

EPISODE 64

[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]

[0:00:35.3] RP: Welcome back to the Creative Empire podcast everyone. I'm Reina Pomeroy, and Christina Scalera is here with me.

[0:00:40.5] CS: Hey guys.

[0:00:41.4] RP: Today we have a really special guest, and we've been trying to get Eliana on the phone for the longest time, but this lady is busy. Anyway, we're super excited to have Eliana, and she is the mastermind behind ellyB Events. If you've seen her Instagram photo, you know that she has exquisite style. Today what we're going to be talking about is ideal client and how you can find that person, you know, this elusive person that we've been talking a lot about on this podcast. Eliana, we're super excited to have you, and thanks for coming on the podcast!

[0:01:14.9] EB: Thanks for having me guys, I am sorry for not being accessible, but I'm here and you have me 100% now.

[0:01:22.0] RP: You're just a busy lady, I really respect that.

[0:01:23.1] CS: Yeah, I'm so glad that we have you on the podcast so that our audience, who may not be able to connect with you every day, they're going to get to see your amazing personality and just have a lot of fun with us here on this next few minutes. With that being said,

you've done some really amazing stuff with your business. Do you want to just give us a little bit of a background of how did Ellye B get started, and how did you get into what you do now?

[0:01:46.1] EB: Oh God, I like to tell this story, I always had a business before I even had a business name back when I was getting married. I went to school for business management, I have my Master's degree in Business Administration, so I always knew I would own a business. In my mind, because I'm from New York, it was a laundromat. In New York, we just don't have laundromats, so you just couldn't tell me I wasn't going to own a chain of laundromats! But in the process of me getting married, back in that day we didn't have Instagram and message boards — well, all we had were message boards, and what we did was we would just share all day, we were at our nine to five, just sharing ideas.

I always remember I started different threads of like, blue wedding ideas, and orange wedding ideas, and anytime I found a good picture online, I would share it with a group called "Long Island Weddings", and it was maybe about a thousand ladies on there. From there, as I was sharing the ideas and everyone was like, "Oh, you're finding the good ideas!", and I was honestly just a creep online, and just looking to see what everyone was doing! But from there, people just asked, "Can you help with my wedding?", and things like that. I was like, "Sure! I'd love to be your day of coordinator!" at the time, and I did my very first wedding the weekend before my own. That's kind of out of demand. Ladies were just saying, "Hey, can you please help at least the day of? I have all these DIY projects and I want to display them," and I started from there.

[0:03:03.8] RP: Okay, that's crazy that you did it the weekend before your own. I think it's a good example of your selfless dedication to your clients, and how much you value your client's experience. I would argue that you might have had a business before you had a business name, but you also had a client experience before you had a client, it sounds like!

[0:03:19.5] EB: I know, it's crazy, yeah. I was able to - what was a little death defying about that is that I started out in New York, and then two months later I moved. I moved to Georgia, and I just said, "What is going to happen now?" I moved with a full-time job at that time, but I was scared to go to a completely new market. Going from the north to the south is a completely different clientele.

I was really just like, what do I do now? The New York bride and the Georgia bride are two different animals, you know? It was learning the culture all over again, and having to recommit all over again, so it was really interesting.

[0:03:52.3]RP: Yeah, for sure. You still do quite a bit of weddings in New York it looks like.

[0:03:56.0] EB: Yeah, I do. I'm at the point where 50% of my business is in Georgia, and the other 50% is all over. From international, to different states, last weekend we had four weddings in four states. It's crazy, but it's fun.

[0:04:08.4]RP: Elly, can you, okay, before we get into the real meat of the discussion, I just want to know your secret for getting all these weddings all over the place. I know that our listeners are like, "How is she doing this?"

[0:04:19.4] EB: Yea, I will tell you honestly, my number one referral right now is Instagram. Because I'm putting out all those different images, people are literally gravitating to that style and saying, "Will you travel? Will you come to me?" That's what our inquiries say every single day, "Can you create the ellyB experience?" It's kind of funny, because ellyB has now become a verb, so it's like "Can you ellyB my wedding?"

[0:04:39.5] CS: [inaudible]

[0:04:42.5] EB: It's just hilarious! They're like, "Can you come to my venue and do what you've done so successfully out in the south?" My number one referral is Instagram, and then next would be client word of mouth.

