

EPISODE 89

[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]

[0:00:35.0] RP: Welcome back to another episode of the Creative Empire Podcast. It's Reina here and I have Christina here with me.

[0:00:41.1] CS: Hey guys.

[0:00:42.4] RP: We are actually talking with Ali Elmunzer and she is a professional lifestyle and commercial photographer with her studio Turquoise and Palm. She's in Charleston, South Carolina and I think I met Ali a while ago. I can't remember when exactly it was, but she has had this incredible journey of getting to the place that she is now. She actually started in law school and was an attorney at one point, same as Christina.

[0:01:08.6] CS: I didn't know that. Cool.

[0:01:10.3] RP: Yeah, and her photography has been featured in a lot of different blogs and magazines and I'll have her tell you a little bit more about all the things today she's accomplished but she has beautifully curated styled stock photography and we're so excited to talk to Ali today about how you should use styled stock in your business as a small business owner.

So, welcome Ali, we're so excited to have you.

[0:01:33.2] AE: Thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited to be here today.

[0:01:37.4] RP: Tell us about your journey. I mean going from law school to styled stock photography is kind of a big jump. So, tell us what happened?

[0:01:47.1] AE: Yeah, it's definitely a big departure. After college, I decided that I wanted to go to law school. So I went to law school in Boston and then after I graduated and took the bar in Massachusetts, I ended up moving to Michigan where my now husband was living and so I was a licensed attorney in Massachusetts but, as Christina knows, you have to take the bar exam in every state that you want to practice in. When I moved to Michigan, I was not a licensed attorney. I was working, until I got my license, as a paralegal.

Eventually I got my license and I started working in law, I was working in commercial real estate and although I liked it and I liked the people that I was working with, I just really felt creatively stifled. I didn't have an outlet for that creativity and photography was always something for me that I loved, I worked in a photography studio in high school, so it was something that I was already kind of doing on the side.

I just never thought of it as a career until I started shooting weddings and families. I would second shoot with other professional photographers at weddings just for free to gain experience and then I would shoot friends and families on the weekends and on week nights and as I started doing that, I started building up a portfolio and more and more people started asking me to do shoots for them.

I decided that that was fulfilling me a lot more than my job as an attorney. So, I talked to my husband and I just decided to make the switch. I just opened my own professional photography studio and the rest is kind of history with me being a professional photographer. But two years ago when we moved the Charleston from Michigan and shortly after moving, we had our first child.

It was at that point that I've kind of felt like I was in a different season of life and I no longer felt like I really connected with brides and grooms and not only that, I didn't want to be away from my husband and my baby every Saturday for eight, 10, 12 hours. So I started looking for

different ways that I could still do photography without it pulling me away from my family all the time. That's when I kind of started to get into commercial photography and working with small business owners, local businesses, shooting their products, shooting photos for their brand.

As this was happening, they started to ask me, "You know, I can't take great photos by myself and how, with social media, am I supposed to keep up? How am I supposed to always be producing these new photos?" It was at that point that I realized, "I have a whole library full of photos that this business owners could use that are just sitting on my computer doing nothing."

I got the idea to do a membership site and I started going through all the photos I had, organizing them and almost a year ago, it will be a year on December 15th, I launched the Turquoise and Palm stock gallery so that people could join, download the photos and then use them for personal or commercial purposes. That's kind of how I got where I am today and how I got to stock photography.

[0:04:55.0] RP: your journey is so cool.

[0:04:57.1] CS: Yeah, you know...

[0:04:58.1] AE: It's very windy.

[0:04:59.8] CS: It's not too uncommon nowadays, I feel like, either for people, whether their attorneys or they're working in a corporate job to fuel that, almost suffocation right? "I have so much more in me. I'm such a valuable person. I have so much to contribute and I feel like," — whatever, pushing this paper or writing this brief or whatever it might be, doing your accounting job, your HR job, it's not something that really calls to you every morning you wake up and you're excited to go to.

I feel you right there when you said that. What I think is really extraordinary is that you started turquoise and palm a year ago but to us, it looks like you've been doing this forever and it sounds like from your story that you kind of have. So what's the timeline there from when you first started actually selling photographs, whether it was like shooting for brides, to now, today?

