

EPISODE 56

[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] CS: Hello and welcome back to another episode of the Creative Empire Podcast. It's Christina and Reina here and today we're joined by Jena Nesbitt of the Creative Round Table. Jena, hello, welcome. We met at pioneer nation over a year ago on Portland. How are you doing today?

[0:00:51.5] JN: I'm doing great, thank you so much for having me. Yeah, I can't believe that it's already been a year since we're out there near Mount Hood, hanging out in the woods, learning about business/ That was such a really awesome experience, so it was really great to meet you there too.

[0:01:04.4] CS: Yeah. You're just like those brilliant business mind, I feel like. So I was so excited to bring you on and have you talk to our audience. Can you give us a little bit of a background about how you got started and what led you to this entrepreneurial journey? Because it wasn't always — you weren't always in this position.

[0:01:22.3] JN: No, I mean, I talked to a lot of people about this idea of finding your entrepreneurial spirit or sometimes you lose it for a little while and so I actually went to college for fashion design and I had always been the kind of person who was really passionate about having a job and being good at it and so I had all these ideas of this types of jobs that I wanted to get after fashion school and so I worked really hard to become a visual merchandizer and I

did that for a few years, which taught me a lot about selling without saying anything, which was really cool.

But my dream was to be a designer. So I worked really hard to get to a technical design position and then once I had it, I realized that I hated it. Not because the work wasn't fun or wasn't creative or inspiring but because I didn't like the regiment of being at work at 8 o'clock every single morning and leaving at five and having somebody who is telling me how I had to behave or what was important for me on any given day. So I always say, "Well luckily I got fired because otherwise I probably wouldn't have quit," because I'm just a very loyal and dedicated person.

I got fired and from there, I was really rocked, I didn't know what I wanted to do, I had worked so hard to get to that position after college and what I ended up doing was going to an event called Startup Weekend and I don't know if you two are familiar with Startup Weekend but it's an incredible event that's actually happening this weekend. This weekend's the global startup battle but essentially what it is is there are these events held all over the world for 54 hours where you show up on Friday, you can pitch a business idea and then on Sunday you're going to be presenting in front of a panel of local business experts.

I thought to myself, "Well I'll just go to this event as a creative person, maybe I can find some clients and start doing freelance design." So I thought, "Okay, I'll come up with a crazy pitch because then at least people will remember me," right? I came up with this idea for vegan, gluten free, frozen treats for people to share with their dogs. That was the whole idea. I got up and I pitched it and people ended up actually really liking the idea so of the hundred people that pitched I ended up being one of the top 10 and made a team of 10 people and we actually ended up winning the event with this concept.

And so for me, it was crazy because I was coming from this place of feeling really sad and defeated and not good enough and then all of a sudden I was like, "Well wait, no, I'm like a power house. I can inspire people, I can motivate them to get things done and like I'm smart enough to have actually won this competition," you know? Going with the intent of maybe landing a freelance client and then ending up winning a competition is totally different things. That really for me, I tell everybody that's the event that changed my life.

Because what happened was, because I was sort of an outlier and this weirdo who had come up with this wild product, people from the Portland business community wanted to help me because they were just like, “Well you’re funny, you’re bubbly, like you’re obviously interested in trying new things and disrupting markets.” So I was just sort of welcomed with open arms into the Portland business community. So that for me was kind of my introduction into becoming an entrepreneur.

From there, I just started continuing to go back to startup weekend every six months so I could mentor but also learn from people who are just coming up with this concepts and figuring out, you know, I’m really passionate about the idea of what is the moment of the light bulb moment for a business? What is the moment of inception for a business and then how do you take that inspiration and excitement and then funnel it into actually working on your business for years at a time, right?

Because it’s so exciting when you start but then you get 18 months and you’re like, “Oh my god, I haven’t slept in a week. My family hasn’t seen me, I just want to go buy new shoes but I don’t have any money because I need to spend them all on my business.”

[0:05:00.0] RP: I don’t know anything about any of that.

[0:05:04.7] JN: So that’s totally me there.