[0:04:54.1]RP: That's awesome! You really — when we talk about the creative empire, which is the name of this podcast, you really built that for yourself. You started with one thing, but then you have added and added different things that fall under your brand, and it's really cool to see the different revenue streams. You did a talk on this at Savvy, and it's really interesting to hear you talk about it. Can you tell the audience who didn't get to see that presentation? Just tell us a little bit about what your experience has been, and what your empire currently looks like?

[0:05:24.0] EB: My god, it's currently crazy! I will say though, I started out with planning, and when I started out with planning it was you know, just learning about the different planning roles and different coordinating roles, and then from there, that's kind of when I became that person that I know I could execute a timeline really well.

Styled shoots came on the scene in the wedding industry, and I wouldn't touch it with a 10-foot pole. I was so scared of styled shoots, I was like, I don't know design, I have no idea what I'm doing, and I don't want to be criticized. I wouldn't touch it, and then it got to the point in my career where I had no choice. The magazines were reaching out and they wanted particular content. Creating the styled shoots, I would say, begin my ideas of design, and I quickly realized that in order for me to have a successful design, one, it had to be my personal style that was going to set me apart from everyone else. The second thing was that I needed to own a couple of the things so that I can steer my clients in different directions.

That meant that our very first thing that we did was start doing linens. I wanted to control the type of linens, the colors, the quantity, and the stuff like that, just in case if I had an error because I ordered wrong, I knew my warehouse was right around the corner. Then from there we did lighting. Lighting is a one-time investment; we were able to spend a couple of thousand on lighting and now use it forever for incomes, so that was great.

From there, I thought I was going to do florals. I tried it. I didn't hate it, but I didn't love it as much as I thought because it scared me, every time I walked in it was, "Oh my god, do you really love this bouquet?" Or the flowers are browning, or I'd spent the last 24 hours not sleeping. I was like, "This is not for me," you know? I was doing my clients a disservice, because I felt I was too busy worrying about flowers, and not worrying about the planning experience on the day of, so I eliminated that.

From there, as business grew, I needed an office. Starbucks is no longer an option. I wanted an office space, but I didn't want to pay for it, and I knew that there was a need for a small venue in Atlanta where they can host the bridal showers, the baby showers, the rehearsal dinners, and not have to worry about an alcohol expense, and they could bring in their own food and not have to worry about those things. I went into opening up The B Loft, which is my small event

space/office. That kind of runs like a life on its own; it's not inclusive, so if you book ellyB, you do not have to book The B Loft and vice versa. Most people don't know that ellyB actually owns The B Loft, and I prefer it that way.

That's my third thing, then we went into stationary, because I wanted to control design. It's all about, for me, with the different revenue streams when it comes to planning, it was really to make sure that my client trusted me so much. I know that's what we're going to talk about, ideal clients, but they trusted me so much that they're like, "Whatever you say for me to have is what we're going to have." So it was easier to just have staff to execute me, because they know all day, every day, versus finding new vendors to always tell them my new ideas.

[0:08:12.2] RP: Love that. That's the epitome of building your own empire, right? You start in one place and then you acquire different things, but what I loved about your story is that you kind of try things out, and then you made the things that you didn't like, like the flowers and stuff like that, you made it go away, and then acquired other things that made sustainable revenue for you, not just planning, which is really neat.

Let's shift into your ideal client you know, the people who obviously look at your Instagram are like, "I need her right now!", and that's the style, that's the experience you're looking for. If somebody's starting out in this business, who maybe doesn't have quite the voice you do, what can you say to encourage them and help them find their ideal client?

[0:08:55.8] EB: Identifying your ideal client, one, if I was talking to my former self at the beginning, was it's really not to get caught up in what you see everyone else is doing. I know that sounds very cliché, but not having to copy that you see on everyone else's website. I remember when I really first started, I would go to everyone's website and look at their copy, and try to figure out how to make it my voice, but the words were almost exactly the same to be honest, and you didn't have much success. Did you get clients? Yes, but it wasn't until I started speaking the way that I actually speak. Because when that client walks into my office, I'm not talking like my copy, I'm talking like Eliana, you know? It wasn't until I started putting up the pictures that I wanted, or talking the way I wanted, and dress the way I needed to dress, and not feel like I needed to come to an interview with a blazer on, you know? It wasn't until that then I started attracting my ideal client, because my ideal client is me.

[0:09:51.9]RP: What you said, sorry Christina, I was just going to state, you own who you are and I love that about you. So many people, probably who are starting out too, don't necessarily have the confidence to love themselves as much as we need to in order to kind of buy into that theory. Does that make sense?