[0:05:52.4] AE: This will be my sixth year in business as a professional photographer. I started shooting weddings and family portraits in 2010. I started shooting before, but I didn't officially open my studio until 2010 and then two years ago, I started with the commercial photography, the product and the brand photography and then almost one year ago the stock gallery.

[0:06:18.5] CS: That's amazing. Yeah, it's such a great gallery and I love how you have over 1,200 images now, right?

[0:06:24.7] AE: Now, it's over 2,000.

[0:06:27.1] CS: Oh okay. That website needs to be updated.

[0:06:31.1] AE: You know what? It just got updated.

[0:06:32.4] CS: It did? Okay. All right, awesome. If I am a new business owner, I'm just starting out, what is the benefit to me. Maybe it's inherent to some of us but if we're just sitting there thinking, "Well I can take some pictures of some flowers or I could take some pictures of my desk. I could clean up a corner of my office and take a couple of pictures for Instagram."

What's the value of signing up for something like a stock photo subscription versus telling yourself you're going to do that? Getting it done, I think in, my opinion is a whole another story but what are some things that people are able to do with your stock photos or I guess with their time as a result of having that?

[0:06:32.4] AE: Sure, I think that people absolutely can take their own photos and I love helping people and teach them how to do that. But the thing is exactly what you said, are you really going to do it? If you are, then that's great, but you have to do it consistently. Because it's so important for your brand and for your business that you have a cohesive visual presence.

How you accomplish that is through the photos and the images and the graphics that you're putting out as your brand. If you have a beautiful website with beautiful photos and everything really well designed but then your Instagram is like a dark photo of the dinner you had last night with your husband then there's a disconnect. Your potential customers don't know which to

believe. Are you that professional, really reliable brand that you're putting out on your website? Or are you just kind of a part time business owner that's doing it as a side thing because your social media kind of doesn't look so great?

So what people can do with stock photography is they can take a great photo of someone's dinner that is in the stock library and they can post that and so it's a beautiful photo, it's eye catching, it's clean, crisp, clear. And then they can write their story that they would have written with their dark photo in the caption of that photo. So what you're doing is it's still you, it's still your story, it's still your voice.

You're just putting a different photo to create a better visual presence and now I think stock photos can be a great compliment to your own photos. I think sometimes people think you have to do one or the other. You have to take all your own photos and have to be all your own photos or you're just going to use the stock membership and you're just going to use stock photos all the time. Not at all.

If you're able to take a great photo or batch shoot some photos but it's not enough to kind of carry you over and to posting consistently, then you can use stock photos to compliment that. So you can do a mix of both which will help you achieve your goals of having a really polished and cohesive visual presence through those photos.

[0:09:26.2] CS: Yeah, the last time I tried to take stock photos on my own was last December and I probably took 50. Had to edit them, so they're still sitting there waiting to be edited and it took me about four hours to put ribbon a certain way and a book a certain way because it's just not my area of expertise.

[0:09:44.9] AE: Exactly.

[0:09:45.6] RP: I'm not a stylist either.

[0:09:47.1] AE: Yeah, if you don't enjoy doing it, you're not going to do it. As much as you're going to tell yourself you're going to do it. You're still not going to do it.

[0:09:53.2] CS: Yeah, my anthro shopping excursion that day, the excuse was that this is going to happen on a monthly basis and these were stable pieces. Needless to say, I have about four rolling pins right now that I don't bake with.

[0:10:07.3] RP: So something that I think is really interesting too, the way that you just said it, was that you don't have to take things like Instagram literally. If you see an image, it's not exactly what happened in the moment, it's just a reflection of the thoughts that you're thinking. Or a way to showcase something that's happening in your life rather than it being so literal.

This isn't such a transition for me, at least in Instagram brain, to think that I don't have to post the actual meal that I'm eating but can like convey the thoughts that I'm thinking while I'm posting it if that makes sense? It was always like, "How are people posting all of these beautiful images all the time? I don't live a life that's that beautiful," and now I know the secret.

[0:10:47.1] AE: Yeah, no one does.

[0:10:49.5] RP: I think it's so cool that you can do that. It seems like the brain switch for me was like, it felt deceptive. This is not real life and so why am I putting it out? I don't know if you guys have ever felt that way, it feels a little bit inauthentic maybe. So people who are on the authentic sort of kick might shut this down, but I think Alli, you're spot on with this that you were really — as personal as you want to get, it's fine.

