

**EPISODE — VANESSA VELEZ**

[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]

**[00:00:35.5] CS:** Hello and welcome back to another episode of the Creative Empire Podcast. I'm Christina Scalera. I am joined by Reina Pomeroy and Vanessa Velez today. Vanessa, would you mind introducing yourself to our audience? Because I know all about you, I love all your photography but if our audience isn't acquainted with your work yet, where can they find you and what do you do? Who are you?

**[00:00:55.9] VV:** Hi guys. Well I'm Vanessa, a destination wedding photographer, currently living in Miami and I am also a branding strategist. So I have two jobs, two companies, going forward and financing on everything at the same time so that's what I'm doing right now.

**[00:01:10.7] RP:** Fabulous, welcome. We're so excited to talk to you Vanessa.

**[00:01:13.6] VV:** Me too. I am super excited to be guys.

**[00:01:16.6] RP:** So we're super jealous because Vanessa is Punta Cana and she's outside that pool and Christina and I are in our little offices.

**[00:01:25.2] VV:** I wish you guys could see it. It's really pretty here.

**[00:01:29.4] CS:** We can see the pool reflecting off the glass behind you. It's very nice to look at.

**[00:01:34.3] VV:** There you go, see?

**[00:01:35.4] CS:** I love it. I love that you are a full-time entrepreneur, mom and you were on vacation right now really treating yourself well and it wasn't always that way. So how did you get to where you are now as a destination wedding photographer and a really nice big sensation on Instagram too?

**[00:01:54.1] VV:** Well, you know I started almost 10 years ago now, which is crazy to me to think about. I started in New York originally. I was working in marketing at The Institute of Photography in New York. So I was running a photo contest and I've always loved photography. I thought it was always amazing. We had a lot of cameras when I was growing up. So once I started running this photo contest, I fell in love with the idea of having all these people from around the world, seeing their work and seeing how everybody liked a different perspective on photography per se.

And from there, my husband, boyfriend at the time was studying photography. He was studying commercial photography so I sort of got into it. I was like, "Can you show me the ropes? Like how do you use a camera, how you should film?" And I little by little learned and I really just fell in love and I don't think that I even expected to change careers because I was literally just starting my career in marketing but I just told him like, "You know we should start a business. We should go, we should do something."

We decided to go online and find a job and we did our first wedding, which was crazy. We have been six months working and we did our first wedding and from there, I just never looked back. I really just fell in love with it and I couldn't think about doing anything else.

**[00:03:13.6] CS:** It sounds like you have quite an extensive background in marketing and I've heard other photographers say, "Don't go to school for photography. Go to school for marketing." How is that background helped you in becoming a successful destination photographer?

**[00:03:32.7] VV:** Yeah, definitely the fact that I have studied marketing and that it was something that I really loved, it helped us a lot because I was like, “We have to do a website,” and at that time, there wasn’t any template websites that you could just buy. So I remember I was trying to do this site like all coded and I was like, “Oh my God, what are we doing? But no, we have to do it because we need to have a website, people need to find us.”

So I did a website, we put up a blog and I remember at the time, I was following Style Me Pretty and a few other blogs that had just started to pop up in the wedding industry and it was this new thing. So I was like, “Well we should have a blog. We should be able to talk to people and connect with people. We can put pictures of people, they can see it and then they could comment,” and literally that’s what we did and I think that it was the greatest thing that we did having the blog because it helped us so much.

People love reading their stories of their wedding. They shared it with their family and with their friends. People from their work and then from there we got a lot of leads, people referring us and then we decided that we were going to move. So when we decided to move to Puerto Rico, I remembered that I was very scared because I was like, “Wow are we really going to do this?” But I was still like, “Let’s find some big place that we could show our work and go from there and if it all goes well, then we decided that we move or not.”