[0:05:06.1] CS: Yeah, can you talk a little bit about what happened with the dog treat human treat business?

[0:05:13.0] JN: Oh absolutely. With that, I essentially won the competition and then one of the things I’m really encouraged, everybody I talk to who is trying to start a business is to talk to customers, right? That’s one of the main corner stones of the Startup Weekend experience is that you have to go out and talk to real people. What we decided to do is there’s a big event in Portland called The Doggy Dash, which is essentially everybody with dogs comes down to the main park on the water front and there’s like thousands of dogs just all wondering around with dog owners.

We decided we would make 2,000 treats and go hand them out at doggy dash. Two weeks after winning the competition. I had to make relationships really quickly because I couldn't get a booth. I had to find stores in town that would be willing to kind of let me tag along and hand out samples from the booth that they had already paid for, which I was lucky enough to do and so from that experience, I was able to get the flavors to a place where people really liked them along with the dogs. Four weeks after that I had the product in six stores.

So it was very much just one foot in front of the other and I just kept going for it and continuing to make connections. One thing I didn't think about was that summer ends and so frozen treats aren't really something people maybe want in the winter time. So as summer started to close, I had to come up with another product idea and so I was working on cookies, which were a lot more labor intensive in the kitchen and it was hot and it was just miserable and I remember I had this day where I was like, "You know, you don't start a business to do something you don't want to do, right? I really don't want to do this." I loved the idea of starting it, I loved learning about how to start a business but I hated it.

So I called my mom and I was like most young ladies do when they're having a moment. I called my mom and I was like, "Mom, you know, I'm not a quitter, I'm not going to give up on this business, what do I do? I don't want to do this anymore, I'm not happy." She was like, "You could write a cook book," and for me, it blew my mind. It was like, I couldn't have seen the forest from the trees in that moment that a cookbook was even something that I could do.

[0:07:12.6] RP: Mom's so smart.

[0:07:14.7] JN: I know, right? Mom saves the day. She really kind of gave me the pass to able to say like, "This is a great idea, but great ideas can come in many forms of execution." So you don't have to sit here and slave away in a kitchen if your passion is not cooking and making food and getting it to people because I was surrounded by people who owned amazing food businesses who are really passionate about the process of making food and getting it to people.

So I was looking at them and I'm like, "I don't have the passion, I don't have the love, how do I get that? Oh wait, maybe I go to an industry that actually care about a little bit more." So that

was my main moment that really kind of introduced me to being an entrepreneur but it all takes an interesting path from there too.

[0:07:56.8] CS: Yeah, now you have the creative round table, can you talk a little bit about that? Because I haven't heard of anything else like that out there.

[0:08:04.8] JN: Yeah, I cofounded the creative round table about two years ago with Jen Glen and Jen and Jena, the Jen founders, as they call themselves. I met her through actually Startup Weekend, which was really cool, another person connected me with her. Said, "You know, I think you'd really like Jen, she's a graphic designer, you guys would probably hit it off." It was after one of the startup weekend that we had each had like a glass of wine or something, we are going out to our cars and I just started talking with them, it's like, "You know, I've been going to meetings once a week that were for business founders." But it was a broad range of types of business owners, right?

There are people who owned medical businesses, there were people who owned massage therapy practices, there were graphic designers, there were people trying to start apps. So it was a really broad swath of people and I really liked the meetings but I felt like they didn't understand me or understand my perspective being a little bit more of like a zany type of "be creative" personality. I was telling Jen, "I've been going to these meetings for about a year now but I want meetings with people that I could pick. People like you," is what I said and she was like, "Well that will be great. I want to do something like that," and so I said, "Okay, how about this? You and I each pick five people that we like from Portland that we think could use this help and we'll have an informational meeting."

So that's what we did, we invited our friends who owned fashion businesses or friends who were game designers, stylists, graphic designers, video production people and we just invited them to come to a meeting and we just started at around this idea of "what's your goal and what are you trying to accomplish and how can we help you accomplish it?" Now, we've run over a hundred weekly meetings over the last couple of years which has been incredible and you know, the cornerstone has stayed the same. We focused on giving creatives a place to most importantly be held accountable for margin progress but also a safe room to ask for help when they need it, but also share their accomplishments.