[0:10:07.6] EB: Yeah, it makes complete sense, and I think it's hard because you're scared, because you feel like you don't know who you are, but I think that and I tell people all the time, if you have an event, say you're starting to get these small events, make something of that event yours. Even if you have to execute the entire client's vision, because let's say you're just being hired as a coordinator, maybe you take a sweetheart table or dessert table and make it exactly the way that you want so that's what you're able to showcase, and kind of put your voice in your personal spin to. Maybe it's not the entire event that you're designing, but it's just a little piece that you can go ahead and feel you know, is completely yours.

[0:10:43.6]RP: Yeah, grab the pictures and put them all over your website and Instagram.

[0:10:47.5] EB: Exactly.

[0:10:49.0]CS: You do that all the time, you mention this cultivate where sometimes if you work with a client, and she maybe has a little bit of a different vision than you, those pictures don't get up on your Instagram, because Instagram is your number one source of referrals. It sounds like you have had a really consistent source of women and other clients for events that book you for your look, based on what the look that you provided on Instagram.

I thought that was interesting because you're staying true to yourself and your brand, but also you seem to have streamlined the process to know, you know, this is exactly what I want on there, because this is who I want to continue to serve, because that serves me and my purpose and my fulfillment in life. It's kind of a self-sustaining system at this point. But I love that suggestion of just taking a little bit and making it your own, if you're not designing a whole event to this spectrum, maybe the client doesn't have the budget or something but you know, another thing that you said Cassie Cherneski's Cultivate Retreat this year was also about — basically creating this client experience where you know exactly the car that your client's going to walk

out of and some of the things that you provided about just how that client first meets you, where they're greeted with a car service, or just like all of the added details that a lot of people are too scared to invest in, because they don't understand — I don't want to say how money works, but how that investment and your client works, and how that's paid off for you, because you've taken some big risks.

[0:12:12.5] EB: Yeah, I do and I still do. I think that's the part that people need to realize, is that as you're doing this, you're still tweaking, you're still identifying that client, it changes. We go through seasons in our business; the same thing, we go through seasons with our clients. Being able to understand, and still put the educational piece in. Listening to podcasts, going to conferences, you don't get to the point where it's like, I'm above this. If I'm speaking at a conference, I still have pen and paper out. I am still very much into it, because someone can talk about their client experience in graphic design that I can relate into planning.

Looking outside of your field I think is a big deal when identifying your clients as well. Because look at our clients; after they're getting married, they're going into — they all buy homes. They all do this crazy thing, where they decide to buy homes and mess up my budget two months before the wedding day! They're buying homes, they're getting pregnant on their honeymoon. That is at least 80% of my clients. Being able to talk baby, and keeping and fostering that relationship, my ideal client now wants me to do their baby shower. They want me to stay in their life in some form or fashion. Being able to understand what's happening in the whole market, or watching *Project Runway* for fashion, is kind of my thing that helps me keep abreast of things if that makes sense.

[0:13:32.8] RP: I love that. If you had to describe your brand in like, three words, what would it be?

[0:13:36.3] EB: Three words, colorful for sure. You think me, you think about color. I would say over the top, for the brand, definitely over the top for some people, and real. For example, if I'm going to do a styled shoot, I don't pull all my stuff from a Z Gallerie, because chances are if I'm doing a wedding I'm not going to have 200 plus things from Z Gallerie, so I design with a real aesthetic from things that's attainable.

[0:14:00.4]RP: What's Z Gallerie?

[0:14:01.6] EB: Z Gallerie is a home store. Oh my god! It's my favorite store. If I could do my entire house in Z Gallerie. It's amazing, it's every modern, She-she and fashion forward, so it's one of my favorite home stores.

[0:14:12.9]RP: Yeah, I was going to say, like, your brand is very on trend and sassy. Those were the words that came to mind for me.

[0:14:18.2] EB: Cool, thank you!

[0:14:19.2]RP: Anyway...

[0:14:22.4]CS: Reina is like a great big picture thinker, but I like to dive into the details, so I'm not asking you to give away any trade secrets or anything like that, but practically speaking, something you're comfortable with, do you mind walking us through what booking a client looks like for you? I guess where I'm going with this is, if I'm a new wedding planner, if I'm looking to get into the wedding planning industry, maybe I've googled my contract template, and it's in a Microsoft Word document, and I'm going to email it as an attachment to my client and hope that they sign it. I feel like there's just a better way to, one, go about booking clients, practically speaking.