And I remember finding this really big bridal show. They would do it in the biggest shopping mall in the island. It was a 200 store shopping mall so we went and I printed up these huge pictures. I did a styled shoot which at the time wasn’t like a thing. People really didn’t do styled shoots at the moment. So we put up this styled shoot together, we got these models, we went and shot at the Brooklyn Bridge and we did all these amazing pictures. We put them up on the show and we signed 19 contracts that weekend and from there, literally we were like, “Okay, so we’re moving to Puerto Rico,” and we moved.

**[00:05:14.9] RP:** Holy cow, wow.

**[00:05:17.1] VV:** Yeah, it was crazy. I mean I couldn’t believe it.

**[00:05:22.2] CS:** That’s a good lesson of putting yourself out there.

**[00:05:25.9] VV:** I think you need to.

**[00:05:27.9] RP:** Yeah absolutely. I'm really curious, you've been in business for a long time. You put yourself out there and you just did it which is such a cool thing and you were trying to do things that no one else is doing like styled shoots. I am wondering in your 10 years of being a photographer, I'm wondering if you have seen a lot of changes in the industry and what's the most interesting change?

**[00:05:50.0] VV:** Yes, definitely. It's been the ride because from the moment that we started to what the business is now, I think it's changed so much and especially with the internet and Instagram and Facebook and all of the different blogs that have been popping up and have been created in the last few years. Now it's all about getting published and getting yourself out there and that's how people find you. It used to be that you would have a website and you would have a blog and that would be enough for people to be with you and see your work.

But now I think it's so many things that you have to conquer. You have to have your website of course, a blog is still something that really connects with people because people love reading stories and reading about you and your life. But I think now, Instagram has taken over what blogging used to be in my sense. So now, my personal life and all my personal things go on my Instagram and I just mix them up with my business.

So I think it is good because you can connect with so many people on Instagram. It's such a big social media platform that it really helps. Right now, I think it is the biggest thing for any business owner. Everybody that I had talked to, I was telling them, "Make sure that your social media is on point especially your Instagram because it's the best way to get clients and find clients and find people." Especially for destination wedding photographers. Where you get to connect with people from all around the world. It is a great medium to hone in on those clients.

**[00:07:09.1] CS:** Definitely. You have a really big Instagram following. So how have you grown your following and the ultimate question is how is it helped you and where are you getting client bookings, are you getting just notice in the industry and visibility or where are you finding a lot of benefit from Instagram?

**[00:07:28.4] VV:** In my case, I think definitely Instagram grew little by little. The first, I will say the first year and a half that I have the Instagram, I was still into the food part of Instagram where you put all your food up and stuff. So I wasn't really honing in on business. But then once I started seeing all these big companies using Instagram to target clients, I was like, "You know this might be a good way to put myself out there, to put my work out there and have other people see it."

So basically little by little, I started taking out the food pictures and replacing them with nice pretty destination wedding pictures and I think definitely hashtagging has been the biggest benefit and the biggest thing that I think has to grown my Instagram because the research before I post like what's the best hashtags especially a lot of people love to use those top 50 hashtags but I think you really need to find hashtags that have to do with you.

Make sure that you are looking for things that have to do with whatever it is that you're posting not necessarily something that's trending but if a wedding planner is looking for a destination wedding photographer on Instagram, you want them to find you. So if you won't use that hashtag, they won't find you and I think especially when I moved to Miami, it helps me a lot tagging Miami photographer, Miami wedding photographer, Miami wedding. Doing stuff like that really helped me hone in on all these people and they would find me.

Actually, I haven't really had that much contact before with wedding planners to Instagram but now I do a lot. Now, I have a lot of wedding planners contacting me, a lot of wedding decorators contacting me just to do styled shoots and to work more with them. So I think it's really cool because they are seeing my work and I am seeing theirs, all of a sudden we're connecting and all of a sudden we have a shoot together and I think it's really the best way to use Instagram.