One of the things that's the hardest about being a freelancer or an entrepreneur is that there aren't people there to celebrate the little wins with you. Your husband's going to clap for you and you're like, "I want my about on my website," you know? He's going to be like, "Okay, don't you have to do that?" For us, we're your cheerleaders you know? If for you the biggest thing was just even calling the accountant like we're going to do the clap for you because we know that it was a hurdle to get to that far. So that's the main focus of the creative round table, but we also run public events as well.

So we do like a monthly network event which had been really well received. We just past 3,000 member in Portland for our public group so that's been really cool as well. Just over the last couple of months we've actually started kind of a new take on our accountability meetings and we've teamed up with a coworking space here in Portland called Ned Space, it's the original Portland coworking space locally made, locally owned and we have our own little community there in the back of Ned Space that's designated hot desks for creative people that are part of our weekly meetings.

It gives them this community of in person relationships but also then they get the benefit of having us there to scold them if they haven't done what they said they were going to do or cheer them on when they're really struggling to make that progress. So it's been incredible, for both Jen and I think to have made such an impact with something that was initially so self-serving but sometimes that's show the best business ideas start, right? It's that you're just solving a problem for yourself and you just happen to really know what the market needs because you're part of it. We got lucky there.

[0:11:33.2] RP: I love that. I think that your story is just such a good one for people who are like, "I don't know what I'm doing and I feel like I have all this ideas but I'm not really sure," and like you don't have to have all the answers upfront.

[0:11:47.2] JN: No.

[0:11:49.6] RP: Things kind of appear organically and you have to put in the work to get there. I also love the fact that you have partnered with a lot of different people to make what currently is,

happen. Like just the example of you having those hot desks and the coworking space and just the people who — 3,000 people in a city is a lot of people. Just wanted to commend you on this community that you're really building.

[0:12:13.6] JN: Yeah, thank you so much. That's the funny thing that Jen and I always just remind ourselves is that we definitely don't have all the answers but we pride ourselves on being able to get you to the person who might have the answers. Really just being inclusive. I mean, for us, people often say, well I don't know if I'm creative, I can't come to the creative round table. We just say like, it's a mindset, you could just spend your entire day solving math equations but if you're doing it with a creative slant, you feel like this are your people then you're welcome here.

One of the coolest things about is just that we have this incredible range of ages; everybody from college students to people who are retired and in their 70's. Also just such a broad range of different types of backgrounds and so a lot of people are moving to Portland right now and so we're having this huge influx of talent and really interesting people. For me, I struggled for three years to really make a connection here, and so if I can be kind of that door that's opened that for these people who are trying to find their foothold in the city, then that's all that matters to me. It makes me happy to make them happy, essentially.

[0:13:21.1] RP: I love that. I think it's a lesson in like you have to be the invitation, if you don't have a community, go be the invitation to open some of those doors.

[0:13:28.9] JN: Oh absolutely. At the beginning of this year, I took an adjunct professorship at the Art Institute of Portland. I teach entrepreneurship and then other marketing focus classes there right now. I tell that to my students all the time. I'm just like, you guys, you know, if you don't put yourself out there then how are you ever going to know? There's things that I've done. I was told on the story about — when I was in college I worked as a stylist for Elite and Ford Model Management.

I worked with young models, it was really a lot of fun but I was looking for work when I see here in Portland so I started doing model scouting because I was like yeah, I know the industry, I've done this before, I've worked with young models. That is like the essence of putting yourself out

there because I used to have to walk around the mall and then just walk up to strangers and be like hi, you're kind of pretty, have you ever thought about modeling? That's not creepy.

[0:14:14.3] CS: I'm laughing hysterically over here, it's so funny.