But if you want to really convey a professional sort of front or not front. That's the wrong word. You know what I mean. Just as a professional brand externally and to be able to show that through copy, being vulnerable through copy or like sharing something personal through that way is just as well.

[0:11:35.4] AE: Exactly. I think that's the big — I think you hit the nail on the head there with people feeling like they're not being authentic if they're using a stock photo. But it's interesting to me because I see people reposting other photos, other people's photos all the time and that's great, I totally understand that.

But that's not your photo either. Just because you're reposting it and it's someone you know or admire, you're still using someone else's photo. So I think that's kind of the hurdle people have to kind of get over when it comes to using stock photos.

[0:12:12.6] CS: Actually I think that I do this in a way that — I do use this photos and I will post things that about a dinner that isn't happening right then or a picture from The School of Styling or something that isn't exactly accurate. I'm not there with this beautiful place setting in front of me and probably actually at home, the dogs are barking, things are going crazy, pots are dirty, whatever is happening in the real world.

But I feel like the way that I've been able to convey and use stock photos successfully is that I'm just really open and honest about that on any platform or when people ask me, they're like, "Do you really — does your office really look like that?" I'm like, "That's not even my office." I know that might be disingenuous to someone who just comes to my feed and like thinks that's my office. But my goal with my Instagram feed is to give people some inspiration, to give them some encouragement to show them yes, you can work hard and have whatever it is that you want to achieve.

I think stock photos are a great way to do that because again, it's possible for them, right? I just have to show them and say, "Hey, this is actually your photos from Turquoise and Palm or these are actually photos from such and such and you can have the same thing too." I feel like that I've never seen people light up so much as when they have those kinds of revelations where they're like, "Oh, I don't have to work so hard." Whether it's stock photos or they get a VA.

Right, it's like this hack that they found, that's exactly right Reina. I think it's fine as long as you're open and honest that it's not your real life, this are stock photos and you can have it too. I'm really open about sharing and so, I'm kind of curious since you are an attorney and you have photos and we have a lot of listeners to the show that this is a common problem that they have.

People just will repost their images and, you know, that's not such a big deal if you're like a bridal photographer and you really want to get known and be there tagging you. But for someone like you where this images are your livelihood and they are the things that people are buying to put on their own Instagram feeds. We have a lot of calligraphers who listen who kind

of have the same thing happen where they sell their calligraphy prints and they'll put an image on Instagram that gets shared all over the place. What are some things that you have done in your business since it is so image heavy and copyright based that you're able to I guess protect the integrity of your business, not so much the image?

[0:14:34.0] AE: Yeah, you know what? That is forever going to be an issue with the internet and the visual world. There is just no way to stop people if they want to steal your image and repost it. I try to look at it in a really positive manner that if people are sharing my images because they like my work and that, you know, I have faith in the creative community that they're providing credit and that they're doing the right thing and if someone shares an image and doesn't give me credit that it's an oversight.

Because I really created this to make people's lives easier. To make their visual presence — to elevate their visual presence. The question I got most often was when I told people that I was starting this, "Well what if someone comes in and downloads all your photos and then starts selling them?" Well, my answer was, "I have no answer for that."

People, they are going to use the images properly and people aren't. I just feel like you can only do so much and that's just somewhere that I don't want to spend my energy. I want to think positive and believe that people are trying to do the right thing.

[BREAK]

[0:15:51.8] CS: Stacy Green left us this sweet review on iTunes. She says, "Reina and team are powerful beyond measure. The podcast is more than just inspiration but actionable advice from real people that want to see others succeed. It's easy to become so engrossed in your own success but the creatives interviewed know the value of community and encouraging others. Thank you for this. I am a listener for life."

Wow, thank you so much Stacy, that's so sweet of you to say and we're so glad you're a listener and we hope that you're a listener for life. If any of you feel the same way or if there is a particular element of the show that you really enjoy, we do read all of your reviews so please head on over to iTunes, leave us a rating, leave us a review. It helps the show up better in

rankings and it helps us as podcasters to create more valuable, insightful content for you to hear what you want to know.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:16:44.7] RP: Yeah, I've seen a lot of people grow their Instagram's through reposting other people's stuff and typically they give credit where credit is due, and I think that that's probably the best way you can do it. If you're not reaching out to that person and getting explicit permission probably, you guys can probably correct me.