**[00:09:09.2] RP:** I love that. I think it's really cool that we have to adapt with new technology that comes along and I'm really fascinated by how quickly people have grown their Instagram or they have used their Instagram or any other social media platform to grow their audience and grow their connections within the industry. I always feel like it has to be a bigger number for you to find those connections but that's not always necessarily true is it?

**[00:09:39.2] VV:** No, definitely not. I think that even if you have a small following as long as you're really targeting the right people, it doesn't matter if you have 300 followers or you have 10,000 followers. I think the point is really to make sure that you're just targeting well. That you're putting up pictures that are going to find people, they are going to interest people that people are going to want to click on, they're going to like that picture and they're going to want to follow you and keep seeing more of your work.

**[00:10:01.5] RP:** Very cool and with your marketing background, I'm guessing you have a lot of knowledge to be able to fold into your social media strategy as well. Could you talk to us about our audiences newer and they are really looking to learn and I'm curious, you teach this audience and I am wondering what you would suggest or what kind of things that you have coming up that would be helpful for our newer photographer or a newer person in the industry?

**[00:10:27.2] VV:** Yeah, definitely when you are starting out, I know that it's always daunting to think about launching a business or becoming either you want to be a wedding planner or photographer or whatever it is that you want to get into, it's always daunting to think about how am I actually going to do this. I do a lot of one on one sessions with business owners. It's one of the things that I am most passionate about after I have been a few years doing photography.

I still have that calling to work with people and help people get advertising out there, to get their marketing right and I really started realizing that I loved working with branding and helping people find what client they wanted to target. So I think one of the biggest things and advice that I always give to people that are trying to launch something new is to really sit down and really make sure that you know who you're going to target.

Sometimes people think, "Well I'm just going to start and I'm going to target everybody and whatever comes my way I'll take." But I think if you start from the beginning knowing the client that you want, it is so helpful because you will find good clients and clients that really will be in a better world with you and you will love the experience because if you are working with everybody, you don't necessarily get to work with people that maybe are connected with you.

And you do want to be connected with the clients because that will make you give them a better experience and one of the things that I always say, just sit down with a notebook and dream up

your dream client. Like, “What’s the type of person I want to work with?” Do a vision board, sit down, get a magazine and start cutting up stuff that really inspires you and see what the trend is. You will see that maybe you have a lot of pictures of women with sunglasses and sitting on the beach, or you have stuff like that. Something that is very specific and you’ll start seeing a pattern and that pattern will help you realize what is the type of client that you want to achieve to get.

I think that, in my case especially for new business owners, I think that one of the things that sometimes people forget about is that you really have to know what you want to do and you want to know the type of service you want to give people so that you’re able to really create something that is different from everybody else. You don’t want to be like the rest of them. You want to be yourself. You want to be you and that’s the type of thing that will help you connect with people that really understand your brand and what you want.

**[00:12:38.1] RP:** I love this conversation Vanessa. I’m giggling over here because before I was a podcaster, I was also a wedding planner and Reina back in 2009 had no idea what she was doing in terms of her ideal client and I remember on my website, I was like, “I do this kind of wedding and this kind of event,” and all the things and I didn’t know how to niche down. For whatever reason I was still profitable, but I would not advise it.

**[00:13:05.6] CS:** Well I think it’s scary.

**[00:13:07.1] RP:** Yeah, it was really scary and I didn’t really know how to get that ideal client and so I am so glad that we’re having this conversation and I’m trying to think back on what would have been helpful for me to hear from an expert, somebody who is really established and say, “This is how you could run a sustainable business not only a profitable business but something that would last.” Because I didn’t last past three year mark.

So I really love what you’re saying about encouraging people to sit down and think about if you could choose your ideal client, what would she look like, what would that person be like and get really specific about it and I totally agree with you. My business is run that way now. I’m wondering, this is kind of a weird question but I am wondering if you learned this by learning from mistakes or you have always done this from the beginning. You said that you have booked

19 clients that weekend when you went to the showing and that's not always the case and so what would you say to somebody who's struggling with looking anybody right now and what should they start looking at and what should they be doing?