[0:14:17.8] JN: Seriously. I always just tell them, you won't know if you hate it until you try it and you can try it for a couple of weeks and say, "You know what? I thought maybe being an account manager for this company was for me but it wasn't," or, "It's not maybe being a technical designer, doing this was going to be what I wanted but it's not. It's okay because we can change our minds, that's one of the most incredible things about being human beings is that we can change.

[0:14:41.8] RP: Amen to that.

[0:14:41.9] JN: I just always encourage that.

[0:14:43.2] RP: I love that. Speaking of change, let's shift gears a little bit. I'd love for our audience members to hear your perspective and profitability and like to price yourself actually. How do you decide how to strategically price yourself?

[0:14:57.0] JN: This is one of my favorite conversations. I think a lot of people shy away from it because it sounds scary, right? We're talking about numbers and money and on all of that but really, it's kind of a psychological conversation, initially. You have to ask yourself a lot of questions about where you really fit within your market. Is what you're offering something that's very inclusive where you can sell a lot of things for a lower price, or is it exclusive?

Is it just like that masterpiece piece of art that only one person can own? Is that what your product or service is? You know, getting inside that mindset is important initially when you're trying to figure out what pricing looks like. Because you have to have an idea of where you want to sit within the market before you can even begin to figure out where the money goes.

So one of the things that I always encourage people to do is to think about every single activity or process that goes into whatever they do. If you run a jewelry business, you don't just have

the making of the jewelry. You have to find the supplies, you have to spend time talking to people that you sell to, you have to make marketing materials. You know, there's a lot to it. If you skip over any of those activities that you're involved in to make your business actually function and work and create a sellable product, then you're skipping over your ability to actually make money, right? If you're ignoring that.

I always start by listing those things and then getting an idea of kind of what I need to technically stay alive for a month and I've talked about this with everything from artists to people who are far more technical and looking at manufacturing product and so for those of us that have maybe a little bit more fluid approach to it, perhaps we have a service that doesn't have materials that are associated with it. It can be challenging I think to really nail it down — but I'm trying to find my words, I apologize.

[0:16:44.9] RP: Take your time.

[0:16:46.4] CS: Yeah, go for it Jena.

[0:16:47.3] JN: I was just going to say, once you have an idea of where you want to play in the market, you're going to be high end, low end, mid-range and then you have an idea of what those expenses look like then you can begin to kind of work backwards from it. I sort of think of it as like you're just shifting numbers around as you're trying to develop a price, right? There is not a correct answer.

The correct answer is that you're making sure that you are leaving enough of a margin that you can actually profit, right? So in retail, they refer to it as keystone pricings. So if I say I made a bracelet for \$5 and I was going to sell that bracelet to a clothing store, I would sell the bracelet to the clothing store for \$10, the clothing store would sell it to the customer for \$209, right? It just continues to double but when it comes to a service, that can be a little bit more daunting right?

You're like, how do I continue to double this? Look at your — first of all, your time right? How much time are you actually putting into any one service and as their travel or wind up or research or anything else associated with that and then, double it, bare minimum and then look

at your competition, right? Say, especially with services and say, “Okay, we’ve got this really incredible person over here who provides the service in their top tier. They probably only work with 10 people a year and then we have this person over here who offers 15 minute consultations for \$10 and you know — but I’m not really that kind of a person right? You start to think a little more about who your customer actually is. This is a conversation I think a lot of people in America were trained not to be very open about talking about money and attitudes towards money. When you’re thinking about who you’re selling to, it’s important to recognize that there are different customer mindsets.

An example that I use a lot is JC Penny like four years ago went through major rebranding, right? I went from basically being JC Penny to being JCP and everything was going to be square deals or whatever they called it, I can’t remember. Essentially, the concept was for almost a hundred years, JC Penny had sent coupons to their customers every single week to get them in stores to buy things. So, you know, got a \$36 T shirt come and get it for \$18.

Then they decided on their new business model that they’re going to do away with coupons completely and they were just going to basically send out the price as it was, it would never be discounted, it was always going to be that \$18 shirt. Their business tanked because they weren’t thinking about the psychology behind the person that’s shopping there.