[0:17:01.1] CS: I don't know, I get scared doing that. I know a lot of people do that.

[0:17:03.4] RP: I see a lot of people do it and like I would rather you credit the not credit because that person can let...

[0:17:09.0] CS: Well, yeah, I don't know. I would be really scared to give credit because now you've just told them that you've stolen their photo and you knew you stole it.

[0:17:16.1] RP: Well maybe that's valid.

[0:17:17.0] CS: Yeah, I know. I mean, there are — maybe this is something that we should address as an industry and as people that have a platform between the three of us and then you know, on the podcast even it's like, we have movements that have started and have gone very well.

The Community Over Competition movement for example. One of the things that maybe we do as a community is just band together and have some kind of hash tag like Anthro has #myanthrophoto where we're able to share photos with anthro and allow them to use it and we give them permission by using that hashtag. So I don't know what the solution would be here for you Ali, but I do think that one of the most successful ways that I've seen people approach this is just to create that really great strong brand, which it looks like you've done with Turquoise and Palm. Your branding is so on point, I don't know if you did it or if someone else did it.

[0:18:10.0] AE: Thank you.

[0:18:10.6] CS: It's really gorgeous and it's like, you can get a hamburger anywhere but people still stop at McDonalds every day. McDonalds hasn't gone out of business and there's a reason for that. You know, love them or hate them, McDonalds has a brand that people recognize and will pull over religiously for on a road trip.

So how has branding helped you in your business and where did you get to the point where you develop this Turquoise and Palm brand? Because a lot of people starting out think they have to have this whole big brand to start with and then build everything from there. I'm curious what came first, the chicken or the egg, the brand or the business?

[0:18:45.8] AE: The business definitely, and the brand has probably been six years in the making. Because I didn't start out as Turquoise and Palm. I started out as Alli McWhinney Photography, which is my maiden name.

[0:18:58.6] CS: Yeah.

[0:18:59.7] AE: No one could say it or spell it and so, when I was starting out, I wasn't thinking so much about the branding. I got a cool logo and then I just moved on from there. But I knew with turquoise and palm and doing brand photos for other people and doing stock photos, I had to have a recognizable brand that again was consistent and cohesive. Everyone that knows me knows turquoise is my color and then I love warm weather and beaches and so that's where the palm came from.

But it just felt like it fit me so well and I know that people really want to get their branding done. It almost feels like your business is official when your brand is done, but for me it took a long time for me to finally get to where I not only knew my branding but I knew my business so well that it fit. So both the brand and the business, where I am doing stock photos and brand and products photos, that feels so true to me — so much more than weddings and portraits ever did — that I feel like the branding came from finally finding my niche. Finally finding my place in my business. So, the answer is the business came first but it was truly I would say five or six years in the making to get the brand.

[0:20:19.9] RP: I love that. I remember having that conversation with you maybe a year ago, maybe a year and a half ago about you starting this and I remember you telling me, “I have like thousands of photos in my bank, what am I going to do with all of this? And I think people can use it, I think that’s such an innovative way to think about the work that you’ve already done. This is your work, you’ve created it, it’s beautiful and why is it sitting in some data storage online.

[0:20:43.7] AE: Yeah, thank you.

[0:20:44.7] RP: Yeah, for sure. I think that the thing that you said that’s coming up for me right now is that, entrepreneurship bends with the seasons of our lives. And you used to do weddings, you used to do this different kinds of photography and that was suitable for you then, and now you have a family and you really want to stay home and the entrepreneurial journey has shifted because of that need.

I have seen that in so many other business owners but I’m really fascinated by the fact that like you have made a business out of the lifestyle that you want. So just kudos to you for like having that foresight and like knowing that that was a change that you wanted to make. Because I know that change is hard.

[0:21:20.7] AE: Yeah, thank you very much. I think that sometimes as entrepreneurs, we lose sight of why we’re being entrepreneurs. It’s because they want to build a lifestyle that suits them. So I feel like if you’re not willing to pivot and kind of, like you said, change with the seasons of life then you’re going to be an entrepreneur doing something that you don’t want to do and what’s the point of that? Why did you become an entrepreneur to begin with? To do what you love and to have a lifestyle you love.