**[00:14:14.9] VV:** Yeah I think definitely, in my case it was a surreal thing. It doesn't always work out that way. When I think back on it, I know it was a great blessing and I know that it was just amazing that it happened. But it's not something that you can replicate constantly, but you can replicate success in the sense that if you know, for example, people say, "Okay, I want to book whatever wedding I get," and you have no target. I think that you really should always say, "Okay, so my first year of business, I want to book five clients and then on the second year, I want to book 15 clients."

So hone in on those five first and then think about the rest. If you pass that mark, it's amazing. It's like, "Okay I got the five, and now I can keep going." Because sometimes, people aim really high when they are just starting out and it's frustrating and it makes them sad and frustrated because of course, you want to be successful. But it doesn't have to be something that happens overnight. I think people need to calm down, relax, really say, "Okay, I really, really want this to work but I am going to put myself in it all the way and if I get five clients, I'm okay with that." I think it's important to be sure that you're not over reaching just because you don't want to be that person that's always frustrated.

You want to be that person that's always happy with those five clients. Because at the end of the day, it's an amazing thing to have five clients in your first year of business. Everybody, the first five years of your business are the hardest years and if you got past that five year mark, then you say, "Okay now I got this down." Because those five years are the years where you're hiking up and you're struggling and you're like, "I want to do this. I want to reach the top." But it doesn't necessarily have to be something that happens fast.

Do it slow, take your time, make sure you know your client, make sure you know your brand, make sure that you really spend the time at the beginning with a really good person that works with branding because I think that helps you so much. I think having that time to sit down and say, "Okay, this is what I want my brand to be," and create it from the beginning not half way through will definitely give you 10 times more than you spend on it.



**[00:16:19.4] RP:** I appreciate that you brought up branding because as a photographer, you're not a branding person necessarily but you have a beautiful brand. And so we've talked to a couple of branding designers and people who built brand identities for other creatives. But can you speak a little bit more about what happens when you do a really strong visual branding identity?

**[00:16:43.7] VV:** Yes, of course. Definitely right now in the world that we're living, people are very visual that's why Instagram was such a successful social media platform because people are looking at pictures and then they're reading the caption. They are not reading and then looking, they are looking and then reading. So having a brand that stands out that automatically somebody looks at your logo, looks at the feel of your website or your business card or your postcard.

Once they start looking and they see, they really get attracted to that brand. So that's why it is so important to really have a good strong brand because people literally will say, "Oh that looks pretty" or "Oh my God, that is amazing. I want to know who this person is. I want to know the person behind this brand." Because especially for me, I connect with a lot of brands. I'm a total Kate Spade obsessed person.

The first time I saw the Kate Spade logo, I was like, "Oh my God, this is so me. This is so gorgeous." Because it is so simple, but yet it was so interesting. To have that little tiny logo and then just a name and then you're like, "Oh I want to know more about this." So I think people are really visual and having that connection with somebody just through a logo or just through like the first impression your website makes is so important.

**[00:17:53.9] CS:** Yeah, your branding is really unique and that I love it. I wanted to talk to you about this a little bit because when you first go to your website, it's [vanessavalez.photo](http://vanessavalez.photo), which I love that you have a top level domain and not just a dot com, by the way? I actually really like that. I feel like that is a sign of somebody who is very technologically advanced and ahead of their time, but that is just my opinion. But when you first go to your website, it's really interesting.

Because you're a wedding photographer but at the same time, well a destination wedding photographer, which plays into what I am about to say. The first thing you see is your brand and your logo and what your brand is all about before you even hit the break in the page and scroll down to see your photos, so it is art work in a way and so I love it because if you guys haven't gone to her website yet, I'll just explain, she's got her logo.