Adrienne Dorison is a coach to both of us, and she does a lot of sales calls. I love her method, but then also, you know, on just purely logistical side, that's such an old school way to do things so what's the best way to get clients into our system and to take care of them? Because this great client experience is something that just we feel like it's going to be a someday thing, and you've had this since the beginning. How have you been able to do that? What does that look like?

[0:15:23.6] EB: I'll say it from a perspective of five years ago. My former self, five years ago, if I just Googled a contract and modified it, I would definitely have invested in having a lawyer review it. That I would tell you for sure. I'm very thankful that I haven't had any legal issues, but I would never want any legal issues. That would be the first thing that I would invest in, but at that

point, I was using a lot of different software where it was kind of just patchy. I think it was okay at the beginning where you have Hello Sign or Eco Sign to send out your contract, you receive it back after I meet the client and I want to do a design proposal, I'm then now sending on a PDF document, having a document stored in Google Drive where they're all able to access it.

I think it worked and it worked fine. As long as your organizational skills are there, you can still give them their experience because everything just seems to be well branded. Having your logos, having the consistent fonts, having consistent colors. As you can see in my office, everything that you will see will have the pink and the blue because that's the ellyB brand. Even though everyone would think pink is my favorite color, it's actually red, but I know I have done a great job because you see pink and you know it has to do with ellyB.

Do you want me to talk about the rest of the process, as they come in?

[0:16:39.1]RP: Okay great.

[0:16:39.1] CS: I would love to just get your perspective of what it looks like to book clients and a lot of our — I think, at least from the people that I've talked to, maybe are coming to Tuesdays Together events and just joining the industry, they're in the really early stages, and they're feeling kind of overwhelmed. They have all this different voices that are telling them, "Do this, no do that!", so it's great when we get to talk to someone like you, who has been doing this for so long, and has cultivated business all over the world at this point, because you can't do that without being at least somewhat organized and having a system in place. Hearing your take on what you do and what you do well is really, really helpful.

[0:17:15.8] EB: Yeah!

[BREAK]

[0:17:17.8] CS: How would it feel if someone laid out a business plan, a road map, or some kind of strategy that would get you started and get you closer to the goals that you dream of accomplishing in your business? Well, Reina and I actually have done this. All you have to do to get this totally free resource is head to creativeempire.co, and click on "free workbook". We will

deliver to you 50 of our most potent, powerful strategies and proven tactics to getting our businesses visible, booked, and profitable. If you would like to have this in your business for totally free, you can grab that at creativeempire.co. We'll see you there.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:18:02.1] EB: I'm going to tell you from kind of beginning to end from the client inquirers and what happens. I do use a CRM tool, so it's connected to my contact form, which I use Tave. I know a lot of people use different things like HoneyBook, I know you use that Christina, but from when they contact me, it automatically sends out a canned message, and I will tell you, 60% of the clients really think that I just sent them that message, and they're so excited because I got back to them within six seconds.

They say that the timespan, it goes so quickly now! They're like, "Oh my god, she's there at 2AM responding to me, I love her!". They get this message, and it tells them I can't wait to hear all about their wedding day, and their plans, and all the fun stuff, and at that point they respond and they're excited! They're like, telling me pictures and ideas and colors. Now I do, I'm very lucky that I do have a virtual assistant that takes over at that point, just because I can't manage all the responses that I get. So at that point, she responds and says, "Hey, let's chat!", and she gets a couple of dates that work for them, and puts it on my calendar.

For some of my clients — I don't meet with every single person, because that's tough. That's just asking to do too much. I do have a particular amount of questions that I ask first, I will meet with anyone. I know a lot of planners that if you don't have \$50,000, they're not going to talk to you; that's not me. I think it's my job as a planner to educate you in making sure that what you're saying is making sense, so regardless of your budget, you will have a conversation. It might be via phone and not in person, just because it does take a little bit more time to have the in-person meetings.

So we schedule a call that will last anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour, and we will go over everything, I am the planner that will give you the entire farm first, because it doesn't hurt me as a planner to give you information to educate you, because I've had times where clients don't necessarily book me, but still refer me and say, "Hey, I really loved ellyB, I just couldn't afford

her at the time or she was booked for my date." That goes a long way. I think it's very important to not think, "I'm not going to give away all my ideas, because they might take it and book someone else." I know if they take my ideas and book someone else, it's still not going to be executed the way that I would have, or give them the experience that I would have, you know? That's important.