So I think it’s important to be open to changes. So if you’re doing something creatively that you don’t want to do anymore, okay, start exploring what you do want to do. It’s okay. The community will accept you however you are.

[0:22:07.0] RP: Yeah, it's true that it starts with you and it starts with kind of the needs that you have, so I love that. I wanted to ask a little bit more about how a newer entrepreneur can use stock photos. So we talked about Instagram and how curating an Instagram is really important for the professional brand.

Can you talk to us about how other people, maybe your clients have used your stock photography in their businesses, in other ways?

[0:22:29.8] AE: Sure, absolutely. I mean, they are truly unlimited ways that you can use this stock photos. But I think that if you're new and you're just starting out and like we were talking about, you're still kind of getting your branding, the most important thing is to at least on your website create a cohesive appearance. So, a cohesive visual presence.

You can do that using stock photos, right? You can use one stock photo as your header and then you can either crop that stock photo and use it as kind of calls to action throughout your website or you can use complimentary photos either in color or style stock photos throughout your website on the different pages as well.

What that does is that creates the cohesive look, the professional look, and it establishes you as a brand. It's not you just kind of throwing whatever photos you can find out there. It's finding the photos that truly resonate with you and your clients. Then eventually, you can move on to getting the custom stuff done and that's what a lot of people do. They join the stock gallery that use the photos, and when they kind of find their brand, find their voice, then you move on to getting the brand photos and investing in that.

Other ways you use stock photos are, people use them all the time on eBooks, courses, of course social media, as shop headers, as newsletter headers, as flat lace, they use a lot to overlay text or products. There are really unlimited ways. My only limitation for people is that they can use the photos in an eBook and then sell that eBook.

But what they can't do is create art out of the photo. You can't take one of my stock photos, put some hand lettering over it and then sell it on Etsy. But otherwise, the restrictions are pretty — I

don't think that I have a ton of restrictions on the photos. I really want people to be able to use them in their commercial use.

[0:24:25.2] CS: Yeah, that's a huge benefit. I think a lot of us just don't understand and it's not our fault it just you know, we shouldn't. We're not lawyers, we're creatives and we work with our hands or we create calligraphy or we are print designers or whatever it may be. That's something that we're really passionate and talented about.

I mean, I just want to hit on that because that's a huge benefit that you're allowing people to use your photos in products that are for sale, maybe not as a print, but as like a stock photo in your book or it sounds like even on a course as the background of a power point that you present to your course participants or something like that. That's a huge benefit.

It's something that we take for granted because we just assume that people are going to enjoy the exposure and it's not necessarily always true. I for one really believe I paying people or at least compensating them somehow for their "exposure". So, it's great that I use their photo but I think that they deserve something else in return. I know if we're just starting out, that's really hard to do. We don't have much of a budget for really anything.

What I would encourage people to do is trade with each other or to take advantage of something like this where it's a really low cost per month. \$15 essentially per month if you bought the yearly subscription is like nothing. You would pay more than that on a photo shoot even with a new photographer for your brand. So I think that's really phenomenal value that you're offering to people for a very low cost.

When you price your membership site though, essentially — so you get a year of access — what went in to that? How did you decide to price it at that price point and then are you happy with that price point? I know you've been doing this for a year so I'm assuming so. But I would love to hear more of like the pricing behind that for you. What does it look like from the inside?

[0:26:14.7] AE: Sure. So my pricing has actually already changed twice and it is changing a third time and the reason that it's changing now is because the stock gallery is so different now than it was a year ago. I feel like I have images that are more unique, I have images that I'm

putting a lot more — like, I'm not just pulling from my library anymore. Now I'm creating these photos. The time, the effort, the styling, the shooting, the editing. I mean, I treat my shoots for the stock gallery the same as I do for my shoots for clients.

So, people pay a lot of money to get the custom shoot, I'm putting that same amount of time and effort into the stock gallery shoots. That is part of the reason that the price is going up because it's now become so much more but in a good way. I think that the value is there. So I think, I don't know when this episode is going to go live, I think in the spring, but I will have my new pricing structure out where I have one month, three months or six months.

And the reason that the one month price went up is because I found that people will join, download what they need and then cancel that same month, which is fine. I'm totally fine with people doing that but if you're going to do that, then you're going to have to pay a little bit more to just kind of pop in and download what you want or as many as you want.