Which has this little hot air balloon floating up off the A on her name and right underneath it, it says, "Wanderlust. Come fly with me, let's fly away. A very strong or irresistible impulse to travel and a strong longing for or impulse toward wondering." Which is so amazing because you never say that "I am a destination wedding photographer" or "I am fine art film destination whatever, whatever". You immediately give them the visual image of flying away and being with you, travelling, going on this journey with you. How did you decide to very subtly take their hand and hold them along that journey rather than just saying, "Look at me, I am a destination wedding photographer"?

[BREAK]

**[00:19:32.7] CS:** 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 would 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]

**[00:20:10.4] VV:** Well first of all, you just gave me goosebumps talking about my website. I'm like, "Oh my God, I am so excited."

**[00:20:15.9] CS:** I love it, I love it.

**[00:20:17.7] VV:** Thank you. Definitely, this is my new brand because basically this is my rebranding. I just launched this about eight months ago and I really wanted for people to feel like they're on a journey with me. I want them to understand that I love to travel. I love to get out there and I love to meet new people and I think that I really wanted people to first, fall in love with the idea of the wanderlust. Who doesn't love travelling? Who doesn't love exploring the world and seeing amazing new places?

I really wanted people — because destination plans for the most part are for people that love to travel too because that's why they're having a destination wedding in the first place. So I knew that if I had something that was very strong, like a strong caption that would really talk to them specifically, that it would be helpful to me because they'll want to see more. They'll want to explore more into my website.

I don't even have my galleries up there in your face. I have them under little captions because I have all the little stories under like the Puerto Rico wedding, Italy wedding. I have everything specific because I want people to click on what they want to see. So I really made sure that when I did my website, then my logo was the first thing you would see just because I had this whole story around it.

I wanted to do the caption with the explaining what wanderlust it's because sometimes people don't even know what wonder lust is. People know what travelling is and they know what loving to travel is and I actually have a word that describes all of that into one thing, that's what I wanted to hone in on.

**[00:21:45.1] RP:** That's so cool that you're brand is centered around wanderlust, that is really cool.

**[00:21:51.1] VV:** I love it. I just love it, you know?

**[00:21:53.6] CS:** Yeah, but I also love that you took the time to recognize that your clients may not be familiar with the concept yet even though they love it. They just know they want to get out, maybe they are stuck in some kind of corporate job and they know they want to get out. They can travel. Their wedding is a great excuse to do that and when they go to your website

versus another destination photographers, they're immediately going to see, "Wow, okay this girl is all about it. She's traveling, she's going places, she's with me."

Versus it's maybe somebody who's just maybe more pretentious or wants you to see their galleries right away to impress you and I think, in my opinion, I am not a photographer obviously professionally but in my opinion, it's not enough now just to have a great gallery. There is a lot of great photographers out there and so the branding is important but I think what you also provide and that's very clear from being around you as a person. But looking at your website and seeing the stories that your clients tell is an amazing client experience.

I'm huge on the client experience. It's something that I am always striving to make better for my clients and my business as well and Reina is too. She always says it's important to love on people and you're such a lover Vanessa. So how have you used, I mean I guess maybe we should start back a little bit. What did your client experience used to look like? And then what are maybe three practical tips that a photographer could integrate into their practice today to bring their client experience up a level?

**[00:23:23.7] VV:** Yeah, if I think back on how my clients — from the beginning I did know that I really wanted to make people feel something on their pictures. So I knew I wanted to be that type of more documentary photographer. I remember when at first when I began, I started my business with my husband, right? And we were together and we worked together. Then I decided that I wanted to go out on my own and do my own thing and he was going to do his own thing.

We love each other, we love being with each other, we were not getting divorced, people are super scared and I was like, "No, we want to find our own space inside the photography world and then literally, we split up and then he ran his company and I became Vanessa Velez, which is what I am now and I've been that way for six years now. So I think at the beginning, right when I started my company alone, I was like, "Okay, the most important thing for me right now is knowing the client that I want."