The people who are shopping at JC Penny were used to getting discounts and so for them, that little incentive, that little reward was crucial to it. If you have a type of customers that’s going to feel intrigued or drawn in by small discounts or free giveaways or things like that then you have to pad your hourly rates or your costs to be able to give those things away for free. Whereas if you are maybe on the higher end and the idea of giving something away or getting something for free is kind of gross to your customer because they have enough money, it’s no big deal, you know, “Why are you giving me something for free?”

Then perhaps then you continue to pad until you’re sort of at a level where the higher end customer looks at it and feels validated by the price because that’s a really interesting thing. I’m sure many of us have heard studies about wine, if they put a cheap wine in an expensive bottle and they pour it for you, you’re going to think it tastes better than the exact same wine poured from a cheaper looking bottle.

So as you're trying to determine what pricing looks like, the most important question is really the customer, right? You can't ask them how much would you pay for something. You have to ask them questions like, "In the past, what have you paid for something similar to this?" Or, "Have you been intrigued by other authors that people have placed before you? What did they look like?" And you can do your research to figure out what the money looks like there.

It's a really — it's a sticky thing, right? It's more a process that you reiterate many times than it is, "Okay, here's the answer," I guess. I was recently going through this with my students a couple of weeks ago for one of their projects and we just sat and went through the worksheet about 10 minutes for each student and initially, they're like, "Oh my gosh, this is terrifying."

But once you just start writing it down and then you do the math and you're saying, "Okay. If I can make a hundred items in a month and I can sell those hundred items at \$10 apiece, how much money can I make? Oh, wait, it cost me \$600 to keep my business afloat, not enough margin there, let's either raise the price or reduce the amount of materials in it." So it's kind of like balancing a scale or god forbid I say doing algebra, but it's sort of like light algebra.

[0:21:13.4] RP: Yeah, my husband and I — well, I don't like to do this but my husband likes to go on walks with me and likes to talk numbers and he's like, "Yeah, we'll just open an excel spreadsheet and talk about," — I'm like, "No, that sounds not fun at all." But it's so necessary, right? If you don't know your numbers, you literally cannot figure out if you're making any money or not.

[0:21:34.3] JN: Right, absolutely. I mean, that's the other thing that ties right into numbers is tracking. You need to be able to measure your metrics and whatever that looks like. If that looks like your revenue, your profits, your sales or if it's even just how many people are clicking through on your ads or visiting your website on a given week. If you're not tracking things then how are you ever going to know if you're successful or if you have an opportunity to be more successful?

It's easy to ignore it because it's not fun to look at, at least for most people. But one thing that I do encourage people to do is just like add a new thing every week, you know? If you have like

20 things you hoped to be tracking on your business then just start with one and get into the habit of looking at that and feeling it out, knowing what it looks like as it changes and then you can just add other things every single week. You don't have to do it all at once, because that's terribly overwhelming and we all know that good habits start incrementally and not by just diving in head first and trying to do everything all at once. Because it's overwhelming.

[BREAK]

[0:22:33.7] CS: All of your reviews are so helpful to hear and to read. We really do look at them, so please go leave us a rating and review on iTunes. This week's review is by Kristen, she has Samba to the Sea. I fortunately had the opportunity to connect with her, she has the coolest business you all. She's between Costa Rica and Savannah. Dream, right? She said:

"Ladies, I seriously didn't know I needed this podcast until I fortuitously found it. Where do I even start? I started tuning in about a month ago and I seriously can't get enough of you all's support plus amazing content with this podcast. I just binge listen to hours of the Creative Empire and each and every episode I'm blown away by your guest, their advice and the genuine conversation. Thank you."

Thank you Kristen for listening and thank all of you for listening and if this podcast is helpful for you , please tell us how it is helpful and what you want to hear from us on future episodes. Thanks guys, talk to you later.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:23:28.8] CS: Yeah, one thing that echo in my head every time I think about it is your voice talking about the USP and like, the unique selling proposition of a product. And so for those of us who really hate the numbers and are struggling to get our metrics down or track something like myself. I think what's helpful is to create something that has a really strong USP and a great example of this and I think I agree with you Jena, do think you need to be tracking your numbers? But where we met, I remember that day even I think it was Chris Guillebeau who was saying, he hasn't looked at his Google analytics in like a year and a half or something.