I want to encourage people to stay with me on the journey because I'm adding new collections every month. I want people to really continue to use this and to let it kind of evolve with their business. So my new pricing structure will be one month, \$29, three months, \$69 and then one year \$197. So that's going in effect November 15th, which is coming up but it will have been in effect for a while I think by the time this goes live.

[0:28:13.5] CS: Yeah, and are you doing anything to reach out to your subscribers or your followers on Instagram and just let them know? Because I found that I, I mean, I generally am raising my prices. Just, the demand is there and I don't have the time or whatever it is that's fostering that change. But, you know, do you find that that is a good way to maybe segue or increase sales for a certain month by letting them know that a price increase is coming?

[0:28:41.2] AE: I'll let you know when I do it but...

[0:28:44.8] CS: Oh I thought you did it a couple...

[0:28:45.4] AE: No I have. I actually did not do any push, any notification the last two times I did it because I felt like I was more just trying to figure it out those times. There wasn't a lot of

strategy behind it, I was just kind of testing the market. But this time I feel like I'm spot on with my pricing and so I am going to let people know because I am rewarding the people that have been with me a long time and they can keep their current pricing forever.

As long as they're with me, they'll keep the current pricing and I will send out emails, Instagram to let people know and so anyone who joins before that will get to keep it but anyone else moving forward — I mean, I hope people will take advantage of that but...

[0:29:28.2] CS: Yeah, I did it by accident this year and I was like, "Oh, that's really cool." When I did it again, I did it more intentionally and I thought that was so cool and unique and people are like, "No, that's a great tactic that you can use in strategy to increase sales or whatever," and I'm like, "Oh." There's lots of ways out there I think to create, we have a lot of guests on here that they do something like a sales funnel and they talk all the time, and Reina's familiar with this, where you — basically, if you're selling something, you want to create the impression of either, maybe if it's a service it's a little different, but a product, you want to create the impression of scarcity or time limit.

Reina and I both feel like this can tread into some disingenuous water pretty quickly. This is actually — like, letting people know is one of my favorite ways to continue to be genuine but also serve yourself and your business as well because you're just being transparent and letting them know "yes, a price increase is coming, take advantage of it now", and then you also benefit obviously as a business owner.

Yeah, I think it's interesting and then your first two price increases, those — it sounds like that just kind of happened pretty quietly. Would you mind sharing? You totally don't have to but would you mind sharing like what you started out with and then what was that first impetus for the first price jump? Pricing is something that we haven't really talked about much on the podcast, but it's a question I get all the time.

[0:30:48.2] AE: Sure. My first pricing I did do — I think I had a three month, six month, one year model and I didn't stay with it very long. The reason that I switched, whatever that pricing was, it wasn't there for long and the reason I switched is because I felt like people wanted a one month option, and I felt like I didn't want to exclude people that those people that did just want to pop in

and download photos. They have an eBook and they want to pop in and download the photos but they didn't need a three, six, or 12 month subscription.

So I didn't want to exclude those people so that's when I switched to the one month \$19, one year \$180 and so then as that evolved, I realized that I should be rewarding people for staying with me longer. So that's when the — this is the third iteration where there's the one month, three months, 12 months. So I know that doesn't help answer the question as much as I can't remember my original pricing. I can look it for you guys.

[0:31:49.8] CS: No, that's great. I think most people just don't even know where to start and the problem I see most often is that they are very scared to price their services or their products I guess out of what they feel comfortable asking and typically when people start, they don't feel comfortable asking for anything. Maybe Reina, I don't know if you have any input. You work with a lot of business owners and coaching them.

But it's something that I know Reina and I have talked about before we feel really passionate again that you deserve to be compensated for what you're doing and I've even had conversations with Reina where I'm like, "I'm just going to offer this for free to a test group," and she's like, "No, if this is something that's valuable people need to pay for it." So when you're just starting out, we have a lot of photographers listening that maybe they're looking to do the same thing with their photos, where they turn them into some kind of stock photo site.

Or they're even just a wedding photographer or a portrait photographer and they're looking for those new clients, figuring out a pricing structure that works for them and then I love how you changed your model of business from working, it sounds like, one-on-one with clients when you started six years ago with this to now having a membership site that sounds like it's doing really well.