And that was the first thing that I did. I sat down and then I said, "Okay, I want to target brides that want to travel. I want to target brides that love luxury. I want to target brides that are

humble, that are sweet, that love romance, that love watching *The Notebook* or reading a really good romance novel, because that is the type of person that I connect with well because it's how I am too. A lot of the times you'll see that your ideal client will be very attached to who you are too. Most of the times, you will share a lot of traits with your ideal client because obviously you want people that connect with you so you will have a lot of things in common. So I think that is the first thing. If you are just starting out, like I said, find what that client is.

The second thing definitely is to me, sit down and make sure that you know what your business mantra is. To me, it's that I am a lover of love. I love to work with people who are in love, who want romance, who love cuddling, who love being together. That's who I am and that's what I target and I always, for the most part, you will see most of clients are very lovey-dovey. They love being on top of each other and kissing and holding because they're in love.

And they might be together for years but they still have that puppy love kind of phase, which is the same way that I am with my husband. We've been together for 13 years and I'm always feeling that romance with him because I really am in love with my beautiful husband. And then number three, definitely is make sure that your social media and your website and your blog match. Make sure your brand is all over it. You don't want your website to be disconnected from your social media. You want everything to be together. You want everything to look the same.

I have a color board for my Instagram. So every six posts, the color changes on my Instagram. So if you scroll down, you can see I go from whites to pink, to purples, to blues. So I think it's good because it is the same way in my website and that way, people can see that, "Okay, this girl definitely is into pastels and a lot of lovey-dovey." So those three things are super important to me I think.

**[00:26:21.6] RP:** What I took away from that point, the second one really resonated with me and I've heard a lot of people talk about ideal client and I've done talks on an ideal client but the way that you've just described it was just more visceral than I've ever experienced it. Well first of all, let me acknowledge that the fact that you're 13 years into your marriage and you're still loving on your husband, way to go. I am five years in, I'm like, "Bye honey."

You just showed us what the experience of understanding your ideal clients so well is and some people say, “Oh what magazine does she read?” or what websites does she visit but for you, it’s really an experience and I felt like I knew who she was. I don’t know if you got that sense Christina?

**[00:27:05.9] CS:** Yeah, definitely Vanessa, and it goes back to you even knowing that your ideal client like to travel but doesn’t necessarily know that she likes to travel. And you taking her on a journey with you and showing her that she likes to travel and showing her that this is this word that’s describes your life that she maybe hasn’t encountered before. It’s so funny as you’re telling me about your Instagram, I mean your Instagram is beautiful, your website is beautiful. Your work is just gorgeous.

How do you have the time though to curate such amazing presence? What is your secret? Because I think not only myself but our audience struggles with feeling like “I have to do all the business stuff, the bookkeeping, the contracts, the invoicing, the whatever and then on top of that, I have to make it look pretty? Oh my gosh, how do I have to do that? Or how can I do that?”

**[00:27:59.1] VV:** Well definitely it’s a task but I really have a system. So I have it down now thankfully for the last year, it’s been helpful, but this is what I do. Right now, I do use HoneyBook. It’s a system for business owners to help you in the back end with payment, the contracts, questionnaires, e-mails. So everything goes through HoneyBook so I really have taken out of my hands a lot of the sending out automated questionnaires for clients, for branding and for weddings. I always send out questionnaires to get to know my clients.

So now, I have everything systemized. So once they sign a contract, they automatically receive the first questionnaire and then I get that back. Once I accept it, then six months after, they get their second questionnaire. So having a system that works with you, whatever it is, there are a lot of great systems out there. You can find something that works with on your business.

I think it is really important because it’s like having a manager but not actually having a person but having a system. So it helps you because everything is more faster and more efficient in that sense and then for my social media, I do a lot of scheduling. I use Later, which used to be

Latergram now it's called Later and you can go to [later.com](https://later.com) or [later.org](https://later.org). It's a great platform, it's free and it lets you post up to 30 post a month and you can schedule it.

