10<sup>th</sup> one, maybe you do like the price is a little bit reduced from your other offerings, which now have a higher price point because there's so much more valuable because there's a story behind it. But maybe that temp listing is just like a grab bag like surprise "gimme" necklace where you have like they don't know what they're going to get but they're paying a lower price.

So they know they're going to get something quality. It's kind of like the Farm Girl Flowers mentality is like you get these — I hope everybody knows about Farm Girl Flowers. If you don't, you need to go check their website out and their business model, it's amazing. But in short, they produce a quality product. You know you're going to get a quality product and they charge you less money than like 1-800-flowers and you don't know what you're getting ahead of time, you just know it's going to be great.

**[0:23:18.7] AT:** Right.

**[0:23:19.7] CS:** So I love Reina's suggestion, I would love to see you run with that.

**[0:23:24.9] AT:** Now, to push back on that, I think it would have to be more like 20 just because I have ones that I love and ones that are already named. But if I did 10 styles or 20 styles, now, the thing I fall under is that because I did that when I first opened my Etsy shop. I had five styles and I had five of each, maybe it was six of each? So each one though, the pendant's a little different.

Then it's a matter of — I like the opportunity of picking what pendant you like. So then would you — but I could put them all under one listing which is I think the way at this current moment, I have 10 of my Sara Pendant Necklaces on Etsy and they're five per listing.

**[0:24:09.1] CS:** Yeah, we're going to send you the TED Talk, I'm going to try to find it for our listeners. But there's a great TED Talk about choice theory and why having more options or even giving your customers choices actually reduces the chances that they'll buy. Because they just can't make a decision. So I'm going to let you and Reina talk and I'm going to try to find that link.

**[0:24:31.9] RP:** So here's what I know from just having binged on a whole bunch of Kendra Scott necklaces. And you know exactly when you do that color bar that you don't know what that piece is going to look like when they send it to you. So I think, just go with it. I think that it's really, I'm looking at your pendants, they're all beautiful. I don't know which one I would have picked, honestly, if you had told me, "Which one?"

So I think that there's a little bit of that nature surprise factor, which is part of your brand right You're creating this necklaces around this stone and the customer isn't going to be able to control if it's going to be ABC or D. They just know it's going to look like a Sara. Does that make sense? I think that there is a little bit of a beauty in like a surprise factor in that people love that.

I think that if we're, as a shop owner, if we're so freaked out by kind of like that surprise factor on behalf of our customer, I know that if somebody hates it, you're going to do something about it right? You're going to fix that. I think you'll see on your end that if you give people fewer options, people are just going to be click, click, click done and just buy from you. Honestly.

**[0:25:41.8] AT:** I've been taking notes this whole time.

**[0:25:45.5] RP:** Awesome, so let's wrap this up. What is your biggest take away from this conversation and what are you going to be held accountable for?

**[0:25:51.1] AT:** Well, the most, the last one is my favorite. The try to only have 10 styles, probably more like 20. The stories behind the pieces and the idea of the surprise grab listing I guess you would call it. I definitely am going to work that into what I plan to do. So by the time this airs, if you can go to my Etsy shop, you should be able to see only just a few. Yeah.

**[0:26:21.0] CS:** First, let me just butt in really quickly, so that talk is by Sheena Iyengar and we'll have that in the show notes. But where can people find you on Etsy, Ashley?

**[0:26:36.3] AT:** All my social media, my Etsy shop is [etsy.com/atakcrafts](https://www.etsy.com/atakcrafts). My Instagram handle, and my Facebook page, my Twitter, which I rarely use but they're all, Pinterest, they're all @atakcrafts.

**[0:26:55.8] RP:** Awesome, well it was super fun having you and I hope that you do the grab me bag. In Japan, in January, because Japanese people don't do Christmas as much, we do like this thing and it's basically the luck bag and all the department put in the luck bag something that maybe it's \$50. But there's like \$100 worth of value in the bag and you don't know what it is. So it's kind of like sometimes it has like a color theme or something. Like, "These are all purple or these are all green." But they don't know what's in it. It might be a fun idea for you to explore so great idea Christina.

Well, we're super excited that you're here Ashley, thank you so much and we can't wait to follow up with what you accomplished through the last quarter of this year and when this airs, how your Etsy shop looks by the time this airs. So super excited to see that. Thank you so much for joining us and thank you for listening to this episode of the Creative Empire Podcast, go build your own creative empire.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:27:50.2] 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](http://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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[END]