[0:24:06.0] JN: Right.

[0:24:06.5] CS: I mean, his numbers, I'm sure, are off the charts but he has created such a unique selling proposition like he's cornered this market and so you know, most of us are in a position where we started a blog in like 2006 or seven. So for those of us who are, you know, fast forward to 2016, 10 years later, we don't have the advantage of being a first mover. How do we incorporate not just the metrics that you're talking about that are so important, but how do we also corner maybe some of — or how do we start to think about a USP in our own business like you did perhaps with even the dog treats?

[0:24:40.7] JN: Yeah, unique selling proposition. I sometimes call it the UVP or the unique value proposition. So they're the same thing. If I say UVP, I mean the same thing. But in thinking about this I always think about it is as kind of a two sided thing, you have your unique proposition, so whatever makes your business kind of its own magic unicorn. The thing that you can do differently than other people or better than other people. Or perhaps just that insider information that you have.

Bu also looking to create like an unfair advantage for yourself or knowing who in your network you can leverage or the experiences from your past that you can make part of that unique value proposition. So essentially, I always encourage people because now it's getting a little bit tougher, right? As you mentioned, most of us didn't start blogs in 2006 though I had one. I wish I had kept it around and I just got rid of it. Man that would be a lot of outfits of the day if I had kept that up.

Anyhow, for us now, we see a lot of business models that are really similar. We're seeing a lot of things that are the same. But one thing that we're beginning to notice as UVP that works really well and is also very timely and trend right is philanthropy and giving back and finding ways to do good things for your community because unique value proposition, perhaps you're providing a service that maybe a dozen other people in your metropolitan area provide. But, you know, aside from you being beautiful and wonderful and sparkly and amazing to talk to and just your great self, what else can you do that makes you special, that makes you kind of go a little bit more above and beyond?

The thing that I stress to my students because they're all 19, 20 years old and if they want to start businesses is that we're at a place now in business, we're just doing business for yourself to do good for yourself isn't enough anymore. We need to be looking at society and community and the small things that we can do. We don't have to give away a large chunk of our profits or give away a lot of what we believe in starting a business but we can even do more I suppose for the community.

And so, when I look at unique value propositions, if I'm not coming up with an idea that's just incredibly disruptive like the dog treats, telling people that they could eat the same treat as their dog, that was very unique. I got more turned up noses at my booth than — it taught me to deal with failure and rejection quite well because people were like, "Ew gross, I'm not going to eat that." "It's peanut butter. Okay, fine. It's fine." That got their attention right? However, if I had been say making just regular dog treats that were like oatmeal, biscuits or something like that and I said that for every treat you buy, I donate a treat to the Oregon Humane Society and so if you buy this box of a dozen treats then I'm giving them a box of a dozen treats.

So that could have been just as unique and heartwarming and interesting and inspiring to people as the fact that I was doing something a little bit more kind of zany and novel. So when you're looking for unique value proposition, you know, I think it comes back to whatever your perspective is on running a business. If you are kind of that more outside of the box thinker and you're trying to be more disruptive in your industry, then make dog treats that people can eat. Do things like that.

But if you're just providing a service that you know that you do really well but is maybe not inherently disruptive, find ways that you can do good things that make you different. Or share what you are passionate about. If you have a passion for helping the homeless or helping youth art programs or something along those lines then do it because, why not? It's your business right?

[0:28:15.2] RP: I think it's so fun the way that you described it. I've heard UVP talked about in like — oh, you're special and that's what makes you special, being the UVP in and of itself. I think that you're adding an extra layer to that that you are special and that's great. On top of

that, you can — I don't know? Connect with somebody who is in your audience through that second channel. I think that's really, really unique. I so appreciate you sharing that, thank you.