So basically you put up the pictures, you put up the captions and it tells you once it's ready to go to publish it. So it's like "Oh, you have a post that's scheduled," and you just hit publish. So it helps me a lot because usually, I will sit down on Thursdays and I will do the whole month ahead of time. Sometimes I will do two weeks and then do two weeks later. In that way, I already have it planed out so I know what it's going to look like and you can also see how the board is going to look like once it gets posted.

So you see the pictures that work together because you know sometimes when you post something and you're like, "This picture doesn't really look good next to this one here, maybe I should erase it?" And then you're erasing. So now, I don't have to worry about that because I already have that already scheduled and I think it is really good to do it because that way you don't have to think about it so much. It's so hard to sit down every single time and think about a good caption.

But if you have a couple of hours and you're like, "Okay I'm going to sit down for the next hour and I'm going to schedule all my posts, I am going to find some pretty quotes, I'm going to sit down and find the hashtags." And once you have that down, I think it really does make it easier for your social media to always look curated and I think it is important to curate your feeds just because you want to give people an experience to your Instagram.

You want your feed to look very nice because when they go from another feed to yours, they're like, "Wow, this looks very professional," and I think that's what I want people to see when they go into my Instagram. Even when I am posting pictures of my morning coffee or if I am posting pictures of my vacation, I do want it to look together. So that's why I really think curating is definitely the way to go.

**[00:30:41.2] CS:** Yeah, I don't think curating is dead either because as photographers or in this creative industry, we look around and we're like, "Oh my gosh, everybody has these beautiful feeds." But we forget that our clients are professionals, they're working in corporations, they are nurses, doctors, whatever it maybe and for them, I'm a lawyer and I work with them. I was just

at a legal with them last night and the stuff I see coming from lawyers on their “Instagram”. I am making air quotes because they are on Instagram, I don’t know why, but it’s a joke. I’m not saying that to be mean, it’s just the dark food pictures that were circa 2012 Instagram.

**[00:31:23.1] RP:** Well I did that too.

**[00:31:24.2] CS:** We all did it.

**[00:31:26.4] VV:** We all did it, yeah.

**[00:31:28.3] CS:** And when I first started seeing feeds like yours Vanessa, when I first met you and I clicked on your Instagram last November at Making Things Happen, we met.

**[00:31:36.4] VV:** Yay!

**[00:31:37.4] CS:** I know that was an amazing experience. We’re just going to talk about Laura Casey every show I think. But when I first saw your feed, my feed still sucked and I was like, “Wow, how did people do this?” And I think that it’s great that you’re shinning a light on how you’re able to sit down and batch that content and get it all knocked out of the way and it helps I think that you’re a photographer.

So if you aren’t a photographer, are there places where maybe somebody could go? I know you do a lot of coaching with beginning business owner’s not necessarily just photographers and so if you are not a photographer, where can you go for one inspiration for the captions? Because that’s always hard to come up with something to say that’s worthwhile and then two, where can you get pictures that are decent if you don’t have a whole library of great client photos?

**[00:32:31.8] VV:** Well, in my case obviously I am a photographer so it’s easier for me but for my clients I always tell them, “If you’re not a photographer, make sure that you take time to do shoots.” I think having shoots that inspire you and say like, “Okay, I want to do a shoot.” Let’s say, the other day I was working with a blogger. So she wanted to do a shoot for her fall and her winter catalog. So I told her, “Okay, let’s take a whole day. Let’s do a six hour shoot and then put together different table case.



**[00:32:58.1] RP:** Wow.

**[00:32:58.9] VV:** Yeah, put together but at least she shows three table case so she did three teams and we had an amazing stationery. She made a really pretty food plate. So we shot the food plate and we did a lot of really cute artsy stuff too. So I told her I think it's good because that way you're paying for he shoot but you have six hours to do whatever you want and the good thing about this is you'll have material for the next six months. So it's good because you don't have to worry about it, you know?