From there, you know, we have our meeting, we wrap up, I give them my cell phone number. I don't know boundaries, I'm learning. I'm sure you'll have a podcast on this and I'll listen to it. I do give them my cell phone number, because for me it's a little easier if they text me ideas. We're in a text heavy world, and I feel like we do need to elevate with the times, you know? People are at work and they're texting. I don't want to necessarily talk to you 8 or 9 at night if I could have answered your question via text at four. I tell them they have full access to me if they have any other questions. They don't take advantage of that, but they do love the fact that I've offered that. They don't take advantage because they know they haven't given me money at that point. From there, I send them a proposal, and since I'm using my CRM, it's two clicks of a button. They have the proposal, they have the contract, they have their payment schedule, and at that point they can go ahead and decide to book.

As they do move forward, we go ahead and we create our virtual office that they have, and will tell them how excited that we are, send them a welcome gift because we're excited to work with them, and they have magazines and a whole bunch of fun stuff. I stress to them that it's very important that they worry about the experience of a wedding. For them, I don't want you to worry about vendors, that's why you've hired me. I don't want you worrying about design because that's why you've hired me. However, I can't help your family that wants to invite 60 other people, or your bridesmaids that's now fighting because they don't want to spend a thousand dollars plus on your bridal shower. You focus on that, let me focus over here, and I will hear everything that everyone else doesn't want to hear. Then they're like, "Oh my god, I have the bestie in the wedding world, and it's not a planner with a to-do list that's from The Knot!"

Is there structure? Absolutely. If we're having a face-to-face meeting or a call, I'm definitely on Basecamp, which is what I use for my virtual office, and I'm checking off the to-do list that is automatically generated in the template. I'm very much of the person of let's work on this next five things versus let's focus on 97 of the next things. Did that answer your question, Christina?

[0:22:05.6] CS: Yeah, definitely. I'm a huge fan of Asana, you said with stock on my own business, and I mean, it's been a game changer. I used to be a paper and pen girl, I love writing everything down, but then I would forget my planner at home and I wouldn't be able to access it, and so now that I've been able to use Asana, and have those steps that you're talking about, and then you can even make like sub-steps. It's so much easier to check off like, one little thing and get that done than it is to try to like plan your wedding. That is not an action step, you know? Your action step is contract a client. Automate your CRM software. Whatever it is, it's not book client. That's not an action step. I love that you're breaking it down.

[0:22:48.4] EB: Yeah, I think it's really important. It's two-fold; the systems in Workflow, as we know, have a character that talks about all the time like, what is the work flow on the back end? Sending that client gift, the follow up, and doing all those kind of things, and then the front end that the client sees. It's making sure that you have the steps for both.

[0:23:05.6] RP: Love that. I actually have a question about a couple of things. When people are either not booking and are like, frustrated, what can you do? Then the other question is, what do you do when you have somebody who inquires, and is totally not an ideal client? I guess the first question which is what do you do when you're not getting those inquiries.

[0:23:24.0] EB: You're not getting those inquiries. It happens, again because I really feel like everyone has those seasons, I think that's where it's really — I think that's how those additional revenue streams keep you afloat. Because I am getting the revenue from the bookings that have the linens, or the lighting, and stationary, it's supplements the income with the planning. When people are not booking, I think that gives you the opportunity to revamp maybe what you thought was your ideal client. Is it your ideal client? You need to figure out what that voice of that new idea client is, so that you're able to communicate with them effectively. I've had people where I'm talking to other planners, and they're like, "I just can't find my ideal client!", and I said, "Well tell me the one time that you had that ideal client?" She said, "She was in a sorority, she went to this school, she did this," and I said, "If that's your ideal client, that's where the rest of them are. You need to infiltrate the sorority, you need to infiltrate that school or infiltrate that bride to start spreading your name to those other people, because those are the people that you're trying to attract!" I think that's — did that answer your question, Reina?

[0:24:25.5]RP: You were saying that you just need to keep trying, or if you are like, dedicated to that ideal client and find them rather than just sulking about it, which is what I think a lot of people do, they're like, no one's emailing me, and we wonder about why it is that we're not getting an inquiry, but I think what you're saying is like, you go out and do that, you create the need and create the demand instead of just waiting at home.