[0:28:42.1] JN: Oh yeah. No, I mean I think that I feel like it's partially my responsibility teaching people about business is to encourage us to look to business as a way to better the world and also ask ourselves, "What are good business practices?" I mean, it's very rare that you get to invent something from the ground up and doing, like creating a business is very much that, right?

So if you really believe in something, don't shrug it off. If you can make it part of your model and it's successful and it makes sense then don't ignore it. Just like, you know, me, not ignoring myself in that kitchen baking those cookies like, "I don't want to run this business." You don't have to go on a business you hate, you don't have to do it.

[0:29:23.2] RP: For sure. I was actually going to ask you, you have used the word disruptive a lot and I don't think we've had this conversation, Christina, on the show.

[0:29:30.8] CS: I don't know but it's...

[0:29:32.9] JN: It's one of my favorite topics too.

[0:29:34.0] CS: Yeah, I love the topic of disruption. I'm like total disruptor on everything.

[0:29:39.5] RP: Let's do this. So can you tell us — say for instance a listener who maybe is a graphic designer or a photographer who has a full time job, how can they be a different kind of vendor or different — how can they be a disruptor?

[0:29:55.3] JN: Right, well I mean, I'm thinking about the Henry Ford, people had asked — if I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said, "A faster horse." And then also, I think Edison said — I think it was Edison? "The man that looks and wonders why and then the man that looks and wonders why not?" In being a disruptor, it's really a question of asking yourself, "Why not?" Why isn't somebody doing this within the industry, within the market and if you research it and you kind of play out the scenarios and you realize, "Okay, yeah, this is just

like not a successful logical realistic idea.” But sometimes they can be, and so by asking yourself questions, say if you say you’re a graphic designer and you want to disrupt, what all your competition doing? What is everybody else doing? Okay, so that’s what they’re doing but what do they not offering? What are they not doing?

If there’s a certain thing that you could — if you could disrupt the graphic design market by being the graphic center that will meet the client for a beer instead of handling everything over email, that could be incredibly disruptive to an industry where people are used to getting services through a computer and that human touch is just magical to them. So for me, I look a lot at what people are doing and then say, “Okay, they’re all zigging, how can I zag?”

That’s really the question, right? How can you be the person going the opposite direction. As long as it makes sense, right? I say this to people all the time. I’m like, “I believe that you can do anything you want in business as long as you can justify the logic behind it.” If you can’t justify it then it’s just kind of like throwing spaghetti at a wall and hoping that it sticks. But if you can justify it, if it’s perfectly cooked, then it will.

[0:31:39.0] RP: That’s awesome, what are some other examples of disruptors, and if you — Christina, this is for you too if we can think of as many as we can.

[0:31:47.0] JN: There’s a huge theme in disruption in general right now. For me, working in the fashion industry, we’re seeing it come up in places like there’s so many different delivery and subscription based services, right? Instead of going to Nordstrom and dealing with your personal stylist, now you probably have a box subscriptions service you’re dealing with your stylist there and so instead of actually having to go to the store, you’ve got somebody picking your clothes out and sending them to you.

So I look at a lot of that as like a huge disruptor, but a lot of people talk about Casper Mattresses, it’s a great example of a disruptor because the mattress industry traditionally had been won with incredibly high mark up and margins. So you go and you’d buy a mattress at the store. The retailer probably paid less than half or maybe a third of the price of that. So you’re paying this massively inflated price, whereas you could just buy the mattress online through Casper, get it shipped to your house and then there it is and at a lower price.

So that's like a great example of a disruptor, right? It's not an inherently very interesting or exciting industry, it's mattresses but at the same time, they did something with it that made it a little sexy and like different.

[0:32:53.6] CS: Yeah, I think bloggers are actually, fashion bloggers are great example too because I don't know the last time I purchased a magazine about fashion or even wanted to. Because I can go online and I can get something that's more up to date and interesting than what people or any of those other magazine companies could manufacture for me and then take months to produce. By then it's stale to me.