I think having the time and even sometimes you can exchange with somebody that's starting out and they want to shoot more and you're like, "You know I want to do the shoot and I was wondering if maybe you wanted to help me out?" And sometimes people will do it if not for free, maybe they will do it for half the price. So you just need to get out there and find a photographer that you can work with because having really pretty professional pictures is definitely to me, it's the way to go with Instagram.

And for captions, I am always looking. There is this really good website called Quotes on Words, if I am not mistaken. But if you go on Google, just type in "famous quotes", "romantic quotes", "funny quotes" whatever it is that you're looking for and you can find amazing quotes online that can help you do some cute cool captions.

**[00:34:14.5] CS:** Those are great suggestions, thank you Vanessa. You are really passionate about helping others succeed. I know that you have gone through several iterations of your business and revamped and refined and refined and now you have this really beautiful end product. If people want to work with you or if they want to learn from you, how could they do that in their own way and in their own time?

**[00:34:35.8] VV:** With me definitely, I have a new website that's coming out just specifically for business owners because I have been working on the last few years on the side with a lot of business owners, helping them with their branding and helping them with their business plans. So it's going to be launching hopefully in December so I am very excited about that. It's going to be [vanessavelez.co](http://vanessavelez.co) and you'll be able to see all of my work there.

You will be able to e-mail me through the page, you can also always e-mail me on my regular e-mail which is [vanessavelezphotography@gmail.com](mailto:vanessavelezphotography@gmail.com).

**[00:35:06.7] CS:** Yeah and who can benefit from working maybe with you or maybe with a different mentor in their area, who could benefit from working with a mentor?

**[00:35:15.1] VV:** I think honestly, whatever type of creative business that you run, it's always so helpful to find somebody that can help you and guide you in the right direction, specifically with things that maybe you don't know how to deal with or handle. Sometimes, we're really good on the creative side but maybe we don't know how to market ourselves or we don't know how to get really good contracts, right Christina? So I think finding people that really could help you with that is the best way to go.

Just because that way you won't have to worry so much about the other stuff. You can concentrate on your creative side. So definitely to me, mentoring, even I do a lot of mentoring. I love having someone mentor me just because I always want to learn something new. I think that having and making that investment in whatever it is that you need to do it, it's really helpful and beneficial for everybody.

**[00:36:02.4] CS:** Yeah, thank you so much Vanessa. If there was one thing that you would go out and tell someone, "I want you to go build your creative empire," what would that piece of advice be for them?

**[00:36:11.7] VV:** I think for me, let's see; I would say, "Don't be afraid." I think sometimes we're so afraid of failing or not doing things the way that other people do it that we get scared into not doing it. I am all about don't let your fears ruin your life. You go for it even if you start small. Even if you are just maybe creating little things, just go out there and do it. Start small but do it, get yourself out there. Meet people, get those business cards flying, make sure you are connecting with people.

Because honestly, if you start small you will grow from there. There is no way to go but up. It is what it is, you keep going and keep reaching for that ceiling and say, "You know I want to reach

the top and I want to be the best of whatever it is that you're doing and I am not going to be afraid of doing it."

**[00:36:57.8] CS:** Thank you so much Vanessa. So if you guys want to go check out Vanessa's website, it's [vanessavelez.photo](http://vanessavelez.photo) and [vanessavelez.co](http://vanessavelez.co) and Instagram, where can they find you?

**[00:37:08.0] VV:** On Instagram, you can find me under Vanessa Velez Photography and Vanessa Velez Co.

**[00:37:13.9] CS:** Awesome, thank you so much for joining us. We really appreciated talking to you today.

**[00:37:17.5] VV:** Thank you guys.

**[00:37:19.2] CS:** Go build your creative empire.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:37:24.2] 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.

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]