One of the things I love about that is that it's consistent income. Because yes, there's what's called the turn rate where people leave, like you said, and hopefully not just after that one month mark where they go through and download everything but that would be pretty crappy. I'm sure it happens but that's just — anyway. But I love that you started out offering these one-on-one services and now you've again turned it into a membership site. It sounds like you are finding

ways to reduce that turn and then you're doing what every photographer I've talked to wants, which is create a consistent income for yourself.

And you can project out, "Okay, in three months I'll probably have this many more subscribers," because it's all math at that point. You know how many people are going to jump off. You know roughly how many people are going to join based on your list size and based on the promotions that you run. So that's really cool. Are you doing anything like that where you're projecting out what your income is going to be in a month or two months, three months, six months?

[0:33:50.8] AE: Oh yeah, absolutely and especially with the New Year coming and now the price changes, I'm really trying to get more strategic and how many new members am I going to get this month and what's my turnover rate going to be? And really trying to plan out, and of course you can never predict exactly with any business. But yeah, the goal is to have a consistent income where then the custom work that I do one-on-one is more selective and at a higher price point.

Because I do believe that my one-on-one time like I believe with anyone, your one-on-one time is your most valuable asset. So that should be priced at the highest. I feel like my stock gallery is a way that everyone can get access to me and my photos, not me, but my photos without paying the really high price tag of my one-on-one work.

[0:34:46.8] RP: Thank you so much for sharing all of that. I think pricing is a really tough topic to talk about for whatever reason and it's very secretive in the industry and I am just grateful that you hashed that out with us. One of the things that I thought that was really interesting was that it didn't always have the strategy behind it but you've gotten to a place where you are strategic and I think that that's a pretty, maybe normal growth in an entrepreneur.

That you are trying things out, you test things as they go and then you found out what worked and what didn't and now you have a pretty good sense of what's coming or what you can expect in the future and I think that that's really encouraging for a newer entrepreneur. Because as many podcasts of the Creative Empire that this audience member might listen to, they might feel like, "I literary have no idea what to do still," and the fact that you're telling them that it's okay,

that you can still have this successful business down the road even if you are not a thousand percent strategic right now and I appreciate that.

And another thing that I heard from you earlier was when you were talking about your price increases now is that your photos are different, the value is different, and the value is there. Can you speak a little bit to that? What was it before and what's it changed to? Not necessarily the price at all, but just the content of the work that you are producing.

[0:36:04.2] AE: Sure, absolutely. So the original stock gallery included photos that I had taken for different purposes, whether I was collaborating with someone else and taking photos for them and it was what they wanted and I wasn't creating photos for my target market, which is creative business owners. And now over, I would say the past year, it took maybe two months for me to realize that.

Now the difference is and the reason the value is there is because the photos are created with my end user, with my target market in mind, they're not just photos that I once took for whatever reason. Now they're like much more purposeful even my lifestyle photos of let's say downtown Charleston. I will say, "Oh this would look great as a Pinterest image." So I will take it vertical. It is very deliberate what I shoot and how I shoot it with my creative small business owner in mind as the end user.

[0:37:02.4] RP: Love that, thank you. Thanks so much for sharing that. So our second to the last question is what does your empire look like in the future?

[0:37:11.6] AE: Oh wow. My empire, I really hope to just continue on the path that I'm on, and as I mentioned, just get more members to the stock gallery. I will continue to do shoots for the stock gallery. One of the big things that will be coming next year is doing more photography education. I've had a lot of people reach out to me on how to do their own either photos for their product or for their blog. So I do have a couple of courses coming out next year.

I am also doing some speaking engagements next year, so just trying to get out there and help more people just through education as much as I can. So yeah but just continuing to have the lifestyle that I want that is true success, that I can pick my son up from school and if he's sick I

can be home with him and just continue to do what I love and that's this photography journey and not being scared to pivot if I need to.

[0:38:06.1] RP: Love that, and where can people find you and your stock library?

[0:38:10.4] AE: Sure, my website is Turquoise and Palm and that's where you'll be able to find the stock gallery and all the information that you need and where you can join. And then on Facebook and Instagram, I'm just @turquoiseandpalm and Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest, turquoise_palm.

[0:38:28.5] RP: Fantastic. Well thank you so much Alli for being here with us, and to our audience members, go build your creative empire.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:38:36.7] 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]