[0:24:48.0] EB: Absolutely. Again, also, don't get wrapped up in what you think that ideal client is. For example, everyone says, "I want that high end, I want that luxury client." That's 1% of the wedding industry! We all cannot service 1% of the wedding industry! My ideal client is not a luxury client right now; they're not spending \$500,000 plus on their wedding day. I'd be lying if I said that they were, but what my clients are spending, I'm making that look like the best \$500,000 for them. That's definitely important. Then your second question, which was?

[0:25:22.0]RP: My second question, which was when you get an inquiry and you're like, "Oohhh." Or you invite them in for a conversation, and then they end up being not the right fit then. How do you not book them?

[0:25:35.7] EB: That can be several things. Number one thing is use your budget. They don't have the dollars to support the vision that they want. That's why I do all that free work of breaking down the budget and explaining to them, "Look, price per person is a minimum \$150 per person. You're trying to spend \$5,000; we're speaking two different love languages." By giving them that education, they'll either A, go back to the drawing board and figure out more money or cut the guest list, or B, they find the planner that feel they can go ahead and produce that for them. If not, I just refer them to someone else that I think would be really great. They might be a great starter planner that just needs experience, and is willing to hit the ground running and go from there.

[0:26:15.7] CS: Yeah, that sounds like some people that are just starting out would be well served to connect to more experienced planners in their industry, and just reach out and say, "Hey, I'm a resource that's available for you." Do you ever work with new planners, and what are some common questions that they have sometimes?

[0:26:32.3] EB: Some common questions that they have sometimes, oh god, new planners have so many questions. What is it? It's ideal clients, how to figure out your design skillsets, how to figure out your design skillset, it's also how to become full time is the number one question that we'll get, definitely. You know, "I have a nine to five and I need to figure out how to transition", which normally isn't an easy transition. How to get noticed by vendors, and to have those vendor relationships that propel you forward, because it does have a lot to do with what we do.

Definitely I agree, if reaching out — I think if you put yourself in a good environment, you will have access to people that's going to give you the real, you know? You have to also be very conscious of figuring out because of this age of social media, where that real is, because we have a lot of talkers in our industry. Like you said, you know, there's so much chatter in your ear and you don't know where to focus and where to spend your time. The best advice that I can give you is to follow or listen to the people that you admire, you know?

For example, when I admired Mindy Weiss, I realized how she was treating social media. How much personal stuff she's putting out versus how much event stuff, and that helped me curate my voice because I realized if I had nothing but meetings on my page, I'm not attracting the type of client I'm looking for.

[0:27:50.7] CS: Yeah, it sounds like maybe you pick like, two or three people in your industry and follow those people as kind of like, your mentors from afar? Is that fair to say?

[0:27:59.8] EB: Exactly, from afar, it's looking at — because you admire them, so that means you admire their design style, or type of client, or the voice, or the following that they have. You start realizing what they do. For example, someone that's high in the industry may have a 100,000 followers, but then they follow a thousand. If you do the opposite, and you're following 100,000 people and just have a thousand followers, you're not creating that demand for people to be intrigued as to why they should follow you.

[0:28:26.7] CS: Interesting.

[0:28:28.5]RP: Yeah, question for you, I'm guessing you have a lot of emails in your inbox from people who are brand new and are like, can I pick your brain? No. We've heard this from a couple of other people we've interviewed, but like, what advice do you have for people who do want to pick your brain? What resources can you point them to, or anything else that you want to share with them?

[0:28:52.8] EB: That's a great question, because we do get it often, and I wish I could respond to every single person and say "I wish I could help you, but I don't have the time", because my inbox is a complete mess. I'm just unable to. For me, I always talk about the Savvy business community because I love that community for myself. When I have a second, I go in there and I love that it's people from different industries. Back to that perspective of getting it from different areas, I recently started hosting what I call "The Beat-less Meetup", so it was no makeup, let's just get down and dirty, I don't even care if I have a linen on my table, let's just talk.

That way, there was people from all different- either they've never even had a business, or they're thinking about getting into it. They're welcome. They're in an environment where they can have friends and they can foster accountability partners. I recently just started the "B Academy" which is my next crazy idea that I'm doing. At this point it will be out by the time the podcast happens. It's a group coaching session that I'm doing for wedding planners, that's year one to three, and again I've created a Facebook group, so now they can kind of talk about things that they have going on, and as soon as I have an opportunity, I jump in or some of the other girls that's really doing great things can go ahead and help out the newbies as well.

[0:30:02.4]RP: That's awesome, there are great resources out there and you don't need to necessarily email somebody to get them.