Maybe that's just me being like a millennial to the core but yeah, I feel like magazines — I feel like celebrities are dying. I feel like now that we have blogs and if you want to be a TV star, you can start a YouTube channel instead now. But you could have started a Vine up until recently and there's so many different platforms that you can create to just disrupt this marketplace and this industrial complex that was the only way to produce or manufacture certain things and up until recently.

[0:33:49.8] JN: Yeah, I mean it's the void of the gatekeeper, there's nobody there being able to say, "You can pass through, or you can't pass through." Now everybody's through which gives us a situation where there's a lot more noise and mediocrity in the marketplace, but if you're really good at what you do and you put a lot of effort and love into your business then you will shine. There's a lot of wannabe's out there but there are in any and every industry. Just stay with it, stay persistent and you're going to outshine the wannabe swisher.

[0:34:18.0] RP: Yeah and actually, one of my favorite quotes by Sally Hogshead, she created the Fascinate profile and she says, "Don't be better, just be different and figure out what is different about you," and actually one of my favorite disruptors is probably Spanks. Who said that was going to be a thing? She is brilliant, right? She's done a great job with the company. I don't know, there's so many different kinds of disruptions that are happening in the world. So if you're a graphic designer, if you're a wedding photographer and you're like, "How the heck do I disrupt in this industry?" Just asking that question I think is a really valuable exercise.

[0:34:53.2] JN: Right. Well and I mean, I think that sometimes too, you don't realize how much you are disrupting an industry just by doing things differently. Like Christina was talking about. Fashion bloggers or people on Instagram doing fashion, fashion modeling and things along those lines, it's changed the fashion industry at a core level. We used to present fashion shows six months before they would actually hit stores and we had both Burberry and Ralph Lauren this season not show spring, they showed autumn and everything was for sale after the fashion show.

That is because of Instagram fashion bloggers disrupting that market. That would not have happened otherwise because they can't make money showing spring and then making people wait six months to get the product, they have to show it and then sell it because that's where the power lies now. So for me, seeing that happen is like yup, nope, that's a lot of people disrupting over a hundred year old institution of what we're used to in the fashion industry, which is crazy.

[0:35:52.6] CS: Yeah, for sure. I love your like insider perspective of the fashion industry. Yeah, that's that Jena?

[0:36:01.9] JN: Nothing.

[0:36:02.9] CS: Yeah, with all this that we've talked about here today and everything that you're doing, communities that you've built. In a couple of years, what is your creative empire look like for you?

[0:36:12.9] JN: That's a great question. I turned 30 a couple of months ago, which is a big deal for me and I was with some friends a few weeks later and they were even asking me the same thing. They're like, "Jena, you're always doing so much," — Because my goal for this year was to become a professor so I did that, that was my big thing and so I decided at a bar over an old fashioned with my girlfriends that I'm going to give a TED Talk by the time I'm 35. That is my goal. Setting lofty goals is the only way to achieve them. Putting a timeline on a lofty goal is also important.

But in five years, I really just hope to see the creative round table continuing to make positive impact in people's lives, it would be great for us to have expanded to some other cities, which

really is our mission and what we're working on kind of laying the groundwork for now and then I mean, other than that, I like to continue freelancing and working in the fashion industry and continuing to influence product design and what customers are seeing because that's what I'm really passionate about.

I've summed it up for a couple of people before. The thing that I'm passionate about the most is influence and whether that's by helping people to run successful businesses by giving them a community, whether it's by influencing students to have best practices in the classroom or what I do as a freelancer for every single day for money, which is trend forecasting and so I spend my time helping product be influenced for the better. In my world, there's more influence for the good, not influence for selfish purposes. That's what it's all about for me.

[0:37:45.9] CS: Where can people find more about you and your companies and what you do?

[0:37:50.1] JN: Yeah, you can check us out at thecreativeroundtable.com. If you're in the Portland area, we run a meetup at the last week of the month, generally on Thursdays. So you should totally come and check us out, we always have snacks and beer and wine and a really friendly room of people to talk to. So if you're in Portland we'd love to see you.

[0:38:08.7] CS: Thank you so much Jena, everybody out there, please go build your Creative Empire.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:38:14.0] 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.

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]