[0:30:08.2] EB: Yeah, it's homework. I remember when I started, I literally went blind researching online, and going into the groups, and picking out all the little information that I could in order to figure out what was best for me.

[0:30:21.0]RP: Yeah, I love that. Go do your homework before you seek Eliana out!

[0:30:25.8] CS: My question for you here is, you said something that was really interesting. How do you get vendors to notice you and since it's been a minute since I was in the wedding industry I'm just curious, how should a new wedding planner, or maybe even photographer or other wedding vendor get other wedding vendors to notice them?

[0:30:43.9] EB: Yeah, that's a great question, and I have a great answer for that. It's very important to understand where you are in your business and accept it. If you are in year one to three, there's nothing wrong with that. There's that younger generation that's going to come and give me competition; I'm excited for it because it keeps me on my toes. It's important if you're one to three of business, not to try to reach out to the full designer, that's in year 25 of business, that only wants to do \$50,000 worth of flowers, and you know your clients typically have a \$10,000 budget. Because there is a florist that's starting just with you that's in year one to three, that's doing great work that needs that opportunity as well. I think it's very important to reach out to the vendors that's very similar to your style with a similar client intake, and growing with those vendors. Because when you start growing with those vendors, and you start making noise, and you're being published, then everyone else is looking around and saying, "Who is this new person that's coming around?" You start to take note and see what's happening. I think it's very important to not worry about being shunned by the bigger dogs in the industry, and just find the people that have that raw talent like you do at that time to create and connect with.

[0:31:51.3] CS: I think it's important for people to connect. I love that you recommend the Savvy group because it's becoming, I feel like, more and more relevant, especially now that Heather is doing the in-person event. Now her meet up's coming soon. Maybe by the time this is out, they'll be out there. It's great that you recommended that as a resource and I love that you recommend doing resource before people contact you. I think there is nothing that turns us as — I'm not trying to elevate the three of us or whatever above other people, but I'm just saying like, once you're starting to get so many emails that you're kind of like overwhelmed, there's nothing that is more irritating than to get an email about like, a frequently asked question where it's very clear that they could have done a search on your blog, or gone to your Pinterest page and you have like 10 articles on the topic, and they just didn't even take the time to do that and ask you that question. I feel for those people, I was there and I did it, but at the same time, I love your suggestions Eliana of just doing the research and putting in the time and the work. Making the

connections, and just really being who you want to be in the industry with the support of others. You've done that really well.

Before we wrap up here, is there anything else you'd like to add about — like, maybe some quick things that people may not think about, what are some things that drive you nuts? Where you're like, "Why don't these people understand? All you have to do to have a great client experience is this!", and people just don't. I guess I'm thinking of an example where, we're redoing our basement and we recently had a contractor come in, and he was on-time and he showed up, he did what he said he was going to do, and it's like, "Wow, you guys did great! You guys have such great ratings on Angie's list!", and he's like "Yeah, we literally don't do anything but." I mean, provided this is like construction contractor, so totally different client right? And experience? They had such a great, they have like 900 A plus ratings and reviews on Angie's list, and he's like "Yeah, literally, we just show up when we say we're going to, and we do what we say we're going to do, and don't overcharge people." That was like, the baseline for his client experience. I know yours is way above that.

I'm just thinking. What are some things like common mistakes that you see in the industry where people are like, they're just constantly doing these things, and you're just sitting there looking at them like, "Why, just do this instead!"

[0:34:02.3] EB: Yeah, definitely. Two things come to mind, two major things come to mind, the very first one is, as a wedding planner, you feel like you have this entitled crown that you run absolutely everything, and everything starts and begins with you, and you don't sometimes respect other vendors when you're walking into a place, or just treating them as if, they're their clients too, you know, it's not just our clients. Just being respectful and understanding, and being willing to tweak things. I tweak my timelines all the time if I'm working with a new vendor. I don't come in there and say, "This is an ellyB wedding, this is it." and walk away.

You're just being respectful of your other vendors because they're referring you as well. They're out there saying, "You don't have a planner? Of course you have to call ellyB!" You want to build that rapport by being respectful and out there and being like, "Hey, I get a great vendor experience, of course, and you're going to have a great client experience." I think people need

to realize that. You don't have to be very mean or stern in order to get your point across. Unless you have to, because I definitely have time that I have to.

The second thing is styled shoots, you know? I see people spend so much money producing this styled shoots that get absolutely nowhere. Yes, you have a little bit of blog content, but you're going to go in the poor house! So stop doing it unless you have to do it. Again, back to my suggestion, taking a piece of your client's event and just adding little trinkets will cost you much less, and you're going to give them maybe a little bit something more adding to their experience that they didn't pay for and they're like, "Oh my god, you gifted me this?", and it still serves as a piece of your styled shoot.

[0:35:41.8] CS: Yeah, thank you so much.

[0:35:44.2] RP: Yeah, you're hitting on something that we haven't talked about before, which is ego. I ran into that as a wedding planner, and I think it's maybe getting a little bit better now, but I'm not sure. Can you speak to like, how you get around people with ego, or like how do you diffuse your own if you're coming into a space that's pretty new to you?

[0:36:02.1] EB: Yeah, you know, when I enter a space that's new, which happens to me all the time when I go into a new city, even though the social media world may know who I am, I'm going into these venues, and sometimes they're banquet venues that they're turning out six weddings at a time, they could care less that I'm there. They have their strict rules, and I really go in there, and I go in there quiet, and I go in there, I observe and I let them know that I am in your house at that point. I want to be welcomed, because I want us to all get along and give the client — the client experience is more important than my ego, that's first and foremost. If I rile everyone up in that room, or the vendors, and now they're going to take it out on my client, I ruin my client's event. I definitely walk in very quiet and say, "I'm here to help, I'm in your house, this is the way we plan to do things, do you have any changes? I'm flexible." Flexibility is very important on a wedding day when you're in someone's home

I think if you just kind of go in there with that, and like I said, if I need to put on the ellyB hat and to say, "Look, we do weddings every weekend, this is kind of how we do things, and the client has flown us all the way here to do it," I can do that, but I rather not get to that point at all.

[0:37:08.5] CS: Yeah, definitely. Just in wrapping up, Elly, when someone comes to you, and if someone is trying to build an empire like you, they're trying to build their own creative empire, what is one piece of actionable advice that they could take today, just to get started and take a step in the right direction?

[0:37:25.7] EB: Starting in the right direction. I'm going to start with telling you what you should do and that's the first thing: if you try a few things and it doesn't work, let it go. Don't keep trying at something. For example, my florals, I didn't fail at it at all, I didn't get a bad review, I just knew in my heart it didn't feel right, and I didn't have the resources to execute it the way that I wanted to. I let it go. I moved on to something else that I felt that could work and keep adding it that way.

After you've done all the education and you feel like you're ready to come out to your own, be fearless and just go out there and get it. "No" doesn't hurt, because eventually someone is going to say yes. Just keep going. There's so much business out there for everyone in this wedding industry, my famous term is that I feel like wedding planners were all bank tellers working at different branches.

How many banks are in one corner with different tellers? We all service the same client, getting their money, doing transactions; it's the same thing in the event world, forget about what the person next to you is doing because there's a bank, a branch and a teller for everyone.

[0:38:26.1] CS: Yeah. Where can our listeners find you, Elly?

[0:38:28.4] EB: God, I'm everywhere. ellyB Events on — I love my Instagram, so I definitely Instagram a couple of times a day, they can find me on the B Academy or ellyB Events over on Facebook, we have a very active group for wedding planners in a space of I think we had about 250 people sign up, it's really good. No fluff, I don't do fluff, I don't want my people to do fluff, there's other groups for that, it's really the real. Tell me your struggles, I will tell you my struggles. Last week I was talking about a project, which by the time this podcast come out, I'm working on a book called *Be Inspired*. Reina knows all about it.

I didn't touch that project for about two or three months, I'm so frustrated. I went back to the project, and I opened up my images and I fell in love all over again. I went to the group and I said, "I have times where I just can't do it anymore, or I fall out of love over something so it's okay to take a break." You're going to come and get the real one, it's kind of like hanging out in my living room kind of deal. Then every other social media platform you could think of, I'm on there.

[0:39:36.6] CS: Awesome, thank you so much Elly, I really enjoy talking to you. I know Reina did too, she's been all smiles, we've both been all smiles this whole interview.

[0:39:44.7] EB: I hope I did you guys good, and thank you for being my very first podcast, I never. And reminding me how to use Skype, I feel young again, so thank you guys and I love you guys. I love everything that you do, and thank you for all that you guys are doing for the creative industry.

[0:40:01.3] CS: Oh you're sweet. Thank you everyone for listening as well, and go out there, build your creative empire.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:40:09.0] 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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